Backspace: A Special Issue on Dance Studies

Alana Gerecke and Mary Fogarty Woehrel

> What is behind the object for me is not only its missing side, but also its historicity, the conditions of its arrival.
> ~ Sara Ahmed, "Orientations"

> I start with my back to the audience because there is this myth I believe in that when you have your back turned…. [This] allows for people to see through you and see who you are. And it also allows them to judge who you are. And I present my back because it gives you a perspective of me from behind, and I offer you, as an audience, the opportunity to really gaze into me from behind.
> ~ Alesandra Seutin in *This Is Not Black*

In this special issue, we explore the productive possibilities of the back in its multiple senses: spatial, temporal, aesthetic, and kinaesthetic. Although it is often hidden from view, the back is dense with cultural and political information. Back-story, background, back-work: our interest in the back is both an invitation to come at things the other way around and an act of critical-kinetic practice. Even the most apparently frontal movement is supported, if invisibly and unconsciously, by the musculoskeletal infrastructure of the back.[1] The back creates the conditions for the front. And, as choreographer Alesandra Seutin identifies in our second epigraph, the back is symbolic on stage in limitless ways. Perhaps most strikingly, the back offers an unadorned vulnerability that brings with it an invitation to gaze and an attendant quality of transparency—a way for "people to see through you" (Seutin 2013).

We engage with questions of history, privilege, and kinaesthetics "through the back" (Peeters 2014). The kinaesthetic concept of backspace opens toward an investigation of that which is not, perhaps, immediately evident—gaps in our performance and dance histories. With our emphasis on the back, we seek to enact the potential of dance studies to speak beyond itself, carving out back-routes into discussions about belonging, exclusion, and social values. Indeed, the politics of the back speak to ongoing and emergent concerns about historical and contemporary relationships of bodies, gestures, and pathways to raced, classed, and gendered vectors of privilege. Consider Rosemarie Roberts' observations about the racial inequities embedded in back entrances as "designated space[s] through which Black and Brown 'help' could walk" (2013, 4), and the contemporary affect of this shared history for black dance companies who are led through back spaces (like kitchens or back entrances) by white facilitators on route to a studio or performance space. Consider also Laura Levin's contention that "traditionally, women and other historically marginalized persons (non-white, lower class, queer, etc.) have been relegated to the background" (2014, 17), a provocation that underpins her exploration of the generative politics of background.

Alana Gerecke is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Theatre at York University and a settler dance artist. **Mary Fogarty Woehrel** is the Graduate Program Director in Dance Studies and an associate professor of Dance at York University, Toronto, Canada.

Following these scholars, we use a framework of backspace to attend to communities of practice that have often been backgrounded by institutional investments in the Western theatrical tradition, systems shaped to overlook the various and vital movement practices of, for example, people of colour (Boye 2018). Here, we track a recent shift in the discourse, an insistence to think critically about our past, our own backstories, and what has been left behind in the construction and expression of those stories. As Henry Daniel suggests, the "re-cognizing" capacity of dance epistemologies can be "a means to generate new experiences that 'challenge' or 'take issue' with that which is already embedded in us" (2016, 124). In this sense, we hope that this special edition's focus on the "back" as a way to "see through" (to return to Seutin)—to get beyond a frontal, outward-facing presentation—is an invitation to "take issue" with what is already embedded in us as a community of dance scholars.

The authors in this issue experiment with efforts to foreground the background: the backstage work, the backspaces, and the backstories that move dancing bodies—an impulse resonating through current dance studies conversations in the land commonly referred to as Canada. A reluctance to acknowledge the specificity of background has long played out across the histories of modern and contemporary dance, which have been cultivated in this country as "universal." Of course, this universalizing relies on a highly racialized set of exclusions that privilege white European aesthetics, exclusions that may well be invisible to facilitators but are deeply felt by those who are left underwhelmed and uninvited. Following the work of numerous artists, dance educators, and scholars—some of whom have been engaged in versions of this project for decades (see Flynn and Doolittle 2000)—we understand movement as radically contextualized by its particular social, spatial, historical, and political backpaces and backstories. Our move toward backspace, then, is less defined by a dichotomous turn one hundred and eighty degrees from front to back: instead, we propose a set of pivots, partial turns that understand the ways in which the front carries the back, and vice-versa.

This refiguring of front/back as a continuum of sidedness is fundamentally kinetic, a matter of orientation. As Ahmed reminds us, our positionality and (subsequently) our understandings of the environments that surround us are contingent on our orientation, which in turn is contingent on our backstories and the "conditions of [our] arrival" (2006, 549). For Ahmed, "If we face this way or that, then other things, and indeed spaces, are relegated to the background" (547). And this backgrounding is not benign. Ahmed again: "Some things are relegated to the background to sustain a certain direction, in other words, to keep attention on the what that is faced. Perception involves such acts of relegation that are forgotten in the very preoccupation with what it is that we face" (2006, 547). Following Ahmed, how can the concept of backspace help us remember moves that we, as a field, have forgotten? Drawing from kinaesthetic knowledge, we propose the back as, itself, one of many possible sides—defined in relation by the positionality of perspective. A turn, a spin, a reorientation can realign positionality anew. Consider how this is physicalized by shifts in dance genre: the entire premise of what it is to know the body is context-specific and can be undone with a reorientation of movement principles and priorities. It becomes crucial, then, that we reorient our facings regularly, and also that we work to develop an understanding of that which is "relegated to the background" in the act of sustaining a given direction.

But, moving more slowly, subtly, and away from a restlessly pivoting re-orientation, we are also interested in considering what dancing bodies know about backspace even within a supposedly frontal presentation. That is, we wonder what a somatic understanding of three-dimensionality can do to augment a framework of orientation. Must we turn our facing to turn our attention? What

ways of knowing can we engage if we abandon the notion that we must face something in order to orient toward it? Grounding these questions, the contributions in this issue are characterized by their investigations of the background conditions that support dance practice. Authors featured here come at dance scholarship with an interest in programming choices, festival curation, amateur practice, landscape, movement tools, and archival practice. These considerations follow the tradition of interdisciplinarity in Canadian dance scholarship that spurred an extended conversation on the topic in the predecessor to this issue, the dance studies Forum in *Performance Matters* 2.2 (2016). Here, Allana Lindgren observes: "Dance in Canadian universities has always been interdisciplinary in nature, though the experiences and engagement with interdisciplinarity are individual to each institution" (2016, 85–86). Of course, interdisciplinarity hardly sets Canadian dance scholarship apart; rather, this trait characterizes dance studies in the United States and globally (Manning 2016; Clayton et al. 2013). And yet, in a country with only one dedicated dance studies doctoral program (at York University), an investment in dance studies as a disciplinary home-space is not a legitimate option for most Canadian dance scholars. Notwithstanding the valid impulse to generate and preserve the dance-based knowledges that inhabit Canadian dance histories (Lindgren 2016, 88), we draw from Laura Levin and Marlis Schweitzer's recent scholarship on the multiple genealogies of performance studies in Canada in our recognition of "disciplinarity itself as a contextually dependent and unstable performance—by turns aspiration and appropriative, forward-thinking and forgetful" (2016, 17).

The explicit dance studies focus of this issue—to our knowledge, the first dedicated dance studies issue of a peer-reviewed journal in the country—is a continuation of a project initiated by Seika Boye, Nikki Cesare Schotzko, Heather Fitzsimmons Frey, and Evadne Kelly. In 2016, this group coalesced and networked dance studies conversations with their symposium "The Other 'D'" at the University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies. From this symposium and a subsequent roundtable at the Canadian Association for Theatre Research (2016), the collaborators developed a relationship with *Performance Matters* and its founder and general editor, Peter Dickinson. The group co-curated an extended Forum conversation in a 2016 issue and secured a dedicated dance studies special issue of *Performance Matters* to be published every second year. This crucial effort to hold up, foster connections, and carve out a peer-reviewed space for dance studies in Canada promises to offer a home for the field—if an intermittent one—in an unprecedented way.

In the spirit of reversal, let us describe the first of these dedicated dance studies issues starting at the back. To close this issue, we offer a Forum conversation between nine dance studies specialists about the ways in which their backgrounds (variously understood) constitute them. We have asked Karyn Recollet, Seika Boye, VK Preston, Angélique Willkie, Freya Björg Olafson, Lindsay Eales, Patrick Alcedo, MJ Thompson, and Michèle Moss to give an account of the critical voices and artists, background activities and moves that inform their work. Invested in speeding the rate of circulation and curbing a feeling of isolation across this vast geography—and attendant to the politics of citation—we hope that this contribution will prompt consideration of how we are introduced to new work in Canada: which sites, performers, scholars, and venues shape the conversations we animate.

Our Materials section features a range of backwork: rehearsal notes, footage, and photographs; inter-artist correspondences; and reflections on the relationship between text and movement. Carolina Bergonzoni and Naomi Brand offer reflections on their work with All Bodies Dance Project, a mixed-ability dance company, and VocalEye, a live description arts service. In their effort to co-create a dance experience loosened from an ocular fixation, they offer tactile, auditory, and text-

based translations of physical experiences and a video link to the creative process. Daisy Thompson works between mediums in a different way, bringing together images, behind-the-scenes correspondences and conversations, rehearsal notes, and creative responses to offer a back-way into her experience as a dance interpreter in Lee Su-Feh's *Dance Machine* (2009–18). Sebastian Oreamuno re-imagines his own backstory to weave a fairy tale that models one possibility for reorienting within our epistemic landscapes and learning to remember that which we have forgotten. Victoria Mohr-Blakeney investigates the impulse to remember in her reflections on *No Context* (2015), a performance and catalogue co-curated by the Nomadic Curatorial Collective featuring the work of dance artist Amelia Ehrhardt; here, Mohr-Blakeney considers the relationship between dance performance and the supporting infrastructures of curation and catalogue. Joshua Swamy and Mary Fogarty Woehrel outline the personal notation systems of b-boys from hand-written illustrations to phone emojis to address the creative process of breaking practice.

Our Articles section features seven different versions of back-oriented dance scholarship. An emphasis on the racialized relegation of specific bodies to the background characterizes many of these contributions. Melissa Templeton examines the complex racial exclusions structured into Canadian contemporary dance by probing the Eurocentric forces at play in the 1999 iteration of the *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* (FIND); Templeton underscores the distinction between holding up difference in order to punctuate sameness, versus genuinely turning—reorienting—toward practices outside of the Western theatrical canon. Erin Silver situates her examination of the politics of the dancing body in gallery spaces. She interrogates the presumed neutrality of the dancing body and critiques the racism that upholds this logic, one that is attended by varying degrees of spatial, aesthetic, economic, and cultural access.

A call to attend to backgrounded areas of popular dance practice also characterizes several articles. Mary Fogarty Woehrel builds on her research into "how dance is shaped by background sounds and music" (Evans and Fogarty 2016) by reversing the direction of analysis: in this contribution, she looks at backup dancers and their relationship to entertainment industries and dance communities. Following the recent movement in popular dance studies to consider dance competitions (Dodds 2018), Nicole Marrello examines competitive dance as an amateur practice that centres on children and families. Here, Marrello offers a multi-faceted exploration of the background labour and economic mechanisms that drive competition events, sustain studio loyalty, and support the development of the form.

Renewed attention to the felt, physical qualities of the back body moves through many articles in this issue. These themes are central to Matthew Tomkinson's reflections on choreographies of the back across a range of contemporary works. By reversing our editorial call to "approach the back," Tomkinson theorizes the back as an active agent and a productive aesthetic positionality, examining "the many senses in which backs and buttocks do the approaching." Coralee McLaren and Patricia McKeever also push for an expanded understanding of mobility by drawing out the movement affordances generated by specific physical environments. With attention to the classroom spaces and mobility devices that support children with movement impairments, McLaren resituates and reorients understandings of place-based mobility. Alana Gerecke takes another route into considerations of land-body reciprocity: within a framing consideration of the possibilities and limitations of decolonizing contemporary dance practice, Gerecke traces a four-day long choreographic migration along a buried creek in Vancouver (1998) to examine the ways in which topography directs movement and asserts agency.

While this dance studies special issue is not intended to offer a comprehensive representation of practices in the country, it strives to include a range of voices, bodies, and practices often absented, elided, and backgrounded. However, we are aware that there are many significant gaps in representation.[2] In part, the contributions and absences here reflect the Call for Papers structure we employed, with its limited reach and resonance. In keeping with our dedication to backspace, we ask readers to hold the following questions: who is left out of this conversation? What does this issue take as its own backspace? Which practices are unrepresented, unaddressed, and unmoved here? What might another set of pivots orient us toward?

Notes

1. An earlier, practice-based version of this exploration of backspace found expression in a movement workshop co-facilitated by Alana Gerecke and Justine A. Chambers at Arts Assembly in 2016, and a subsequent workshop hosted by Dance Troupe Practice (2017).

2. One particularly notable absence from this issue is Indigenous-led dance studies, which is moving in exciting ways across these lands (see, for example, Dangeli 2015 and Recollet 2015).

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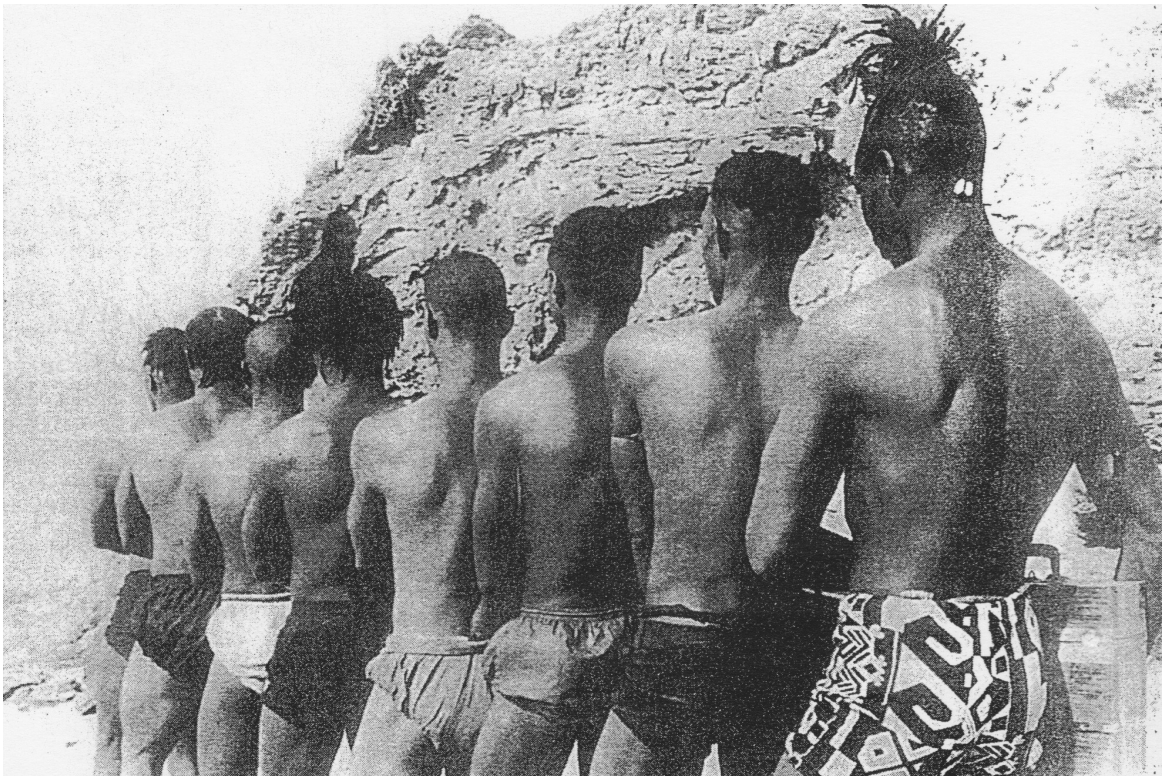
"Back to Africa": Ethnocentrism and Colonialism in Montreal's *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse*

Melissa Templeton

Montreal's modern dance community owes much to *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* (FIND) for bringing global attention to its artists. From 1982 to 2003, the biennial festival attracted dance enthusiasts from around the world, giving exposure to the city's thriving modern dance scene. The festival launched the international careers of Montreal choreographers Édouard Lock, Marie Chouinard, and Ginette Laurin while bringing to Montreal Pina Bausch, William Forsythe, Merce Cunningham, and Trisha Brown (Normand 2003, n.p.). The festival also brought in large crowds; in approximately 350 performances over nearly twenty years, FIND drew 300,000 people to Montreal theatres (Martin 2013, n.p.). Chantal Pontbriand, Diane Boucher, and Dena Davida, the festival's founders and organizers, carefully curated each iteration of FIND looking for upcoming trends in modern dance[1] and advocated Montreal as an international hotspot for dance artists.

While FIND promoted modern dance, whether homegrown or from abroad, the festival was often criticized for being Eurocentric, privileging European artists and aesthetics as a cultural zenith (Albright 1997; Citron 1999; Crab 1999; Howe-Beck 1999a). Ironically, the height of this Eurocentrism is most visible in the 1999 iteration of the festival: *Afrique: Aller/Retour* (in English the festival was titled *Africa: In & Out*).[2] The focus of the festival was ostensibly the African continent, but in an interview with Diane Boucher, she explained that they noticed Africa specifically because they saw several European choreographers (Susanne Linke, Mathilde Monnier, and Clara Andermatt) working with African dancers and believed "Africa" would be the next big trend in contemporary dance. Her interest in Africa seemed to privilege a European view of Africa, an account that resonates with artistic director Chantal Pontbriand's claim that she became fascinated with Africa while reflecting on its proximity to Portugal (Boutin 1999). The organizers' initial attraction to Africa as a theme for the festival was less about those artists working in Africa, and more about the continent's relationship to Europe, which, though underacknowledged by the organizers, was for centuries defined as a relationship between colonizer and colonized.

Melissa Templeton is a lecturer of dance at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Her research combines critical race theory and Canadian dance studies to examine African diaspora dance practices in Montreal. She completed her PhD at the University of California, Riverside and was the recipient of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship. Her writing has appeared in *Los Angeles Review of Books* and *Dance Research Journal*.



Publicity Poster for FIND *Afrique: Aller/Retour*. Image of Compagnie Jant Bi in Susanne Linke's *Le Coq est mort*. *Le Devoir*, September 25 & 26, 1999, B2. Photo by Pap Ba.

The framing of Africa through this European perspective, as well as the implicit power dynamics that it generates, emerge in subtle ways in the festival's imagery. In one of its most prominent promotional images, eight men stand, one behind the other, with their bare backs to the viewer. Their deep-brown skin glistens in the sun while they stare at a barren landscape. Brightly coloured shorts call attention to the men's buttocks, and their hidden faces add an element of intrigue to the scene. Barely visible in the bottom right corner of the frame is a briefcase—the one element in this image that unsettles the otherwise hackneyed scene. The photo was used to publicize German choreographer Susanne Linke's work *Le coq est mort* with the Senegalese group Compagnie Jant Bi, then still a very young company. FIND advertised *Le coq est mort* as a highlight of the festival, but this photo seems inconsistent with the work itself. *Le coq est mort* features its all-male cast in suits with briefcases, who admittedly perform bare-chested by the end of the performance, but do not ever appear in the small shorts seen in the photo. The briefcase, which is a central prop in the work, is hardly visible, and the photo seems to rehearse colonialist imagery of an uncivilized Africa (metaphorically through its racialized imagery but also more literally through its rocky, desert backdrop). This image from *Afrique: Aller/Retour* articulates the exoticism, colonialist fantasy, and facelessness with which Africa was often framed over the course of the festival.

Though many choreographers from Africa came to present at *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, it was European choreographers working with African dancers who were featured most prominently in the festival's promotional material. This exchange between Europe and Africa mimicked colonialist exchanges that, as Brenda Dixon Gottschild would argue, unfairly assume "African visual arts, music, and dance are raw materials that are improved upon and elevated when they are appropriated and finessed by European artists" (1996, 41). It may seem odd that this relationship between Europe and

Africa would haunt a Quebec dance festival decades after so many African liberation movements took place, yet it highlights the pervasive psychological impression that colonialism imprints upon its agents, subjects, and witnesses. Frantz Fanon speaks of this effect in his writing on colonialism and mental disorders: "Imperialism . . . sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our lands and from our minds" (181). Echoing the sentiment of Fanon as well as many of the reviewers writing about *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, it is in this vein that I suggest FIND's presentation of Africa can be understood as colonialist—a way of framing Africa, whether consciously or not, through imagery and discourses with roots in European colonialism. In particular, the festival's colonialist lens tends to posit Africa in essentialist terms, to imagine Africa steeped in the past, and to see Africa as though it were in need of tutelage/civilizing. This lens also sees Europe as a height of modernity, a creator of universalisms, and a noble civilizer. *Afrique: Aller/Retour* often depicted the African continent as a backward space—one not as advanced as Europe.

The Eurocentrism of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* is not unique; ballet and modern dance, genres largely associated with European and Euro-American culture, are often privileged in the global arts scene. Debates about ethnocentrism—the process of judging the culture of another based on one's own cultural values and often believing one's own to be superior—have shaped dance scholarship since at least 1970 when Joann Kealiinohomoku wrote her now oft-cited essay "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance." In it, Kealiinohomoku offers a description of ballet, a dance form with roots in the European courts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in a manner that highlights ballet's peculiarity while echoing the way anthropologists have traditionally approached so-called ethnic dance. This shift in the way ballet was framed, like a parallax, allowed Kealiinohomoku to examine ballet from a new perspective and challenge its use as a touchstone for evaluating all dance forms. Despite Kealiinohomoku's intervention, fifty years later, the pervasiveness of ethnocentrism, in particular one that recognizes dances and dance aesthetics of European and Euro-American heritage, continues to shape the way dance is presented in much of Europe and North America. Scholars like Gottschild (1996), for example, have demonstrated that concert dance forms like ballet and modern dance have borrowed heavily from African diaspora dance practices yet these influences have been masked to preserve the integrity of an imagined European superiority.

Gottschild's research also highlights the cultural interconnections between Africanist and Europeanist art—taking for example American minstrel traditions, postmodern dance, and even ballet choreographer George Balanchine's interest in jazz highlights the hybridity of dance traditions. Similarly, the exchanges between Africa and Europe that take place at the *Afrique: Aller/Retour* festival speak to these notions of hybridity, potentially undermining the very binaries the festival sets up: Europe/Africa; Contemporary/Traditional. However, this exchange also takes place asymmetrically; in these exchanges, a European choreographer tends to be positioned as the creator and authority. How can these uneven and problematic power dynamics be accounted for in discussions of hybridity? Authors like Gayatri Spivak (1987) have cautiously promoted the idea of strategic essentialism, a tactic used by the subaltern to intervene in Western historiography. She also warns that essentialism still carries with it the dangers of overlooking some of the nuanced differences and power dynamics within such identities (Danius, Jonsson, and Spivak 1993). While this essay often utilizes the distinction between "Africa" and "Europe," which is admittedly a problematic binary set up by the festival, it is done so strategically in order to analyze these colonialist power dynamics. It should be noted that Africa and Europe are complex continents,

rather than singular monoliths, and to remember that their overlapping histories reveal more nuances than are present in the festival's binaries.

While FIND often advertised *Afrique: Aller/Retour* in ways that looked at Africa ethnocentrically, privileging European over African dance, many of the artists and spectators in the Montreal audiences challenged such framings. During and after the festival, it was the work choreographed by African dance artists that received the most praise from the press, as well as audiences more generally. Despite FIND's privileging of Europe, artists from Africa were beloved by audiences and won first and second place in the Prix du Publique. In addition, both the French and English media in Canada were critical of the festival's colonialist framing. The festival's ethnocentrism did not go unchallenged. What is the significance of this example of ethnocentrism in Quebec—a province whose layers of colonialism have for centuries complicated the identities of First Nations, Inuit, Québécois, Canadian, and Immigrant identities? How does a festival like *Afrique: Aller/Retour* further disrupt or deny historical and contemporary colonialism?[3] And how is the imagery of Europe/Africa in *Afrique: Aller/Retour* both integral to Quebec culture and also undermined by Quebec's own socioeconomic, political, and cultural landscapes?

The complexity of this festival mirrors, in part, the complexity of Quebec's sociopolitical situation, then and now, as it relates to cultural belonging. In particular, Quebec has struggled since its Quiet Revolution to find a way to voice the plight of French Canada within an English-dominated country while negotiating that voice in a way that acknowledges Quebec's increasingly diverse demographics. Quebec has in some instances looked to Africa and the colonization movements taking place there to theorize its own situation. In other instances, Quebec has looked to Europe, France in particular, for cultural alliances, yet this relationship potentially alienates those with a difficult relationship to Europe, especially those who were or continue to be under colonial rule (as is the case of much of Africa). This paper considers how these political dynamics emerge in the context of FIND's 1999 *Afrique: Aller/Retour*. I also examine how, despite the way the festival unabashedly frames Africa from an ethnocentric perspective that privileges Europe, many of the artists, audience members, and critics present at *Afrique: Aller/Retour* demonstrate a resistance to this colonizing framework. In looking at the archival material available from the event, consulting people involved in its production, reassessing its footage, and reading reviews of the event, it appears that while some elements of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* epitomized a colonialist lens, many on the stage and in the Montreal audience rejected this lens in favour of a more complex image of Africa as contemporary and multiple. In the sections that follow, I discuss Quebec's political history focusing particularly on Quebec sovereignty and the province's relationship to Europe. I then outline how *Afrique: Aller/Retour* presented "Africa" through the eyes of European choreographers and discuss how this framing creates a colonialist gaze that aligns with nationalist appeals to European culture in Quebec. Embedded within the festival, however, is a challenge to such perspectives; the varied works by African dancers and choreographers invited to this festival presented a plethora of viewpoints and perspectives that complicate the festival's oversimplified framing. This glance back at FIND's *Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights the tensions surrounding ethnocentrism that continue to inform current debates about cultural identity and belonging in Quebec.[4]

Strategic Nation Building: Looking to Europe

Afrique: Aller/Retour comes just four short years after Quebec's last sovereignty referendum. The narrow margin of the results (49.42% voting to leave Canada, 50.58% voting to stay) relieved

federalists while disappointing separatists. Apparently looking for a scapegoat, Jacques Parizeau, leader of the *Parti Québécois* and premier at the time of the vote, infamously blamed "argent et des votes ethniques" (money and ethnic votes) in his concession speech and resigned the next day. Some have dismissed his comments as unintentional words uttered in a moment of devastation (Woods 2015), but this is not the only instance where Quebec sovereignty has been tied to xenophobia and ethnic nationalism.[5] Parizeau's comments echo similar gaffes made by other separatist leaders[6] and foreshadow the reasonable accommodation debates in Quebec (2007) and the passing of Bill 62 in October 2017.[7] But while ethnocentrism often fuels these debates (in part due to the difficulty of defining "Québécois" as a distinct people deserving of their own country), many sovereigntists and federalists alike challenge this rhetoric and the xenophobia and racism it often potentially inflames (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). It is important to note that while Quebec sovereignty sometimes resembles ethnic nationalism, there are sovereigntists who do not rely on these strategies to promote their cause.

Sovereignty debates are rooted in a history of English Canada's mistreatment of French Canada. Since the battle on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 (where Great Britain seized control of what was then New France) until at least the 1960s (when Quebec's Quiet Revolution began to take shape), French speakers have been marginalized by Canada's English-speaking majority.[8] Outnumbered by English Canada and often holding less land and wealth, French Canada had comparatively little sway for centuries in political and economic matters in the country. During the Quiet Revolution, a period marked by the gradual urbanization, industrialization, and secularization of Quebec, an emerging French middle class voiced their concerns and desire for better political representation. A sovereigntist movement, one inspired by decolonization efforts taking place on the African continent and other places of colonialist devastation, took shape in the 1960s. Although the movement was relatively small at that time, with an approval rating between 8 and 11 percent, by the time of the 1995 referendum, sovereigntist approval was hovering around 50 percent (McRoberts 1997, 46). Seeking to liberate Quebec from Canada and give French Canada a right to self-govern, the sovereigntist movement has relied on models of nationalism that preceded it—models that imagine a nation as a community that shares a history, language, and culture (Anderson 1983). The history, language, and culture that has typically bonded Quebec's sovereigntist movement is that of the colonists who established New France. But while this image of founding French colonists has carried much weight in political debates, it is an image that does not adequately represent the complex demographics of Quebec that include a growing immigrant population, nor does it adequately acknowledge First Nations and Inuit groups who struggle with their own anticolonial battles.

A relationship between France and Quebec began to flourish in the 1950s,[9] in part thanks to the efforts of Georges-Émile Lapalme, leader of the Quebec Liberal party from 1950 to 1958. Lapalme believed Quebec could look to France as a model for its own modernization. He sought to promote the culture of France, especially its "high art," in order to ensure that French (rather than English) would continue to be used as Quebec shifted from a religious and rural to a secular and modern society (Handler 1984, 100–101). Shortly after France's President Charles De Gaulle established the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles in 1959, Lapalme made a similar suggestion, and in 1961, the Jean Lesage Liberal government created Quebec's Ministère des Affaires Culturelles (Handler 1984, 101). With the Quiet Revolution and what is typically described as the gradual modernization of Quebec, France developed into an important cultural ally for the province. France eventually became a symbol of Quebec's sovereigntist movement—a reminder (or perhaps fantasy) of the power French colonists once had in New France and a signal of their current place within Canada, a part of the

British Commonwealth. France's symbolic significance for Quebec nationalism crystalized in 1967, the year of Canada's centennial, when de Gaulle made a passionate speech to a crowd in Montreal where he famously declared "Vive le Québec Libre" (Relations France-Québec 2011). This moment was a turning point in Quebec-France relations, as it offered external validation to the vision of a sovereign Quebec nation.

Discussion of Quebec's "modernization" has multiple layers. In part, it implies a European temporality that situates Europe in the present and those who are "modernizing" in the process of catching up; Quebec could secure its position as a modern agent by emulating the advancements of France. "Modernizing" also refers to Quebec's political economy—there was a significant shift in the latter half of the twentieth century that saw Quebec's French population transition from an agrarian and religious population to an increasingly urban, industrial, and secular one. However, Quebec's project of modernizing also took the shape of nation-building (the "nation" being a by-product of European modernity) and offering a historical and cultural dimension to Quebec's politics and implicitly promoting its distinct governance. The idea of the self-governing nation-state, which has been central to European political philosophy with roots in the Enlightenment, became a globally adopted paradigm for pushing back against European colonization. But as scholars like Paul Gilroy (1993) have argued, "nation" is a problematic category (to which he offers the Black Atlantic as a challenge) that often relies on ethnic absolutism. Such nation-building strategies often use rhetoric that duplicates that of the racist right, especially in arguing for ethnic purity (Gilroy 1993, 7). In this sense, while the creation of cultural institutions and policies in Quebec that mirror those found in France may in part lend itself to supporting Quebec culture in general, this connection to France also potentially slides into those mythologies of Quebec that imagine "Québécois" as an identity tied ethnically and ancestrally to France as well.

While a relationship with France was developing alongside Quebec's modernization, paradoxically, separatist discourses in the 1960s and 1970s also often connected Quebec's nationalist awakening with anticolonialist movements taking place around the world, especially in Africa. Separatist writers often borrowed from the writings of theorists like Frantz Fanon, poets like Aimé Césaire, and leaders of the Black Power movement (Austin 2013). Even the separatist terrorist organization Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) borrowed its name from Algeria's Front de Libération Nationale (Bothwell 2006, 447). Many scholars have argued that this interest in "blackness" was a way to highlight the oppression that French-Canadians experienced as a result of British colonization, but such comparisons fail to account for the experiences of racism and colonialism experienced by First Nations and Inuit groups, as well as Quebec's own black population (Austin 2013; Dorsinville 1974; Makropoulos 2004; Scott 2015). In recent years, sovereigntist strategies increasingly identify a connection between Quebec and France, though there are still instances where Quebecers problematically use "blackness" to articulate their sense of oppression.[10] What makes *Afrique: Aller/Retour* so fascinating is that in this dance festival, these identities collide; while enticing audiences with oversimplified imagery depicting blackness, oppression, and colonized subjects, the festival simultaneously privileges European art and the culture of the colonizer.

It should be noted that ethnocentrism in Quebec was exacerbated by Canada's multicultural policy. "It was no coincidence," writes Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon, "that national multicultural policies were introduced at the same time that Quebec was developing its own discourses of decolonization, derived from francophone theorists such as Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon. For some, these policies still function as implicit barriers to the recognition of both *québécois* demands for independence and aboriginal peoples' land claims and desires for self-government" (1998, 29). In

1971, among heated debates about Quebec's place in Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau claimed that rather than "bicultural," Canada was a "multicultural" society. Though superficially this declaration might seem like a way to acknowledge multiplicity within Canada, as historian Kenneth McRoberts explains, it ultimately became a way for Trudeau to use critiques of minority ethnic groups in Canada to undermine an emerging Quebec nationalism (1997, 120). Trudeau's declaration diminished French Canada's hardships to cultural differences while casting a blind eye on the complicated histories that have advantaged British-Canadians in the country.

Martin Bruner (1997) similarly argues that multiculturalism was initially conceived as a way to appease/subvert the separatist movement in Quebec (47) and that as a result, many sovereigntists initially adopted xenophobic strategies in response to English-Canada's multiculturalism and its assimilative power over Quebec (49). Multiculturalism has been embraced by English-Canadian nationalism as a way to mask its dominant position in the Canadian polity, as well as to claim authority on national matters over French-Canadian nationalism. The association of English Canada with multiculturalism[11] and French Canada with "ethnic exclusion" has helped English-Canadian nationalism (as slippery as it is) to gain legitimacy while continuing to repress Quebec nationalism as inherently flawed. This tension, however, is largely due to Quebec's struggle to define itself in nationalist terms; Canada's "multicultural" stance is so strong in its assimilative powers that it has become difficult for Quebec to build cultural borders. Quebec therefore finds itself continually grappling with white Anglophone hegemonic forces. Confronting its own issues of cultural exclusion, the Quebec government has developed a model for cultural inclusion called "interculturalism" that seeks to accommodate and integrate cultural minorities but privileges the French language in order to help with its linguistic preservation in a predominantly English country. This investment in intercultural approaches to Quebec culture, though often carrying its own baggage, also potentially offers a space to critique ethnocentrism.

FIND's *Afrique: Aller/Retour* offers some insight into these racial dynamics. In the wake of a defeated sovereigntist vote, a revival of ties to Europe, a developing policy of interculturalism, and a growing critique of Québécois identity from within the province, *Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights the tensions between Eurocentric cultural productions in Montreal and a community looking to uproot such practices. Despite the festival's framing, whereby Africa becomes an exotic other steeped in the past and in need of civilization, with so many dancers and choreographers from Africa representing themselves, and with an audience increasingly sensitive to its own variegated community, a more nuanced understanding of the continent emerged alongside a colonialist one.

"L'Afrique des Européens"

> Et puis il y eut l'Afrique des Européens. Autant de le dire tout de suite: j'ai détesté. Parler de récupération culturelle dans ce cas, c'est rester poli. (And then there was the Africa of the Europeans. To be brief, I hated it. To speak of cultural appropriation in this case is to be polite.)[12]
>
> François Dufort, "Déjà un Au Revoir"

So much about the way this festival was presented reveals, both implicitly and explicitly, how Quebec came to see Africa through the eyes of a European colonizer. I've suggested that this perspective takes root in Quebec's evolving ties to France and the province's need to assert its cultural distinctiveness. In this section, I consider this colonialist lens by examining how *Afrique:*

Aller/Retour often depicts Europe and Africa as temporal opposites: Europe a sign of modernity and the contemporary moment, and Africa steeped in the traditions of the past. The festival also potentially essentializes African culture, implicitly and explicitly, in an apparent attempt to define Africa rather than allow Africa to speak for itself (though the many African choreographers at the festival certainly challenged such efforts). Finally, the festival often posited art coming out of Europe as the zenith of culture and something African dancers should strive to replicate. While some in the media exacerbate this colonialist framing, many others, like Dufort in the above quotation, challenge its validity.

A theme that continually emerged in the promotional material, press coverage, and even some of the choreography from Europe, was the juxtaposition of "tradition" and "modernity." Stéphanie Brody and Frédérique Doyon of *La Presse* write: "Aller/retour du balancier entre chorégraphe occidentaux et africains qui s'influence mutuellement, aller-retour aussi entre modernité et tradition" (1999, B5; The festival must balance Western and African choreographers, who mutually inform each other, and also find a balance between modernity and tradition). The parallel structure of this sentence equates the West with modernity and Africa with tradition. Not only does "hybridity" become a theme that allows Europe to continue to be central even when the focus of the festival is Africa, but the cultural exchanges between Europe and Africa are frequently described as the meeting of modernity and tradition. This kind of dichotomy implies that an African present represents a traditional past while Europe becomes a symbol for a modern future. This temporal dichotomy mirrors festival vice president Diane Boucher's vision for the *Afrique: Aller/Retour*. Boucher went to Africa to check out the scene and was an adjudicator for the dance festival *Rencontre chorégraphique de l'Afrique*, but she was not excited by the work she saw, as for her, it reflected "traditional" more than "contemporary" dance. She did, however, find Salia nï Seydou, a company from Burkina Faso who had worked previously with France's Mathilde Monnier. Boucher selected Salia nï Seydou because she felt that they had "deeply personal movements, they had something to say, and what they had to say was profoundly rooted in African traditions [and] an essential African quality" (2011, my translation). Boucher explained to me that Africa was a continent that had strong dance traditions. She believed that traditional art should inform contemporary art but, with the exception of Salia nï Seydou, Boucher classified most of the work that she saw while in Africa as "traditional," not "contemporary."

However, while FIND's organizers may have thought the significance of African dance lay predominantly in its potential to inspire contemporary European choreographers, one of said European choreographers, Mathilde Monnier, predicted that Western eyes were not yet ready to judge the aesthetic values of African dance. Not only was she conscious of the fact that the Western gaze is still full of prejudice when watching African dance, but she was also hesitant to describe her work as interested in hybridity. In relaying her interview with Monnier, Julie Bouchard writes, "*Pour Antigone* n'est pas une danse métisée où danseurs africains et danseurs contemporains se laisseraint influencer l'un par l'autre [. . . c'est] une rencontre entre deux cultures qui, chacune conservent ses propres références s'entrechoquent en un même lieu" (1999, n.p.; *Pour Antigone* is not a hybrid dance where African and Contemporary dancers are left to influence each other [. . . it is] an encounter between two cultures who each maintain their references but collide in one place). While Monnier's classification of her dancers as "African" and "Contemporary" implicitly demonstrates an assumption that European modern dance is universal and more in the present than its "African" counterpart, she is also conscious of the potential dangers of this type of encounter. Fearing that her choreographic vocabulary might assimilate rather than showcase the talents of her dancers (five from Europe, five from Africa), Monnier attempted to bring them together in a way that allowed

them to collaborate while remaining distinct, although the extent to which this collaboration was successful is debatable.

Monnier's *Pour Antigone* (1993) brought together dancers from her France-based company with dancers from Burkina Faso. The set is minimalist, with aluminum panels adorning the outskirts of the stage while the dancers, dressed in simple dark clothing, offer rhythmic exchanges as they use the myth of Antigone to explore themes of injustice, the abuse of power, and freedom (Sanou 2008, 80). "From the Judeo-Christian perspective," the program reads,

> Africa is frequently seen as another world, as an inhuman space of famine and poverty known only for its safaris and bare-chested dancing women. While clichés may be rooted in reality, they prevent us from seeing further, seeing the complex matrix of folklore and ritual, where dance is a full-fledged art. Mathilde Monnier delves deep into this zone, not with a mixture of African and contemporary techniques, but through human encounters that respect the deep-rooted identity of the other. (Monnier 1999, 2)

However, Monnier's attempt to showcase the talents of both the African and European dancers she worked with seems to have been muddied in the choreographic process. Instead of reading a critique of hybridity, critics saw Monnier's work as segregating these two cultures. Jo Leslie writes: "Monnier, who received the most advance publicity and opened the festival, did little more than display the African dancers in juxtaposition to her frosty French counterparts leaving many of us dazed and confused, if not outright angry. No real meeting took place and I've never seen Africans look so shut down (meeting Western standards?)" (1999, n.p.)

Monnier's attempt to create a "cultural collision" was riddled with problematic assumptions about her own relationship to African dancers. Her interest in Africa, as Julie Bouchard explains, was in "returning to a pure, primitive dance" (1999, n.p., my translation), which seems to lack the integrity she in other instances claimed it deserves. In an interview with Manon Richard of *La Presse*, Monnier explains: "J'étais tellement perdue à l'époque, je venais de terminer une pièce qui avait bien marché, mais j'avais l'impression d'être en train d'écrire un style de danse et je cherchais à savoir où je pourrais trouver la fracture. Plusieurs de formes de danse avaient déjà été exploités par les chorégraphes, la danse indienne, le buto, mais l'Afrique avait été peu explorée" (1999, D3; I was terribly lost at the time [of choreographing *Pour Antigone*]. I had just finished choreographing a piece that went well, but I had the impression that I was writing a style of dance and I wanted to know where I could find the break. Many forms of dance had already been exploited by choreographers, Indian dance, Butoh, but Africa had been little explored). There is a haunting parallel here between Monnier's artistic agenda and European colonialism, for Europe too decided to "explore" Africa. In this way, *Pour Antigone*'s artistic approach echoes European colonialist projects.

While Monnier's exploits replicate colonialist ideologies, in these choreographed collaborations, there was a greater possibility for the African dancers involved in the project to use this interaction to their advantage and gain recognition for their work. In particular, two of Monnier's dancers, Salia Sanou and Seydou Boro,[13] began their own dance company—and perhaps thanks in part to their exposure working with Mathilde Monnier, the company has gained significant international recognition. Due to their success abroad, Sanon and Boro began a training centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso dedicated to nurturing the work of African dance artists. Finally, in 2008, Salia Sanou published the book *Afrique Danse Contemporaine* funded by Centre National de la Danse in France,

which pays tribute to contemporary dancers and companies in Africa. In it he writes: "Je ne crie pas haut et fort que Mathilde Monnier a changé ma vie et fait de moi un artiste reconnu. Elle n'est d'ailleurs guère sensible aux honneurs. Cependant, j'aime répéter qu'elle ne m'a pas non plus trouvé allongé sous un baobab en Afrique. . . . Je dois reconnaître que l'avoir rencontrée m'a nourri" (82; I do not scream loud and clear that Mathilde Monnier changed my life and made me a recognized artist. She is not responsive to those types of honours anyway. However, I must repeat she did not find me lying under a baobab tree in African either . . . I must recognize that meeting her nourished me).

Similarly, Compagnie Jant Bi profited from their collaboration with Susanne Linke. Renowned African dancer, choreographer, and teacher, Germaine Acogny invited Susanne Linke—Tanztheater choreographer second perhaps only to Pina Bausch—to conduct a workshop with some promising dancers at l'École des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal. The success of the workshop led Acogny to found Compagnie Jant Bi in 1998. Acogny commissioned Linke to create their first major work, *Le coq est mort*, which had its North American debut at FIND. The company has since gone on to work with other international collaborators, including Kota Yamazaki (Japan) and Urban Bush Women (United States). However, while the company's interaction with Linke set them up for successful international notoriety, the content of *Le coq est mort* was controversial.

Le coq est mort proposed to be a critique of colonialism; the dancers enter the sand-covered stage dressed in suits, carrying briefcases, and drinking champagne. But as the piece continues, the choreography gradually becomes more dishevelled and chaotic—in the final scene, the dancers gallop topless, grunt, and beat their chest. Linke may have overstepped her boundaries in attempting to create a work that, as François Dufort explains, "s'interroge sur la place de l'homme noir dans la société africaines" (1999a, 30; interrogates the place of the black man in African society). The creative process involved extensive collaboration between Linke, co-choreographer Avi Kaiser, and the company dancers, with Linke ultimately responsible for the structure of the work, while the dancers created the movement vocabulary through a series of improvisational activities designed by the choreographers.[14] In other words, Linke was ultimately responsible for the construction of the work's narrative such that the "place of the black man in African society," though based on her experiences with the dancers, was ultimately based on her own vision of Africa. Linke makes claims about the nature of her African dancers; her essentialist words are fraught with condescension. *La Presse* quotes her as saying that Senegal has "l'énergie, l'*innocence*, et une précision dans la rhythme absolument merveilleuse" (Doyon 1999b, n.p.; energy, *innocence*, and an absolutely marvellous precision in rhythm—my emphasis). And in the film *African Dance: Sand Drum and Shostakovich* (which was filmed at FIND that year), Linke explains that: "people in Africa . . . a certain kind of innocence that they have—innocent but not naïve, not at all, very intelligent, naturally intelligent and also clever, enormous sense of humor and they have an enormous sense for rhythm . . . that's what they bring us through the dancing." It is telling that Linke feels the need to continually qualify her use of the term "innocent," perhaps realizing that the word is itself loaded and problematic. She essentializes Africans in her observations and pejoratively compliments her dancers' intelligence. Her comments are framed in such a manner that her conclusion revolves around what the Africans might do for "us." Although she doesn't entirely express who "us" might be, implicitly, she seems to insinuate that Westerners may still profit from cultural encounters with Africa. Ironically, while Linke's choreography attempts to critique colonialism, her artistic methods reconstruct a colonialist perspective.

Le coq est mort is a complex work that attempts to tackle many profound subjects but often lacks sensitivity to the racist interpretations it creates. Donald Hutera of *Dance Magazine* explains: "[Linke's] scenario was clear: breaking out of rigid, conformist diplomacy, eight business-suited men indulge their war-mongering impulses before reverting back to nature. The piece mourned a guileless innocence Linke fears modern society has lost" (2000, 86). The themes of guilelessness and a return to nature might not be as offensive had they not been performed by African bodies, reviving stereotypes of a primitive Africa. Renée Richard, writing for *Le Point D'Outremont,* explains that as the piece progresses "la danse se 'ritualise'; elle devient sauvage, vivante, et brute" (1999, n.p.; the performance 'ritualizes' itself: it becomes savage, lively, and rough). This production ends with the image of African dancers performing "the savage," replicating colonialist tropes used to justify Europe's power. The choreography thus becomes a tool for subliminal colonial discourse that positions Africa in stark contrast to the presumed intellectual and cultural superiority of Europe.

As Avi Kaiser, Linke's co-choreographer, explains, the title "*Le coq est mort*" carries multiple symbolic resonances for the piece. It symbolized a literal desire to kill the village rooster who would wake them up at 5:30 every morning; it symbolized the "coq gaulois"—a symbol of France—and its death announced "la fin de l'impérialisme colonial au Sénégal" (the end of colonial imperialism in Senegal); it symbolized masculinity; and "enfin, il témoigne d'une réalité tout à fait concrète de la vie africaine: l'entourage animalistique, le quotidien vécu parmi chiens, poules, et chèvres" (and finally, it testifies to a concrete reality of African life: animalistic surroundings, the quotidian lived among dogs, chickens, and goats) (Doyon 1999b, n.p.). However, these reflections on life in Africa reinforce stereotypical notions of the continent—that it is poor and agrarian, wild and savage—rather than bringing nuance to these old understandings. While French colonial rule may have ended in Senegal, French imperialism continues to have an impact of Senegalese life. Scholars like Anne McClintock (1992) and Ella Shohat (1992) argue that the problem with the term "postcolonialism" is that it fails to recognize the continuity of first world hegemony after a colony's formal independence. In this sense, suggesting that France is "dead" in Senegal ignores its continued influence over the country.[15]

Furthermore, Kaiser and Linke tend to over-romanticize what they view as the "animalistic" side of Africa. At the end of the performance at FIND, the eight black male dancers step into the light, making fleeting impressions with their feet on the sand covered stage. Wearing nothing but black slacks, the bare-chested dancers beat their hands against their torsos and scream while the sound of gunfire pierces the air. Jo Leslie writes: "*Le Coq est mort* was disturbing for all the wrong reasons. . . . I nearly had a seizure at the profundity of her naïveté: black men, bare chested, hopping about as gorillas?" (1999, n.p.). The controversy was powerful enough that when the company performed the work again at Jacob's Pillow the following year, the "gorilla" movement was taken out (Compagnie Jant Bi 2000).

While "Africa" was the official theme of the festival, this was often accompanied by a secondary theme: hybridity. As Montreal dance critic Jo Leslie writes, sardonically: "Perhaps Africa was not intellectually interesting enough for FIND and so the second theme of hybrid was created as a convenient framing for the favored choreographers" (1999, n.p.). In fact, FIND sponsored a conference in conjunction with the festival and its theme was hybridity rather than African dance (Pontbriand 2001). This emphasis on cultural mixing became an interest during the African themed festival but not during any of the European themed festivals FIND previously held, perhaps suggesting that for the organizers, African dance is not strong enough to constitute a festival of its own. While the use of hybridity as a theme is suspect, in practice it becomes a kind of aporia, unwittingly challenging the binary that privileges Europe over Africa in the festival's rhetoric.

Cultural theorist Tavia Nyong'o (2009) suggests that hybridity and the threat of miscegenation has the potential to undermine racial narratives and "unsettles collective and corporeal memory" (12–13). That Montreal audiences were so often critical of these contentious cultural collaborations seems to support this idea and accompanying this theme of hybridity came questions about colonialism, racism, and imperialism as focal points of the festival and in these collaborative encounters.

Despite Linke's overt depictions of Africa as primitive, and Linke and Monnier's essentialist claims, Boucher refutes the argument that their choreography is colonialist, saying that it's just beautiful work (2011). This privileging of European dance artists speaks to a cultural practice in Quebec that connects Quebec cultural production with the work being done in France and Europe more generally, often ignoring critiques coming from outside of Europe. However, as the above commentaries from the press highlight, audiences were resistant to these Eurocentric depictions and took a greater interest in the multiplicity that characterized "Africa" as depicted by African dance artists.

"La Contemporanéité Africaine est Multiple"

> La contemporanéité africaine est multiple et elle n'a pas à se définir simplement comme fusion avec le monde occidental.
> (African contemporaneity is multiple and does not have to be defined simply as a fusion with the West.)
> Zab Maboungou, quoted in Julie Bouchard "Une Danse reliée aux pulsations memes de la terre"

While the previous, politically controversial versions of Africa dominated the main stages of FIND, contemporary African dance filled Montreal's smaller venues with a different vision. Crucially, rather than presenting an essentialist idea of Africa, the varied works coming from African choreographers highlighted how insufficient the word "Africa" is to capture the plurality of cultures represented there. The dancers and choreographers engaged with contemporary questions and reflected on subjective themes that undermined the condescending tone of the festival—a tone that sometimes positioned Africa as uncivilized, backwards, stuck in the past. Instead, their work explored themes not overtly related to a relationship to Europe (focusing instead on themes like African feminisms), developed symbolisms specific to African cultures, and challenged essentialist projects by questioning the ability ever to know the "other."

It seems clear from the schedule of events at FIND that the European choreographers were expected to bring in the largest crowd—they received ideal performance times, large theatres in which to perform, and the ticket prices for their shows were substantial.[16] On the other hand, most of the contemporary African dance companies were presented in small black box theatres. The performance by Montreal-based dancer Zab Maboungou's was scheduled to begin at 11 p.m. on a weekday, making it inconvenient for many spectators. Even the most popular contemporary African dance company of the festival, Salia nï Seydou, was presented in a medium-sized theatre. Furthermore, tickets to see the two Ivory Coast companies, TchéTché and Compagnie Sylvain Zabli, were free—they were quite literally being given away (Lachance 1999, 55). On the one hand, this was a fine way to bring in audiences to see the performance, but on the other, it implies that the

festival did not believe that the works by African choreographers would be strong enough to draw an audience.

And yet in spite of these issues, the African contemporary dance companies received the highest praise from festival-goers and critics alike. The Prix-du-publique went to Salia nï Seydou, and second place went to South Africa's Vincent Mansoe, and critics consistently praised the work of Salia nï Seydou, Mansoe, and TchéTché (Brody 1999; Doyon 1999a; Dufort 1999b; Howe-Beck 1999b; Leslie 1999; Kisselgoff 1999).

The presence of these companies, and the multiple voices speaking about African dance at the festival, whether in interviews with the media or presentations at the three-day conference, offered a significantly more complex vision of Africa. Local contemporary African choreographer Zab Maboungou explained to *Le Devoir*: " L'Afrique a droit à sa contemporanéité comme n'importe quel autre continent qui est dans le monde d'aujourd'hui et en subit tous les mouvements, les contrecoups, les obsessions, les formes de dominations. . . . La contemporanéité africaine est multiple et elle n'a pas à se définir simplement comme fusion avec le monde occidental" (Bouchard 1999; Africa has a right to its own contemporaneity just like any other continent that is in the world today and sustains with it all the movements, aftershocks, obsessions and forms of domination. . . . African contemporaneity is multiple and does not have to be defined simply as a fusion with the West). For Maboungou, the very notion of "contemporary" is often thought to be associated with "the West," and implicitly, Africa is seen as being "the past." However, while tradition certainly plays an important part in African society, as it does in "the West," to choreograph contemporary African dance should not necessarily mean that it must engage with Western dance ideals. And while many of the African dancers and choreographers present at the festival may have been informed by artists in Europe, Europe is not necessarily at the centre of African contemporary dance. Maboungou's Pan-African description of dance on the continent resonates with Spivak's description of strategic essentialism—describing "Africa" in general helps undermine Eurocentric assumptions that denigrate dancers coming from Africa. However, in other instances, Maboungou is acutely aware of the importance of seeing the variety and multiplicity that can hardly be contained within it; l'afrique est multiple, as she explains.

Unlike many of the other contemporary African dance performances at the festival, Maboungou's *Incantation* (1995) avoids the use of European modern dance conventions, which, she explains, is in part for political reasons. A call from the stage begins *Incantation* and Maboungou, dressed in tan, energetically circles her hips and ribs while marching a complementary rhythm in her feet. Maboungou describes this piece as an exploration of agency, an "energy dance" where she "fully assumes the role of a perpetrator of a dance where time never ends" (Nyata-Nyata 2018, n.p.). *Incantation*, like much of Maboungou's work, is characterized by silky, sinuous, and articulate movements, as she draws the audience into her highly introspective and captivating presence. Maboungou is not necessarily suggesting that her work is devoid of European influence (and she is of French and Congolese descent). However, as I've discussed elsewhere, her project has been to create a contemporary dance that uses an "African" vocabulary so that Africa may be seen as contemporary on its own terms (Templeton 2017, 47).

Although Salia nï Seydou uses the theme of "the other" as a starting point for *Fignito ou l'Œil troué* (1997), much in the way Mathilde Monnier does in *Pour Antigone*, the picture they paint of this subjective relationship is quite different than Monnier's. The dancers perform solos in silence, execute a blindfolded duet that climaxes in a moment of contact, and offer a denouement depicting

one dancer slowly spilling sand over the other's head. "The stranger has large eyes to see nothing," the subheading in the program reads (Tangente 2012). The word fignito means blindness in Bambara, and the work reflects on issues of death, powerlessness, the passage of time—"our vulnerability, our otherness, our solitude"—but also encounters, friendship, and love (Tangente 2012). In the piece, the dancers continually move without facing or even acknowledging the other, and their inability to see creates a powerful dramatic effect that causes near misses and subtle ironies amidst the generally sombre tone of the work (Doyon 1999a). Curiously, while Monnier's work emphasized the possibility of bringing together two different cultures and believing that a single piece could speak to/for both of them, Salia nï Seydou presents a more complex image, suggesting that such endeavours may be worthwhile, but acknowledging the struggle and potential inability for such encounters to ever be successful.

Another important image found in the work of both the "European" and the "African" choreographers is sand, as seen in the work of Susane Linke and Salia nï Seydou. In the documentary *African Dance: Sand Drum and Shostakovich*, Linke explains that she was inspired to use sand to cover the stage in *Le coq est mort* because when they conducted the workshop in Sénégal, they did not have a studio to work in and so they worked outside in the sand. Her interest in sand seems rooted in its strangeness to her and, along these lines, the use of sand on the stage in *Le coq est mort* seemed to create more of a spectacle of the performance and sensationalize the experience of dancing in Africa. On the other hand, Salia nï Seydou incorporate sand in their piece in a very different way. Near the end of the work, Boro pours a gourd of sand over Sanou's head. In the same documentary, Boro explains the significance of the sand: "we come from the ground, and we will return to the ground." Salia nï Seydou incorporate sand in their work as a profound metaphor of the passage of time, while in Linke's work sand is quite literally a superficial "surface" that defines the dance.

Finally, the choreography of the all-female group TchéTché speaks to feminine experiences coming from Africa. TchéTché's founder and choreographer Béatrice Kombé Gnapa[17] grew up with dance: her father was a dancer. She studied with several companies on the Ivory Coast, as well as internationally with Alphonse Tiérou and Zab Maboungou, and with Viola Farber. Kombé presented *Dimi*, which became her most famous piece, at FIND. "A hymn to feminine solidarity and a beacon of hope," reads the program, "*Dimi* is a celebration of reconciliation, enacted by dancers who make their bodies speak" (Tangente 2012). *Dimi*, which means "shock" or "pain" in Malinke, looked to portray a message of strength and hope to women. In moments of intimacy, the women would grasp shoulders in support; at other times, they displayed fierce power through agile and acrobatic movements. Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times* writes: "Ms. Kombé's opening solo, in silence, distills the astounding physical daring that the other dancers will pick up as they enter. She jumps stright [sic] up and lands in a split, cartwheels, erupts into barrel jumps or drops flat on her back" (1999, B5) TchéTché, which means eagle, testifies to women's ability to lead, create, and be heard on their own. Salia Sanou writes of Kombé: "Sa danse, très physique, tonique, était une forme de lutte pour libérer les jeunes filles de la pression familiale et patriarcale sur leurs choix de vie" (2008, 70; Their dancing, very physical and invigorating, was a form of struggle that allowed young women to find freedom from familial and patriarchal pressures on their choice of life). Though little has been written about this piece, in part due to the unfortunate passing of Kombé in 2007, her work has been heralded as an important intervention in contemporary African dance, highlighting women in Africa not as passive traditionalists but as vibrant agents participating in a turbulent political landscape. For all the problematic imagery and framing found in much of the *Afrique:*

Aller/Retour festival, that voices such as Kombé's emerge to undermine patriarchal, colonialist understandings of Africa offers some solace.

At the close of the festival, Chantal Pontbriand expressed great excitement about the energy of African dance and felt that it could potentially change contemporary dance in the new millennium. Further, she states, "Africa is very open to the world and asks to be included and to have exchanges" (Howe-Beck 1999c, B5). Her statement reveals on the one hand that African dancers made an impression on the city; on the other hand, though, her words reductively imply that Africa has not been a part of global culture until now. The sincerity of her statement is also debatable. Linde Howe-Beck of the *Gazette* explains that traditionally, FIND has re-invited the public's favourite performers to return to the festival the next year (1999c, B5). However, despite Salia nï Seydou winning the Prix du Publique, they returned the following year not on their own, but as part of Mathilde Monnier's company. Moreover, many critics raved about Vincent Mansoe's production, and François Dufort thought he would be invited to return the following year (1999b, 30), but Mansoe did not return either. In fact, FIND decided to abandon the idea of featuring a country (or an entire continent in 1999) and instead had as its 2001 theme "Le Grand Labo"—the big laboratory. The artists were all from Canada or Europe. Due to financial difficulties, 2003 was the final year of FIND.

"Back to Africa"

In examining *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, we see that FIND "looked back" to Africa, believing they would find traditions of the past and some primal image of dance. But what they found in looking back at Africa was that Africa looked back at them. Rather than a one-way perspective, many of the choreographers and dancers coming from Africa challenged the Eurocentric vision that plagued the festival before it.

While *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse* was a fundamentally important project for modern dance, it also carried with it a flaw that often haunts cultural production in Quebec: a vision of European culture as the highest model of art. In the case of *Afrique: Aller/Retour*, this resulted in a festival that ostensibly focused on Africa but ultimately privileged the work of European choreographers and often led to colonialist imaginings of Africa in essentialized terms as primitive, uncivilized, and back in time. This Eurocentrism mirrors a privileging of Europe that often accompanies nationalist rhetoric in Quebec—a strategy that on the one hand has been important for helping define Quebec as a nation that should potentially be separate from Canada, but has also alienated many Quebecers who do not identify with a European ancestry.

Looking back on this festival twenty years later, we might think of *Afrique: Aller/Retour* as a precursor for some of the current debates that still swirl around Montreal cultural productions, for example the protests and debates that emerged during Montreal's 2018 Jazz festival over Robert Lepage's *SLAV* (a work that appropriated slave songs and often featured white cast members depicting black slaves), or the white student strikers in 2012 who donned blackface to make a misguided point about oppression, or the ongoing struggle in Quebec to reconcile the principles of interculturalism and multiculturalism with policies like Bill 62 banning face coverings. Crucially however, just as many sovereigntists object to ethnocentric nationalism in definitions of Québécois culture, so too do Montreal audiences object to these insensitive displays of race, much as they did to FIND's colonialist framing of Africa. Audiences were receptive to Salia nï Seydou's anti-

essentialist choreographic perspectives that proposed the inability to understand and know the other, while welcoming more complex depictions of Africa as contemporary (Zab Maboungou) and contemplating African feminism (TchéTché). Reflecting upon *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse*'s *Afrique: Aller/Retour* highlights how competing forces—ethnic nationalism promoting Eurocentrism and a critique offered by non-European voices—struggle to define Québécois culture. While many English headlines that contemplate cultural belonging in Quebec today often highlight xenophobia in Quebec in simplistic ways, depicting the province as uniformly racist, Montreal's receptiveness to African critiques of Eurocentrism suggests that while there is certainly xenophobia within Quebec, there is also resistance.

Notes

1. While the festival's founders often use the term "contemporary dance" here, I am using the term "modern dance" to emphasize the festival's connection to the modern dance tradition with roots in the European and Euro-American modernism (like Mary Wigman and Martha Graham). It should also be noted that both "modern" and "contemporary" are problematically used in this festival (and sometimes more generally in dance criticism) in opposition to the category "traditional." This binary has been used to unfairly pigeonhole African art in derogatory ways as less artistic and less relevant to the present moment.

2. "Aller/Retour" is a French term that literally means "go/return" but is an expression that would translate to English as a return ticket or roundtrip.

3. Julie Burelle (2019), for example, discusses the problematic ways "québécois de souche"—those assumed to have descended directly from French colonists—are often described as "colonized" when such phrasing distracts from Quebec's own history and its continued colonization of First Nations and Inuit lands.

4. Current debates about cultural belonging are most notoriously tied to the discussions surrounding reasonable accommodation that have shaped Quebec politics over the last decade. Debates about what accommodations should and should not be made for ethnic and religious minorities in the province came to a head in 2007 when exaggerated media reports prompted the Charest government to commission the Bouchard-Taylor report, again in 2013 when Premier Pauline Marois proposed the Charter of Quebec Values, and yet again when in 2016 Bill 62 was passed banning face coverings such as the burka when using public services.

5. Even McRoberts, who attempts to validate the French Canadian position, admits that ethnic nationalism occasionally informs the nationalist movement in Quebec (254–55).

6. For example, during the 1995 sovereignty campaign, Lucien Bouchard, leader of the Bloc Québécois party, made problematic racist and misogynistic comments about the need for French Canadian women to have more babies: "Do you think it makes sense that we have so few children in Quebec? We are one of the white races that has the least children [and] that does not make sense" (quoted in Bruner 1997, 51). Similarly, Yves Michaud (a prominent public figure and supporter of the Parti Québécois) made comments in 2000 about allophones being intolerant of the French majority (Maclure xii). Or consider in 2007 when ADQ and formal Quebec opposition leader André Boisclair commented to students in Trois-Rivieres about the surprising amount of students with "yeux bridés" (loosely translated as "slanted eyes") that he came across while studying in Boston (Robitaille 2007, n.p.).

7. For more on reasonable accomodation see Bouchard and Taylor's "Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation" (2008) and Steuter-Martin's "Bill 62" (2018).

8. Kenneth McRoberts's *Misconceiving Canada* offers a powerful historical account of Quebec from a sovereigntist perspective, acknowledging the many ways English-speaking Canada has marginalized or sought to assimilate French-speaking Canada. Some scholars, like Gérard Bouchard, argue that this marginalization continues today (Bouchard and Taylor 2008).

9. After the British took control of what was then New France in 1760, ties between French colonists and France were all but severed. While exchanges between the two regions continued, the relationship weakened as France became more secularized while the Catholic Church continued to have a powerful sway over French Canada well into the twentieth century (Relations France-Québec 2011).

10. There are still occasional instances of Quebecers drawing a link between their own experiences of oppression to those of black men and women, like, for example, the egregious use of blackface during the student protests of 2012. For more, see Anthony Morgan's powerful editorial "La grève et les minorités" (2012).

11. Furthermore, as Himani Bannerji argues in "Geography Lessons: On Being an Insider/Outsider to the Canadian Nation," multiculturalism has become a powerful symbol of English Canadian nationalism (2004, 291), and an effective way to promote tourism through things like festivals (295), but it "skims the surface" when it comes to addressing issues the white English majority finds threatening (296).

12. All translations are my own.

13. Sanou was training to be a police inspector and Boro was an actor (Sanou 2008, 91–93).

14. Linke and Kaiser discuss their choreographic process in the film *African Dance: Sand, Drum and Shostakovich* (2002), which documents many of the choreographers who performed in FIND's 1999 festival.

15. The extent to which France is "dead" in Senegal is further complicated by the fact that these artists collaborate in the colonizer's language, French.

16. Unfortunately, due to a strike at Places-des-Arts, the major centre for dance performances, the FIND organizers had to scramble just weeks before the festival to find new locations for all their performances, which led to decreased audience capacity and severe cuts to ticket sales.

17. Tragically, Kombé passed away in 2007 of kidney failure. She was thirty-five years old.

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ARTICLES

A Choreopolitics of Topography: Feeling for Lower Ground in Karen Jamieson's *The River*

Alana Gerecke

> Western dance relates to its ground only through the ground's leveling,
> through its demise, its forgetting.
> ~ André Lepecki, "Stumble Dance"

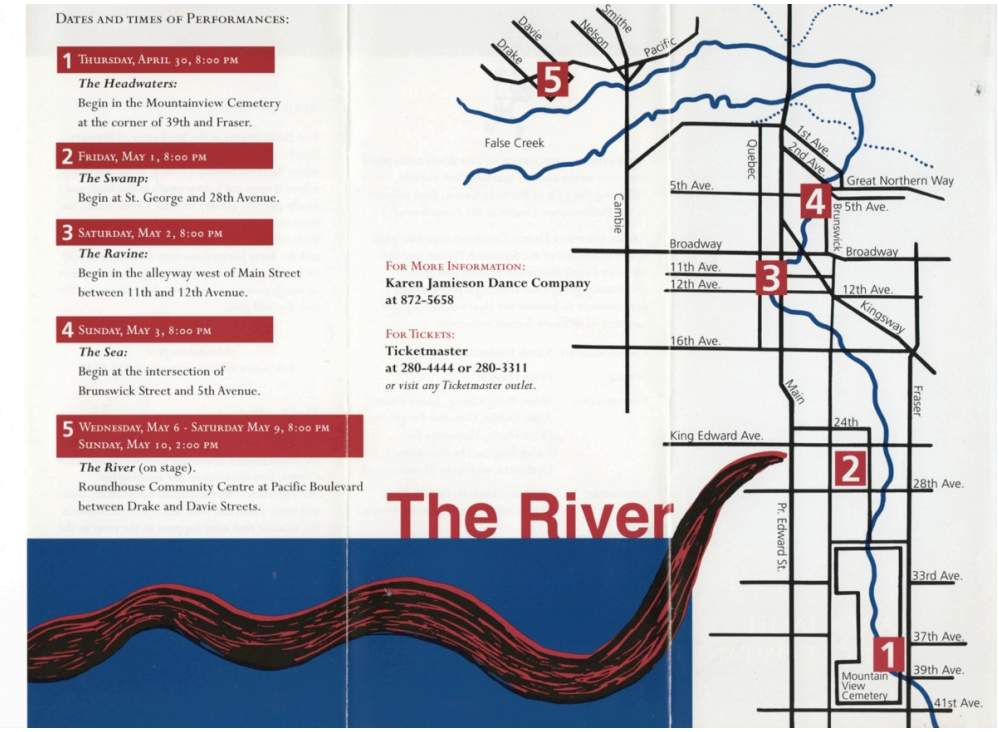
Dusk settles on Vancouver's only cemetery, perched on top of a sloping and dipping landscape that tilts north through the city's first suburb, Mount Pleasant, to meet the ocean. The flow of the visual field toward the sea signals a crucial topographical function: this is the headwater of one of Vancouver's historic waterways, Brewery Creek. On this cool April evening, the sky is beginning to darken; reds and oranges seep from behind the sharpening silhouette of the North Shore mountains. A crowd has gathered. Contained by a set of blue-green cloth banners held by volunteers, the tangled group waits, on the lookout for what to watch. And then the scene comes into focus: seven bodies stand pressed against the cobbled cement wall that borders the cemetery. They are dressed in the tattered remnants of what might once have been a crinoline or a fine suit, each a shade of grey that fades into and juts out of the cement. Their faces, their bare hands, are exposed to the cold and rough hardness of the stone and the concrete, to the cool and cooling spring air. They seem to stand there for an eternity, their movement a certain sort of stillness. And yet, slowly and subtly they melt down toward the loping, grassy ground, a ground filled with so much buried history. Where just now they were standing, they begin to soften, slip, linger, and descend. Their succumbing to gravity takes many minutes. It takes ten minutes. It takes twenty. It takes half an hour. It began before I arrived. It is a revival of yesterday's melt and another before it, and so on.

This is a speculative sketch of the opening scene of settler choreographer Karen Jamieson's *The River* (1998), a site-specific dance choreographed and performed before the term "site dance" and its permutations, "site-based" and "site-specific," were in circulation.[1] The scene that opens this article is my telling of Jamieson's remembering of the piece nearly fifteen years after its production. When we met at her home in Mount Pleasant, Jamieson's recollection of the specifics of the piece was vague. Together, she and I returned to the opening site of *The River* to feel for remnants of the piece, a piece that was mostly undocumented for reasons I'll return to unpack. It was only once we arrived at the cement wall and Jamieson leaned in (seeming to listen to the stone) that the movement vocabulary of the piece's opening scene started to re-emerge: that slow, soft sinking into the ground; that surrender to the downward pull toward the land.

Alana Gerecke is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow (Department of Theatre, York University) and a settler dance artist. Her academic and artistic research practices—including a recent co-edited issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* and a book project, *Moving Publics* (under contract with McGill-Queen's University Press)—explore the social and spatial lives of subtle and virtuosic choreographies in public spaces.


Karen Jamieson at Mountain View Cemetery, 2012. Photo by author.

In this article, I use *The River* as a case study to think through some of the dynamics of privilege and land-body reciprocity at work in site-based dance. To situate my study, a bit about the production: *The River* involved over one hundred collaborators—a combination of amateur and professional artists, including dancers from the Spákwús Slulum performance group of the Squamish First Nation. The piece was designed around Jamieson's choreographic impulse to mark the flow of historic Brewery Creek, which has been buried beneath residential and commercial developments for decades. Alongside the Spákwús Slulum dancers and the amateur, community-based volunteer usher-dancers who peopled the scene, the cast included—and centred on the performances of—seven KJD (Karen Jamieson Dance) company members: Shinn-Rong Chung, Laura Crema, Allan Dobbs, Caroline Farquhar, Peter Hurst, Hiromoto Ida, and Rulan Tangen. Seasoned community event organizer Paula Jardine, a co-founder of Vancouver's former Public Dreams Society, managed the coordination of this large and composite cast.[2] Performed in four evening-length acts that spanned consecutive nights—April 30 to May 3, 1998—*The River* followed the diagonal flow of the culverted creek through a series of neighbourhoods crosshatched with gridded streets. The audience was invited to gather at a set location each evening at 8 p.m. Each night, the starting point picked up where the previous section of the processional performance had left off (indicated with a red numeral on the map below), moving progressively downstream toward False Creek. This northward migration, sanctioned by the City of Vancouver's special event permitting process, culminated with a fifth and final act that was performed three times indoors on the Roundhouse Performance Centre stage. But, in a reversal of the typical placement of concert dance on stage, the substance of *The River* was located outdoors: the indoor portion was reworked from the material developed in response to the outdoor sites. I will focus on the outdoor portions of the piece.



The River show program, Vancouver, 1998. Courtesy of KJD.

The movement trajectories and vocabularies of each outdoor act of *The River* corresponded to a distinctive feature or flow phase of the creek. Act 1, "The Headwaters," navigated the loping grasses of Mountain View Cemetery with a leaning, sinking quality. Snapshot of one moment: three bodies are interlocked in a descent. One dancer tips forward (body and focus taught) into the low-set shoulder of another (bent-kneed and braced to support), while a third dancer hangs onto (hangs off of?) the belt strap of the leaning dancer. Taken together, they show us the press of gravity. Act 2, "The Swamp," moved through what was called, in settler Vancouver's early days, the "Tea Swamp"—now a residential neighbourhood and the grounds of a secondary school. There is a reckless frivolity to this act, which features a richly imagined tea party scene (think Alice in Wonderland) with the KJD dancers leaping and strutting—loose and revelling—around a table adorned with oversized tea party food props (a huge teapot, a serving platter, a tiered sandwich tray). Act 3, "The Ravine," corresponded with the fastest-moving section of the historic creek which cut as deep down as forty feet along this stretch, now a bustling commercial section of Main Street. After descending from street level to meet the audience in a lowered alley, the dancers dash ahead of the front-most audience members before breaking into a full-tilt run that transects the alley, back and forth, back and forth. Punctuating each crossing is the loud, jangling clatter of impact as the dancers' bodies collide against the metal garage doors that line the alley (the backsides of storefronts). Finally, act 4, "The Sea," pooled into the historic drainage of the creek, a stretch of mudflats filled mid-century to support development—development that renewed in vigour in the time that has elapsed since the performance of *The River*, particularly in the run-up to the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics. Carrying props audiences would have recognized from previous evenings in the four-night procession—animal masks mounted on wooden poles (frog, wolf, bear, elk), wire mesh fish sculptures, or a swath of the same blue fabric that framed the processing audience—the dancers weave their way toward the sea.

Though distinct in movement quality, the four acts were unified by some common elements: the ceremonial welcome and closing protocol performed by members of Spákwús Slulum; the accompaniment of live musicians (a range of percussionists and one alto saxophonist); the fringe of volunteer amateur dancers and ushers who helped guide the audience along the route; the presence and conversation (sometimes casual, sometimes scripted) of two local historians who were tasked with situating the performance in its geographical site; and the mobile, mass audience that followed a sustained physical emphasis on the gravitational pull downhill. In the sparse and spotty existing footage of the event, the energetic pull of this last group is notable: the production has the feel of a community parade. Focus is sometimes scattershot; children wander up to performers; audience members show the rhythm of the percussion in small, subtle, and pulsing choreographies as they walk.

The River is significant in the history of Vancouver dance for a few reasons. By the most obvious rubric, it drew together a lot of bodies. I have described the size of the cast (dozens strong); this group grew by hundreds on performance nights. *The River* drew a large audience, between 200 and 350 people for each of the "creek walks" by the company's records, for a total of over 1500 audience members for the outdoor procession (Karen Jamieson Dance 2008)—a substantial crowd for a site-based contemporary dance piece. And its scope was ambitious: in tracing historic Brewery Creek, *The River* traversed nearly forty city blocks. But even more significant than the scale of the piece was its key formal intervention: a departure from the stage. Now, I need to pause here to qualify this claim. I am well aware that it is by no means new for dance to be situated off stage. Indeed, writing and practising in the context of settler Vancouver—the unceded traditional territory of Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations—it is absurd to imagine that basing dance outdoors and off-stage is innovative. By contrast, centuries-old and ever-developing contemporary Indigenous traditions of land-based dance are part of the cultural and aesthetic landscape of the Pacific Northwest coast—not to mention the younger histories of street dance, jazz, hip hop, and other forms in the city. Yet, Jamieson's choice to move her otherwise stage-based training and practice into an outdoor, everyday space was a break from her trajectory as a professional contemporary dance-maker. This production marked a turning point for Jamieson, a key figure in Canadian dance who would go on to make crucial forays into community-based and site-based dance in the city, and contribute in important ways to efforts to decolonize concert dance in Vancouver in the coming years.[3]

Crucially, *The River* was also a break from the expectations that shaped concert dance in the area in the late 1990s. Site-based experiments had rippled through the professional contemporary dance scene in Vancouver for some time,[4] but Jamieson's choice to develop a major, (multi-)evening-length work along the stream corridor was a factor in the restructuring of funding for contemporary dance creation in the province. The poor critical reception of *The River* owed, in part, to a lagging development of valuation criteria for community- and site-based pieces at the time. Assessed within a review system that had not yet left the stage, the merits of this site-based dance found no purchase with its reviewers and put KJD in poor standing for the next many years of funding.[5] The British Columbia Arts Council's (BCAC) project evaluators focused exclusively on the one-night stage version of *The River*, without taking into account the four-night site-based procession (Poskitt 2013). Jamieson's growing body of site and community-based works was one of the catalysts for the development of a branch of BCAC peer assessments that specialized in works situated off stage (Poskitt 2013), a shift that would make space for a wider range of recognized values in dance funding.

But, despite what I have articulated as *The River*'s importance to dance history in Canada, it is impossible for me to get a retrospective fix on the dance as a choreographic object. I missed the live performances of the piece. (I was still living in Toronto during the run of *The River*.) Exacerbating this is the fact that the piece is poorly documented, as I've mentioned, particularly in comparison to other of Jamieson's major works. The dearth of documentation of the production exaggerates the dance's much-touted ephemerality.[6] This gap in documentation is the result of a combination of factors: the strained critical and peer reception; the extra-ephemeral nature of site-based dances, which exist outside of the production elements of capture so common in theatre spaces; and a gap in management at KJD during the late nineties. Things have shifted somewhat in the past few years by virtue of KJD's renewed online presence, but when I started researching this piece in 2011, there was virtually no trace of *The River*. I had to sift through the company's archives to find photo-documentation (a handful of images); press clippings from the print media reviews of the day; and a video taken by the Brewery Creek Historical Society that tracks the two historians who accompanied the dancers and records footage of the choreography only peripherally and infrequently. Part of the work of this article, then, is simply to provide a record of the piece and to situate it in a lineage of site-based dance in the region. This is worthwhile, I contend, not only because the piece is significant in the nested histories of Vancouver, British Columbian, and Canadian dance, but also (and admittedly) because it allows me to discuss some of the traits of site-based dance practice that I am interested in teasing out. But I need to acknowledge that this is not a culturally benign act: the act of archiving this performance is propped up by Jamieson's high art status and by my academic credentials, hierarchical markers of privilege that define our practices, despite our respective efforts to trouble the colonial assumptions on which they rest.

Taking Place, Taken Place

I offer a reading of *The River* as a case study that supports a larger theoretical framework of site-based choreography in a concert dance tradition.[7] *The River* allows me to fold together an ecological reading in the context of a recent history of urban redevelopment, while attending to the uptake of Indigenous approaches to land by settler bodies. All of this feels important to me as a white, settler dance practitioner and scholar with a vested interest in site-based and community-based work—and someone with a healthy caution about the colonial underpinnings of taking place (consider Vancouver as, itself, a *taken place*) and orchestrating bodies, practices foundational to the project of choreography generally, and to site-based work in particular.

The possibilities of, and limitations to, decolonizing dance studies have come to preoccupy me in the process of writing this article, and they form the central questions that drive my research. Following Craig Fortier (2017) in his study of "non-Indigenous" efforts to support decolonization, I see value in acknowledging these various axes of privilege and power even as I am also aware of the risk of offering merely one of many "confessions of privilege," as Andrea Smith terms it (quoted in Fortier, 22), without contributing in a tangible way to changing the cultural infrastructure that maintains white/settler power. I accept Sara Ahmed's critique of the foundational logic that grounds such confessions as it is articulated in Selena Couture's examination of the construction of whiteness in Vancouver (2015): drawing from Ahmed, Couture insists that the assumption that "whiteness is invisible" only rings true "for those who inhabit it, and that this assertion assumes a white seeing, and is therefore an exercise in white privilege, *not* a challenge of it" (Couture 2015, 81, emphasis in original). I also maintain, echoing Couture, that despite its structural flaws and insufficiencies, the flagging of white privilege is "nevertheless necessary in order that it become more possible to seek

to understand how the privilege is constructed, maintained and possibly hidden from those who hold it" (Couture 2015, 82).

With the recent and rapid emergence of decolonizing methodologies in Canadian performance studies conversations (Robinson 2014, 2017; Recollet 2015, 2016; Carter 2015; Nagam 2017; Davis-Fisch 2017, 68; Levin and Schweitzer 2017, 25), I am wrestling with how to think through Jamieson's efforts to honour and embody understandings about land-body reciprocity that come, in part, from her mentorship under First Nations elders—as well as my own interest in topography as agential and co-choreographic—in a way that avoids "extractive" reading, wherein "reading is like panning for gold, sorting through work that may not have been intended for a particular reader" (Smith, Tuck, and Yang 2019, 15). Here, I work through a combination of frameworks: Euro/Anglo-Canadian, Euro-American, and Indigenous. I turn to Indigenous thinkers on land-body reciprocity in an effort to acknowledge that these (eco-critical, new materialist) lines of thought are not new and that they do not originate within the academy; instead, they are a "turn to where Indigenous people have always been" (Smith et al. 2019, 15). But what I come to is not a set of answers; instead, I find myself returning (as I will in my conclusion) to a set of resonating questions about how dance studies in Canada can engage with moving bodies, land, and interred histories on the radically uneven grounds that constitute site.

To be with this work and find an echo of the dance I missed, I have undertaken a methodology that resonates with my claims for site-based dance: that is, one that foregrounds a kinetic reciprocity between land and body.[8] In my attempts to access some version of the work, I supplemented interviews (with Karen Jamieson, co-founder of and spokesperson for Spákwús Slulum Bob Baker, KJD dancer Caroline Farquhar, accompanying historian Bruce Macdonald of the Brewery Creek Historical Society, and the late Julie Poskitt of the BCAC) with visits to the KJD archives, and a study of the development of the Brewery Creek corridor. To this research, I bring my movement and somatic training (which spans forms, but has largely been concentrated on concert dance forms based in release technique), my experiences as a site-base dance artist, and a belief that information about the dance's choreographic modus operandi can be felt in the topography of its route.

With Jamieson, I walked the nearly forty-block route of *The River*, tuning in to the ways in which the topography of the buried creek moved my body, the shifts in kinaesthetic awareness it generated, and the feel of the downstream descent. In particular, I was struck by how this route put me into my heels: that the walk redistributed my weight into my back-body felt like an apt metaphor for my interest in attending to that which I cannot see with a renewed quality of kinetic attunement. Which is to say that what I examine here is informed by *The River*, but it is something else altogether; perhaps it is useful to think of what I sketch here as an archival re-performance of the route. As such, I am not making claims about the feeling of watching the performance itself: my duet with Jamieson down the Brewery Creek corridor misses nearly all of the components of the performance, from the choreographic material articulated by the three groups of performing dancers to the social-kinetic quality that comes of bodies moving together in assembly (Gerecke and Levin 2018). Instead, I pair *The River*'s thematic and physiological emphasis on the living history of its landscape with my own relationship to the piece as a buried moment in Vancouver's dance and urban history.

Situating my inquiry in the midst of one of Vancouver's oldest settler neighbourhoods, I ask what performance's "leak[y]" relationship to time (Schneider 2011, 10) can offer to somatic considerations of place in a settler-colonial urban environment. *The River*'s kinaesthetic tracing of the contours of topography exposes its site, a material transect of an ancient place in a 130-year-old

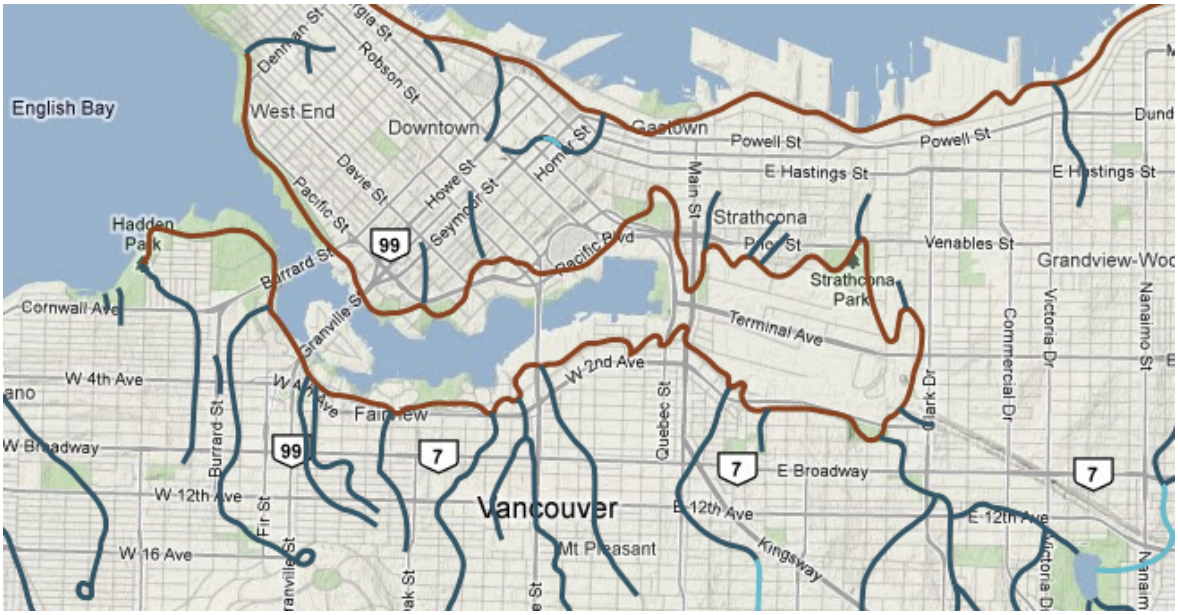
settler city, as unfixed and in a constant flux that is both human-driven and, crucially, otherwise.[9] I ask: What does it mean to understand the body topographically, and to understand topography choreographically? What does it mean to move—to be moved—along the ground's cracks, folds, and depressions? By analyzing how the buried creek directs Jamieson's choreography, and, in turn, how the dance choreographs its audience along the creek's topography, I argue that the colonial city's buried past continues, through its interment, to shape the movement possibilities along the city surface. *The River* asks its audiences to follow the grooves and cracks in a seemingly even surface; in doing so, it defamiliarizes the kinetic qualities of these everyday environments, prompting those who follow to re-think and re-feel how they move through, in, against, and with the land's demands.

Choreographic Topographies

In many ways, Brewery Creek and its estuary served as a foundation for the development of the city. The settlement and resettlement of what is now called Vancouver drew from the nutriment offered by Brewery Creek, both pre- and post-Contact (Harris 1997). A significant geographical feature, the creek served as a gathering and harvesting place for First Peoples from Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, whose presence on the land stretches back beyond recorded history and whose claim to the land has never been ceded. Indeed, an area of False Creek (Brewery Creek's fluvial output) near the current-day Burrard Street Bridge was a Squamish village site known as Snauq—a site from which the provincial government forcibly removed Indigenous residents at the turn of the twentieth century.[10] The creek was lined with vital plants for the region's Indigenous Peoples, including a range of different edible berries (blueberries, blackberries, red huckleberries, salal berries, thimbleberries, black caps, and yellow and red salmonberries) and medicinal plants (devil's club, liquorice fern, deer fern, stinging nettle, spiraea, and skunk cabbage) (Turner 1998). In addition, the creek hosted flocks of ducks and migrating birds and some of the largest trout and salmon populations in the region (Donald Luxton and Associates 2013, 7–8). During the early days of the resettlement of the Lower Mainland by European, American, and eastern Canadian settlers, the water from Brewery Creek supported industry. Despite its distance from the heart of Vancouver's downtown, the creek was integral to the city's growth: early settlers flumed the freshwater of the dammed creek across False Creek and piped it into the Gastown area, literally feeding the flow of development (Macdonald 2008, 2).

Reciprocally, the development of Vancouver re-shaped (and ultimately interred), the creek. The Hastings Sawmill, located in South False Creek at the foot of Brewery Creek, was a company town and a focal point of historic Vancouver from the 1870s forward. Joined by an upsurge of breweries that gave Brewery Creek its name, sawmills would remain a central presence in Mount Pleasant for over one hundred years, with the last sawmill closing as recently as 1983 (Macdonald 1992, 54–55). The presence of primary industry in the heart of so large and urban a city—a trait that earned it the nickname "Terminal City" in the boom that ensued after the construction of the terminus station of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1880s—set Vancouver apart from other North American cities. It was not until the mid-1980s that post-industrial Vancouver officially rezoned False Creek for residential use (59). With the explosion of growth in Vancouver that began in the late nineteenth century and continues to this day, the shape of the land and the river has been actively changed: the waterfront surrounding the foot of Brewery Creek, which had been punctuated by a chain of pedestrian-accessible beaches and tidal flats, was filled in to support the city's growth; the remaining intertidal land later became the repository for soil removed to form the Grandview Cut. Indeed, *The River*'s four-day-long procession along the creek concluded not at the present-day ocean edge, but at

the creek's historical fluvial outflow point. Like many other creeks in Vancouver and in cities throughout North America, the body of Brewery Creek was, by steps, culverted and paved over, such that it literally became built into the foundation of the growing city.



"Vancouver's Old Streams": This map depicts the streams that cut through Vancouver's topography between 1880 and 1920. The blue lines indicate culverted streams and the red outline contours the original shoreline. Map modified from Paul Lesack and Sharon J. Proctor's "Vancouver's Old Streams, 1880–1920," courtesy of the University of British Columbia.

Buried under layers of land and concrete and asphalt, the water-body that was Brewery Creek is now almost imperceptible; but Jamieson's dance draws out those traces with mechanisms of theatricalization. Grounded on the shifting surface of the Brewery Creek corridor, *The River* performs the present as a porous thing that leaks and seeps with history. For, as Jamieson insists, "as long as the rain falls, as long as the land slopes downward, as long as the sun shines, the stream isn't gone. It's still there, still participating in the eternal cycle of water raining down, flowing to the sea, evaporating, raining down" (quoted in Scott 1998a, C5). In fact, community efforts—often Indigenous-led—to revive Vancouver's buried streams are starting to show success as fish return to many waterways that have long been dormant (Holdsworth 2015).

The present past that *The River* performs contours a pre-Contact landscape, one that troubles imperialist, "patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural)" systems of knowledge that privilege the visual, the material, and the written word (Schneider 2011, 97). Jamieson's invitation to the Spákwús Slulum performers to contextualize *The River* with Squamish song and dance throughout *The River*, and to follow protocol to seek permission from ancestors to perform on the land, signals a decolonial politics of ephemerality—if a complicated one.[11] As Bob Baker of the Spákwús Slulum told me, the group performed protocol in *The River* "to announce to the ancestral world and everyone within hearing range that something that had been around for thousands of years was strolling through the area" (2019). In *The River*, the past not only remains in invisible and immaterial ways (Schneider 2011), and it is not only etched into the foundation of the developed (and redeveloped) Main Street/Brewery Creek corridor; it is also welcomed and performed by bodies whose ancestries extend into the land for thousands of years. In the context of Vancouver,

where the clash between settler-culture imperialism and the traditions of the First Peoples is a prominent issue, Jamieson sides with a traditional Indigenous approach to history and works to make space for traditional approaches to land use: one that finds a function for dance and story-telling in keeping the past present. *The River* performs the history and morphology of the space itself with sensitivity to Coastal First Peoples' intimate interrelations with these lands.

Indeed, the landscape that features in *The River* is more akin to what Mohawk and Anishinaabe sociologist Vanessa Watts has called "Place-Thought" (2013). Looking to Haudenosaunee (as well as Anishinaabe) cosmologies, Watts understands land as agential and animate. She draws from traditional teachings to insist on the ways in which land, topography in particular, enacts its desires on the spectrum of creatures that inhabit it, humans included. With reference to the interrelationship between land and Sky Woman (First Woman in Anishinaabe teachings)—where she is/becomes the earth—Watts observes: "In becoming land or territory, she becomes designator of how living beings will organize upon her. Where waters flow and pool, where mountains rise and turn into valleys, all of these become demarcations of who will reside where, how they will live, and how their behaviours toward one another are determined" (Watts 2013, 23). Watts' contributions to academic theories of land-body reciprocity are key to my examination of Jamieson's work, and to my self-reflexivity about my citational politics as a settler scholar and dancer. Even as Watts affirms the direction of various expressions of what can be clustered together around the category of new materialist thought (from Latour to Haraway),[12] she is also critical of the shortcomings of these theories. Specifically, she laments the "subjugated agency" (28) each attributes to the materials and environments toward which the word expands: which is to say, a hierarchical agency that "is dependent on the belief that humans are different based on our ability of will and purpose" (28–29). According to the two Indigenous cosmologies Watts cites, land perceives, and it acts out its desires in material ways: "To be animate goes beyond being alive or acting, it is to be full of thought, desire, contemplation, and will" (23).[13] Place-based understandings of creation in the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh traditions also figure land as animate.

A version of this expanded agency, one that listens for the land's desires or the "land's intentions" (Watts 2013, 22), is perceptible along the Brewery Creek corridor. When Jamieson and I retrace *The River*'s route, we notice that the buried creek serves as an imperfect, unstable foundation for the developments along its corridor. As we walk through the route of act 2 toward the site of the old Tea Swamp, she gestures toward the deterioration of the asphalt, the sidewalks, the dipping fences bordering leaning houses. Subtly, but visibly, asphalt buckles, bends, and cracks; sidewalks lilt, heave, and mound; properties tilt and sink and rise. The slow shifting of the neighbourhood signals the creek that runs beneath the ground. The creek asserts itself. Bruce Macdonald notes the evidence of the creek in Mount Pleasant's current landscape. To this day, he points out, "the route of Brewery Creek is obvious because it is usually at the low point of the east-west streets, while the streets in the Tea Swamp such as 16th and 17th Avenue east of Main are lumpy and bumpy because of the mushy soil" (2008, 22). Jamieson tells me that her choreography here was a quiet sort of burbling: a soft but active flow that challenged and pushed against the seeming stillness of its surface and surroundings. Following the deepest bends in the route, she and I try to track the route *The River*'s dancers and audience followed as they allowed themselves to be funnelled along the pavement by way of the lowest ground, their path charting the depressions along the sidewalk, grass, and street.

The state of the asphalt along a stretch of the site of act 2, "The Swamp." Notice the buckles, bends, and cracks in the pavement as of November 2012. Photographs by author.

The River's commitment to a sustained quality of down is enacted throughout the piece, but it becomes perhaps most literal in a section of act 3 that situates company dancers below ground level. Here, the dancers descend roughly fifteen feet into a pit in the lane behind a restaurant on Main Street. This pit, Jamieson and others speculate, is one of the only remaining stretches of Brewery Creek's basin, a patch of "dried-up creek bed" (Johnson 1998). KJD dancer Caroline Farquhar agrees that the alleyways just south of the intersection of Main Street and Broadway Avenue were where the history of the city—of the creek—was most clearly felt. Fifteen years later, one of Farquhar's sharpest memories of *The River* features the series of pits that reached down to where the base of the river might once have been. The presence of the absent stream was clearest here, Jamieson and Farquhar agree: in Farquhar's words, "the geography echoed" (2013). Here, the dancers slip down into the ground, and they invite their audience's gaze to follow them down below ground level.

KJD dancers in rehearsal in the pit, unaccredited photograph, courtesy of KJD.

"Politics of the Ground"

Following American dance theorist André Lepecki, there is a politic—indeed, a "choreopolitic" (Lepecki 2013)—inherent in a choreographic engagement with uneven ground. In his effort to

"rethink a politics of movement" in *Exhausting Dance* (2006), Lepecki offers a reading of black American artist William Pope.L's series of over forty performed "crawls." Here, Pope.L lies prone, belly-down, on the ground surfaces of urban areas and arduously pulls himself through the city.[14] To read Pope.L's crawls, Lepecki calls up Paul Carter's "politics of the ground" (Lepecki 2006, 100), which recognizes "kinetic practices that highlight the body in motion as always already an extension of the terrain that sustains it." (In working with Paul Carter's critique of ground in dance, it is worth noting that Lepecki draws indirectly from the Indigenous Australian ways of knowing that inform Carter's analysis.[15]) After Carter, Lepecki takes as a premise the intimate and causal connection between ground and the moving body, which becomes the basis of what he calls a "political kinesis" (Lepecki 2006, 100). Carter, Lepecki tells us, draws a link between colonial ideology and the representational mimetic practices that have long defined Western art, insisting that the Western choreographic tradition is especially ensnared in colonialist ideology in its demand for a flat, smooth dancing surface.

I should pause to point out that in their respective observations about dance and ground surface, Carter and Lepecki both use "Western dance" to mean movement practices that grow out of a ballet and Modern dance lineage—those privileged along classed and raced lines as 'high art' by patrons and funding bodies. Of course, this construction of Western dance and its desire for smooth surfaces does not treat—or, indeed, is developed in unspoken contrast to—a range of dance practices that have long been practised in the West, ranging from jazz to street dance to Indigenous dance, practices that take ground as it comes and take it seriously. Lepecki and Carter are interested in the effort toward extraction from the specificities of site that becomes the condition of possibility for colonial dance forms, specifically (as Lepecki's terminology will soon demonstrate) ballet. For Carter, as Lepecki articulates in the epigraph that opens this article, "Western dance relates to its ground only through the ground's leveling, through its demise, its forgetting" (2008, 52). That colonial Western dance techniques are assumed to require for their development, rehearsal, transmission, and presentation the flat, smooth ground surface characteristic of studio and stage "annihilates the possibility for dance to attend to the grooves of the particular terrain where dance presents itself" (Lepecki 2008, 52). In these forms, the job of the dancing surface is to be unremarkable: it "must never interrupt, disrupt, distort, distract, and challenge the dancer in her *pirouettings* and in his *glissands*" (52, emphasis in original). The smoothed over, quieted down specificity of a given dancing surface excises certain components of social and historical context, foreclosing the possibilities of movements that would respond to these material nuances.

In a move that qualifies Lepecki's claim that Western concert dance's insistence on unblemished rehearsal and performance spaces "annihilates" the possibility of the form to attend to the particularities of the terrain, he examines how proximity to and engagement with any ground surface reveals the "cracks" in its foundation. Following Pope.L, Lepecki drops his critical gaze to ground level, noting: "even the smoothest ground is not flat. The ground is grooved, cracked, cool, painful, hot, smelly, dirty. The ground pricks, wounds, grabs, scratches" (2006, 99). Crucially, this wounding ground acts on Pope.L's racialized, black body. Invested in a choreopolitics of uneven ground, Lepecki reads Pope.L's crawl series as a powerful example of "choreopolitical challenges that can illuminate with particular force the conditions of mobility on the colonialist terrain" (100). While cleared and flattened ground is experienced as even and smooth for those who are advantageously situated amidst a variety of axes of cultural, social, political, and historical power, the same seemingly flat ground is exposed as always already riddled with cracks and catches for other (and Othered) bodies defined, in the case of Pope.L, along racialized lines.

I read Lepecki reading Pope.L to suggest that when a movement practice dedicates focused and sustained physical attention to the sometimes subtle, sometimes conspicuous troublings in the ground, that practice stakes a historical, a cultural, and a political claim—one that takes the land as impetus for movement, and one that cannot be separated from the representational politics of the body that does the moving. Drawing attention to the landscape, and to what is interred beneath the buckling pavement, the choreography of *The River* alternates between heightened caution of the physical process of navigating rough and uneven surfaces (the dancers pick their way gingerly along the urban hillside in act 3), succumbing to the shifting ground (the dancers slowly melt downward against the fence of the cemetery in act 1), and violent clashes between body and rough ground surface (full-body throws against the cement in several acts). *The River* "kinetically grounds the question" (Lepecki 2006, 90) of uneven and shifting ground in the procession along Brewery Creek, the hidden flow of which continues to shape the landscape above. The dancers' repeated contact with rough concrete surfaces draws attention to the literal cracks in the colonial effort to bury the topographical structure of the land.

But the terms of relation with topography in *The River* are different from Pope.L's in some key ways. Crucially, and without wanting to diminish Jamieson's genuine and significant efforts toward decolonizing concert dance, it is essential that Jamieson's choreography of kinetic attunement to the cracks and grooves of the terrain *The River* traverses is inextricable from her whiteness. The critical function of *The River* is also supported by the privilege endowed to contemporary dance in the theatrical tradition—especially in contrast to Indigenous dance forms at the time of performance (in 1998). Even the fact that Jamieson's choreography had the influence to contribute to an impulse to open funding bodies to community-based and site-based values in dance speaks to the privileged positioning of her practice. I raise this point in consideration of Dylan Robinson's insistence that "it is necessary to acknowledge the privilege and power that we hold within our artistic and working communities, and then find ways to give over such power that move beyond forms of inclusion" (2014, 306). It is also crucial to note that my own experience of the land in my re-tracing of *The River*'s route is, likewise, inextricable from my whiteness, and from my privileged position as an academic studying concert dance in the Western tradition. Perhaps what my study of *The River* showcases as much as anything is a reiterated performance of the unevenness of "the conditions of mobility on the colonialist terrain" (Lepecki 2006, 100).

None of this undermines the fact that Jamieson's piece does crucial work to point to the problems of the settler-colonial choreographic framework in which it operates: not only does the performance gear kinetic focus toward a waterbody that that undoes "colonialist terrain," but it also sets the stream-driven choreography on a spectrum of racialized bodies (the Indigenous body of KJD cast member Rulan Tangen, the East Asian bodies of company dancers Shinn-Rong Chung and Hiromoto Ida, and the legibly white bodies of the other KJD dancers), and it frames the performance with the self-determined protocol-based choreographies of the Spákwús Slulum. That *The River* was created within a career dedicated to troubling the colonial underpinnings of concert dance is also worthy of note. Jamieson has been recognized by Tsimshian dance scholar Mique'l Dangeli as unique within the Vancouver dance landscape for being "the only non-First Nations dance artist in Vancouver to produce a large body of work in collaboration with First Nations artists," and in those collaborations, for "her approach to navigating protocol, with its emphasis on humility and self-reflection" (2015, 46).[16] Dangeli goes on to examine the development and terms of these working relationships, including Jamieson's early missteps, her genuine efforts to learn and repair, and the resulting two-way flows of reciprocity between collaborators (47–51).

The River's performance of the conditions of mobility along insistent and sometimes rough terrain extends beyond the choreography proper (that is, what the dancers perform) to the ways in which that choreography, in turn, choreographs the movement of its mixed and mobile audiences. The piece's kinetic tracing of the buried creek functioned as an invitation for audiences to relate to everyday spaces of the Main Street corridor with renewed attention. As audiences are guided down the historical creek, bodies are asked to feel, not ignore, the grooves, dips, and imperfections in the surface—to physically follow the unevenness of the terrain with a focused attention on the historical shape and shaping of the urban landscape. Jamieson describes her effort to choreograph her audience into the interior of the landscape: "I wanted the audience to identify with Brewery creek rather than look at it as something outside them and apart from them. . . . I wanted the audience to experience the river within their own bodies" (Jamieson 1998, 1).[17] Jamieson seeks to direct her audience's attention not just to ground level, but to the sub-terrain, the water that still flows below the Main Street corridor. The bodies she directs along the waterway are themselves, Jamieson points out repeatedly during my site walk with her, predominantly made up of water. In the process of walking the course of the stream, Jamieson wanted her dancers and audience alike to "experienc[e] the physical sense of it . . . and experience the landscape—wet or dry, cold or warm, steep or flat" (quoted in Scott 1998a, C5). Reviewer Michael Scott articulates the experience from his perspective in the audience: "Where water once met a bottleneck at the beaver dams, the crowd meets the impediment of a small school yard gate. Instead of wavelets, people eddied around, waiting for a chance to go through the spillway" (1998b, F4). Audience bodies are cast, collectively, as waterbody. Throughout each of the four acts, community volunteers carry large silhouette cut-outs of fish and contained the audience inside banners of blue cloth, offering visual reminders of the water that once ran where they now stand—and literally framing the audience as the water, as the content of Brewery Creek.

Community dancers carry a river banner in rehearsal for act 4, "The Sea." In performance, the audience was guided along the Brewery Creek corridor within the boundaries of this blue cloth. Photographs by Vincent Wong, courtesy of KJD.

In its kinetic effect (and affect, too), *The River* casts the historical creek as a co-performer in the dance. Jamieson's funnelling of the audience down the tilted landscape of the buried creek is framed by the constant murmurings of the two attendant historians who repeatedly point out current-day evidence of Brewery Creek's continued flow etched into the developed landscape. Pointing down toward the culverts embedded in the close-mowed cemetery grass and the cracked roadways, the historians drop their microphones down to the grates, amplifying the sound of the still-running historic creek gushing below. On the third evening, dancers clad in ambiguously antiquated

costumes drop to the ground and dig with their hands into a patch of earth near Main Street where, they contend, a patch of original creek bed remains still exposed, as yet uncovered by development. The subterranean world of the creek becomes felt not as an absent presence, but as a tangible, audible actor whose persistence has material and choreographic effects. The Brewery Creek corridor is not just a dancing surface, but a living, dynamic, and demanding contributor to a long enactment of a set of fraught social, spatial, historical, and political moves.

In these ways, *The River* both models and elicits a version of the "sensuous correspondences" Laura Levin has theorized (2014). Levin draws out the stakes of this sort of performed connection to the environmental background by chronicling a series of "camouflage performances." In these performances, bodies are positioned in reciprocal relationships with their physical environments, each resonating differently depending on raced, classed, and gendered signifiers. Attendant to the ethical stakes inherent in aesthetics that propose porosity and proximity between the body and environment, Levin asks: "What might it mean . . . to present the self not as an atomized individual moving *within* an environment, but rather *as* the environment itself, as something that is coextensive with its surroundings?" (6, emphasis in original). Levin's investment in the reciprocity of body and environment resonates with Jamieson's description of her choreographic impetus: *The River*, Jamieson asserts, "began with the desire to explore the possibility that what is written on the land is written on our bodies. Land is a central concern to me. An ancient function of dance, as an art form, has always been to create a ritual connection between the community and the land that it rests upon" (Jamieson 1998, 1).

The River performs background not within a visual or ocular register, but a somatic one. Unlike most of the works Levin examines, *The River* does not oscillate between visibility and invisibility or work toward "blending into the background" (Levin 2014, 4, 7, 9). Rather, building on Levin's groundwork, I argue that the dance seeks to refigure the environmental background as a driving choreographic force, literally pivotal to the movement articulated. Bringing together Lepecki (and Carter), Levin, and Watts, I see in *The River* (and in the other site-based dance practices I study) a set of important questions: What are the choreopolitics of moving as an extension of a "performing world" (Levin 2014), following the movement impulses embedded in a "Place-Thought" (Watts 2013)? Is it possible to be kinaesthetically attuned—with our differently contextualized and signifying bodies—to the ways in which the land is an active collaborator, a co-choreographer?

Feeling Backspace

By enacting the slow sinking of the landscape back into the topography of the buried creek, by featuring the creek as a mover in the work, *The River* invites its topography to make a claim on its audience's attention. But it does more too. The emphasis on *down*—on moving downhill and constantly seeking lower ground—foregrounds a kinetic paradox of correspondence. The physics of walking undergoes a transformation when the walker moves from level ground to an upward or downward slant. In order to walk up a slant, a body must exert extra muscular effort to gain elevation, whereas to walk down a slant, a body follows the gravitational pull downward. Physical effort in the downward traverse is not geared toward propelling forward progress. Instead, effort is articulated to slow one's descent, to mitigate between the "land's intentions" (Watts 2013, 22) and the body's physiology. To walk on a slant is necessarily to work against the ground, trying to stabilize on a surface that would pitch the body forward or back.[18] Consider *The River*. Jamieson's dance works against the tilt of the landscape even as it also follows the downward slope: the crowded

context of the choreography doesn't permit its audience to cede to the momentum built into the landscape it traverses. *The River*'s audiences, caught in the thick of a mobile unit of bodies, are asked to follow slowly at a pace set by the dancers ahead and maintained by the volunteers who flank the processing group. Audience members are structured into a shuffle-stepping procession that relies on bodies ahead, behind, beside—both proximate and just out of view. As such, the migration of *The River*'s audience is characterized by a paradoxical resistance against the very landscape to which it seeks to yield—a move that foregrounds how choreography is always already shaped by embodied social forces, even as it is also directed along topographical lines.

Walking shoulder-to-shoulder with Jamieson, I notice my weight shift into my heels in order to negotiate the slope of the ground. The physical exertion required to move slowly downward through the tipping landscape generates a sensation of backspace. I notice my joints realign in a subtle back-tilt: knees, hips, shoulders, and atlas lingering behind my centre. There is a quality of *up* too, a cervical extension to balance the downward force. My body indexes the oppositional physiological forces that support movement: the *back* and the *up* to support the *front* and the *down*. Even as I walk forward, some fraction of my weight trails, dwelling behind my intention, in the moment that has just passed. The effect is not so much nostalgic as it is a carrying forward of the back-body, bringing into the present the moment just before and physicalizing the co-imbrication of past with present, present with past. Like the pavement along the Brewery Creek corridor, time buckles, bends, and leaks; and whether brash and virtuosic or covert and underground, the past has a way of erupting into the present (Schneider 2011).

Held in tension (kinetic and otherwise), my attention to backspace in my tracing of *The River* relies on a reaching for reciprocity, a feeling for the bends and folds of topography that honours the *back* contained inside the *forward*. The feeling of *back* moves me toward a non-ocular register, a register that indexes the productive possibilities of knowing-without-seeing. For simply because I cannot see my backspace does not mean that I cannot know it. Any thoughtful mover will understand this. I may not be able to see my scapula or the dimpled line of my vertebra behind me, but I certainly know them: I feel them; I mobilize them; they mobilize me. This is a simple equation (to feel is to know)—perhaps too simple—but it is also linked to a larger epistemological shift that moves away from an ocular regime and toward a kinaesthetic one. Think of backspace as an entry-point (a back-way) into a dance-based methodology that turns its attention to dance forms, dance practitioners, dancing communities, and embodied knowledges often left aside from narratives of dance history. Crucially, this version of backspace is bound to the nuances of its ground, a ground characterized (to return to the epigraph that opens this article) not by its "levelling" but by its sloping contours, not by its "forgetting" but by its foregrounding.

For me, the driving questions that opened this article about the possibilities of decolonizing dance studies in Canada resurface now, reformulated: How might kinetic attention to backspace affirm and hold space for recognition of the sophisticated epistemologies that are embodied by decades- and/or centuries-old movement practices that continue to evolve outside and alongside the Western theatrical tradition? How do the movement principles that structure these practices perform an ethics of engagement with land that can retune contemporary understandings of land-body reciprocity? And how can the long-privileged form of concert dance learn from these movement practices—practices that feel for the contours of the ground in ways that the studio/stage paradigm (as articulated by Carter and Lepecki) obfuscates—without re-enacting colonializing claims on knowledge and practice? An ability (always already circumscribed) to feel *back* becomes a useful metaphor to think this through—but it is more than that too: it is an embodied and kinetic way of

knowing, of moving, of relating. The sensation of backspace holds within it recognition of the limitations of knowledge even as it also insists on the precision and validity of epistemologies that move along somatic, not visual, registers. This kinetic, back-based knowledge undoes its own positionality by insisting that back and front are not discreet at all; rather, they are infinitely interrelated and bound.

Notes

1. In her effort to sketch what she identifies as the first historical and theoretical account of site-specific art, Miwon Kwon demonstrates the excess and slippage of the language of *site*: "Site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, site-related. These are some new terms that have emerged in recent years among many artists and critics to account for the various permutations of site-specific art in the present" (2002, 1).

2. Public Dreams Society was a fixture in Vancouver from 1985 to 2013. It was a nonprofit charity that crafted events to foster public, interpersonal exchange in the city, including the popular Parade of Lost Souls and Illuminares Lantern Procession.

3. A key figure in Vancouver dance since her co-founding of Terminal City Dance (1975–82) and then the Karen Jamieson Dance Company in 1983, Jamieson's many evening-length works have been presented widely, both nationally and internationally. She has been the recipient of numerous accolades, including a Chalmers Award for Creativity and Excellence in the Arts (1980), a Vancouver Mayor's Arts Award (2013), and an Isadora Award for Excellence in Dance (2016), and an induction into Canada's Encore! Dance Hall of Fame (2018). Today, Jamieson's practice is defined by her continued exploration of nontheatrical spaces, especially with residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) and in her engagements with First Nations communities, philosophies, and elders.

4. Of note, the founding members of Vancouver's EDAM (Experimental Dance and Music) had been exploring outdoor and off-stage sites since the group's inception in 1982. Of these artists, Jennifer Mascall (Mascall Dance) and Barbara Bourget and Jay Hirabayashi (Kokoro Dance) have gone on to make particularly significant contributions to site-based work in the city.

5. Annual Reports from BCAC show that while KJD was supported with operating budgets between $35,000 and $45,000 from 1996 to 1998, the company's operating budget was cut to $0 in 1999. The company subsisted on only project assistance (roughly $17,500 per year) until it began to receive specifically allocated Community Arts Development funds in 2004. This was a crucial year for the company: no longer categorized alongside the other dance companies in British Columbia as a recipient of Operating Assistance or Professional Project Assistance, KJD was the first and only dance company to be funded under the Community Arts Development umbrella in 2004 (BCAC 2004, 68). This pattern was roughly consistent with the company's funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (Jamieson 2012b).

6. See Peggy Phelan's ontology of performance as disappearance (1996, 1997); Diana Taylor's understanding of performance as "repertoire" (2003); and Matthew Reason's examination of performance as an "archive of detritus" (2008). See also the notion of dance's "hauntopias" developed by Judith Hamera (2007).

7. For two other foundational approaches to site-based dance, see Kloetzel and Pavlik (2009) and Hunter (2015). Two key contributions to burgeoning discussions of land-body reciprocity in dance studies are Schiller and Rubidge's *Choreographic Dwellings* (2014) and Kwan's *Kinesthetic City* (2013).

8. In this, I draw from sensory ethnography and performance ethnography methods developed by Pink (2009) and Kwan (2013), who emphasize the multi-sensory possibilities of observation.

9. For another approach to the urban river as a site of contradiction between site-specificity and mobility, see Donald (2012).

10. The village of Snauq (or Sen̓áq̓w) was expropriated from its Squamish residents through a series of efforts that culminated a British Columbia government sanctioned burning of the village in 1913 (Matas 2000). In 2001, a longstanding old court case addressing the issue was resolved when the Squamish Nation voted to accept a $92.5 million settlement. For more on the ongoing significance of the area to local First Nations Peoples, see Maracle (2008) and McCall (2016).

11. For an approach to the archive versus oral history debate that is grounded in First Nations land rights claims in a Canadian context, see Johnson (2005).

12. For a foundational iteration of this new materialist perspective that recognizes all matter as agential or "vibrant," see Bennett (2010). For analyses of recent applications of new materialisms to performance scholarship, see Schneider (2015). For a choreographic strain of these discussions, see Bernstein (2009) and Schweitzer (2014).

13. For two other relevant and recent articulations of Indigenous ways of relating to ground and water through movement, see Betasamosake Simpson (2011) and Christian and Wong (2017).

14. William Pope.L's practice of crawling through city streets has a Vancouver connection: it resonates with Korean-born Vancouver-based artist Jin-Me Yoon's practice of dragging herself through various major international cities on a wheeled flatbed that is concealed under her prostrate body.

15. Thomas DeFrantz critiques what he identifies as Lepecki's tendency to "poach" from unrelated lines of philosophy and to decontextualize arguments from their historical context (191). In her *Unsettling Space* (2006), Joanne Tompkins, who also offers an analysis of land-body reciprocity with the term "methexis" (to follow the curves and folds of the land), does so within the context of urgent aboriginal displacements and spatial "unsettlements."

16. Jamieson has focused even more acutely on these questions with *Stone Soup* (1997)—in which she travelled between First Nations communities throughout British Columbia seeking permission to enter via the proper protocol that her colonial ancestors failed to follow—*Gawa Gyani* (1991), and *The Skidegate Project* in Haida Gwaii (2005). For more on Jamieson's collaboration with First Nations peoples and the politics and traditions of protocol in northwest coast First Nations dance, see Dangeli's excellent dissertation "Dancing Sovereignty: Protocol and Politics in Northwest Coast First Nations Dance" (2015).

17. This appears to be a draft response to questions posed by reporter Wendy Appleton.

18. For more on a "politics of the slant," see cultural and urban theorist Paul Virilio's formulation (2001, 52). For another kinetic reading of uneven ground, see Lorimer (2012).

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Get Thee Behind Me: The Back-Body as a Supporting Figure in Contemporary Performance

Matthew J. Tomkinson

Orientations: When People Face the Wrong Way

"I turn my back because I play better," said Miles Davis about his habitual position on stage, responding to critics who felt he had given them the cold shoulder (Franckling 1986, 23).[1] Haters of jazz may see in this gesture a combination of the genre's perceived worst tendencies: self-absorption, indecipherability, and highbrow hermeticism. Jazz aficionados, by comparison, may tolerate or even enjoy a degree of alienation and rejection—may see in a turned back an opportunity to focus more on the act of listening. Indeed, when people and things turn away from us, they sometimes have a funny way of making us all the more desperate to engage. Nonetheless, does a person not reserve the right to withdraw, to establish personal space, and to refuse visibility—in short, to point his trumpet wherever the notes resound the sweetest and clearest?

The French playwright Georges Banu (2014) suggests that frontality is "the first rule of decorum" on stage and that to refuse it "acquires the meaning of a revolt" (61). Looking back on the history of reception, Banu notes that Denis Diderot was one of the first theatre practitioners to "encourage a deliverance from the frontal relationship with the auditorium" (62). Diderot's theory of acting is reminiscent of the observer effect in quantum mechanics, which says that particles will change their behaviour when measured. He believed that actors might perform more truthfully and naturalistically if they were freed from the spectator's scrutiny and allowed to shut out the audience with their backs.

In discussing the front-body and back-body, we confront all kinds of entrenched values of this sort, including those associated with spinal anatomy and posture in dance history, which is beyond the scope of this essay. Generally speaking, though, the front-body tends to connote positive traits such as vulnerability, honesty, clarity, and empathy—but also confrontation and defiance—whereas many associate the back-body with negative traits such as defensiveness, disengagement, and deception. The front also tends to be synonymous with an approach, whereas the back symbolizes retreat: a silhouette on horseback dissolving into an orange haze.

When I read the call for papers for this special issue of *Performance Matters*, I was struck by the phrase "We approach the back in multiple senses." Why, I wondered, is the back here construed as a passive surface, a sleeping creature on which we researchers do the sneaking up? By enacting what I call a "cheeky reversal," this essay aims not to "approach the back in multiple senses" so much as to investigate the many senses in which backs and buttocks do the approaching.

Beyond the front/back binary, I can think of no satisfactory term to describe the appearance of both surfaces at once—the kind of multi-angle perspective that a tri-fold mirror provides, for example. The word that comes closest, to my mind, is "uncanny." In his 2014 book, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, Slavoj Žižek recalls a short story by Guy

Matthew J. Tomkinson is a PhD student in Theatre Studies at the University of British Columbia. His research focuses on the intersections of disability studies, performance studies, and the health humanities. He is particularly interested in representations of cognitive difference and invisible illness in performance.

de Maupassant (1886) called "Le Horla," in which a man gains the ability to see his own back in the mirror.[2] The man's back appears strange to him, "not because of its immanent uncanniness, but because it implies the point of view of an impossible gaze" (Žižek 2014, 519). Crucially, it is the gaze that takes on an uncanny quality in this scenario, and not the back itself. As the playwright Bert O. States (2010) puts it, to hold such an impossible gaze is to occupy a "divine standpoint." To take in every material dimension of an object—to see the fronts and backs of things at the same time—would require, in his words, "one grand cubistic glance" (States 2010, 29). For States, this is one of the most fundamental phenomenological issues. What kind of spectacular contortions would allow a person to experience this divine and uncanny, yet impossible gaze?

David Foster Wallace (2011) deals with this issue metaphorically in "Backbone,"[3] an excerpt from his novel *The Pale King*, in which a boy is determined to kiss every square inch of his own body and works daily on his flexibility toward this end. As we immediately suspect from the premise, the boy comes to find that his neck and back are "the first areas of radical, perhaps even impossible unavailability to his own lips" (para. 36). The story can thus be read as an allegory for the limits of self-knowledge, in which the boy embodies our struggle for a sense of wholeness and self-mastery. The back-body, for Maupassant and Wallace, becomes a startling reminder of one's inherent estrangement from one's own body. An uncomfortable feeling, indeed.

It would seem to follow that to place equal theatrical value on the front, back, and side body would bring us no closer to representing "wholeness" on stage, given that none of us is whole to begin with. As the disability scholar Lennard J. Davis (1997) notes, "The linking together of all the disparate bodily sensations and locations is an act of will, a hallucination that always threatens to fall apart" (140). And yet, for some critics such as Banu, the equivalency of front and back remains an ideal. Banu associates a greater degree of theatrical freedom, for example, with the "oriental model," as he calls it. According to him, Kabuki theatre makes "an equal use of the front and back" and "no priority is given to either" (Banu 2014, 67).

If the back-body is always already inaccessible, then it makes sense that we should look to others to describe it (the tattoo scene from the 2000 stoner comedy *Dude, Where's My Car?* comes to mind) or rely on others to test its very existence and dependability (through trust falls and so on). In this regard, the back is also a timeless symbol of support. See, for example, the human pyramids formed in gymnastics. What are these pyramids if not a testament to the back as a support structure?

Most of the time, the back plays a supporting role in every sense of the word. On the face of it, the back-body is merely a front without features. When it comes to anatomy, the real star of the back is the C7 vertebra at the base of the neck, known as the vertebra prominens (the part of the spine that sticks out the most). Apart from person-to-person idiosyncrasies and the essential (but nonessentializable) difference of all bodies, it might be argued that the back is inherently less interesting than the front, making it more conducive to projections. There is, of course, no universal human back to make these kinds of statements about. But insofar as the material reality of most animals' forward-oriented existence privileges all things frontal (indeed, life itself forms in that direction, i.e., babies)—it makes sense that the topography of all backs is less feature-dense and therefore less heterogeneous than the topography of all fronts. Think, for example, of Man Ray's famous picture, *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924), in which the artist has painted the sound holes of a violin onto a photograph of a woman's bare back.[4] This image relies on the back for

its homogeneity, its sense of being raw material. If we were to imagine this image reversed, there would be a number of competing features to distract the eye, and to imagine a violin with a belly button gives us a different impression entirely. For his part, Banu (2014) suggests that "the performer turns precisely in order to maintain the expectation of the face" (63). Such an interpretation of the back confirms its secondariness to the front, the sense in which it's considered lesser-than, a reprieve from persistent frontality.

Katy Perry at the 2011 Logie Awards, wearing a Jean Charles de Castelbajac dress featuring a screen print of Man Ray's *Le Violon d'Ingres*. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

This essay concerns the dialectical dance between the front-body and back-body. In particular, I look at the ways that back bodies support front bodies, in multiple senses of the word, from carrying to encouraging. So far, I have been talking about "the back" as if it were a universal structure, but as this special edition makes abundantly clear, the back is more than an anatomical model and much more than a physical orientation, too. To take just one example, consider the expression "to have someone's back," which connotes emotional support as well as bodily protection. In discussing various performance and dance pieces that treat the back-body as "that which stands behind," I want to look at how this notion of physical support often tips over into manipulation and a kind of impetus to make wholes out of fragments. The back-body in these scenarios is often a puppet master figure (which I hasten to clarify is not necessarily bad). Sometimes the sandwiching of front- and back-body, to the point of hybridity, is an equal collaboration, which serves both parties in some way. The problems start to emerge, however,

around the concept of "wholeness" and how two bodies work together to produce such an image. This is also Davis's contention when he says that "the fear of the unwhole body, of the altered body, is kept at bay by depictions of whole, systematized bodies" (57).

Reorientations: When People Have Each Other's Backs

On this point, I think of DV8 Physical Theatre's *The Cost of Living* (2004), which is based on an earlier work for the stage called *Can We Afford This* (2000).[5] The film is a key work in the representation of disability in dance. DV8 is from London, and their work has regularly featured a mixed-ability cast. One of the film's most iconic scenes—its last—involves the dancer David Toole, a double amputee, mounting the sacrum of another dancer, Eddie Kay, who then treads across the shoreline in a downward dog posture with Toole on his back. From the side, we see the two bodies' modes of locomotion temporarily reversed. Toole moves (or has the appearance of moving) bipedally while Kay moves quadrupedally, putting equal weight into his hands and legs. By trading places in this way, the two dancers trouble our assumptions about there being a default way of moving. According to Petra Kuppers (2014), a performance artist and disability scholar, it is important to consider an "audience perspective that does not take bipedal motion as the center of locomotion" (178). Moving together, as Toole and Kay do, can therefore open up entirely new ways of locomoting.

Writing about the earlier stage production of this performance, Jen Harvie (2002) says that "Here, the 'disabled' and the 'able' bodies combined to produce a hybrid body, uncanny and newly powerful" (71). What *The Cost of Living* presents us with is thus a nonnormative, non-Platonic whole. The conjunction of front- and back-body creates an asymmetrical being with four arms and two legs that calls attention to the existing asymmetry in all bodies. Toole's borrowing of Kay's legs is not intended to compensate for a perceived lack. But if there is a lack, it is not Toole's alone. For the front-body—Kay's—is modified at the same time that it modifies. And if it does play the dominant "supporting" role in this physical structure, the front-body does so from a nondominant position, i.e., the bottom. In this way, the two dancers complicate the idea that it is only the disabled body that stands to benefit from a swapping of limbs.

The art historian and curator Amanda Cachia (2016) has argued that when a performer makes work from the lived experience of disability, this "creates complexity and ambiguity in representations of disabled bodies in contemporary art practices" (152). While there is room for complexity in the DV8 film by virtue of its casting, the performance of disability by nondisabled dancers in a production such as Dimitris Papaioannou's live performance piece, *Primal Matter* (2012), works on the more superficial level of illusion.[6]

With many of his performances featuring steeply raked stages, Papaioannou is a director who often literally elevates and animates the background. Papaioannou directed the 2004 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in Athens, and in 2018 he was a guest choreographer for Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. The *Daily Gazette* summarizes *Primal Matter* thus: "A naked man and a man in a suit fight to share the same space, and in the end become one" (Liberatore 2012, para. 1). By "become one" the *Gazette* writer means that the two men's bodies move together in unison and give the illusion of hybridity. By placing Michalis Theophanous, the nude man, in front of a square of black fabric, Papaioannou, the suited man, is able to make Theophanous's limbs disappear one by one until he resembles the Venus de Milo.

Dimitris Papaioannou and Michael Theophanous in Papaioannou's *Primal Matter* (2012). Photo by Nikos Nikolopoulos.

Later on in the piece (the moment of "oneness" that the *Gazette* describes), Papaioannou becomes a living prosthesis when he stands behind Theophanous and replaces the other man's leg with his own. To pull off this illusion, the front man bends his knee until his calf is hidden behind his thigh, while the back man rolls up his suit leg to the knee until there's just enough leg exposed to substitute it for the front man's "missing" leg. Soon after, both legs get involved when the front man hides both his legs and sits atop the shoulders of the back man, who crouches in the dark, invisible like a stagehand except for his exposed shins (which are now the front man's shins). The two men stumble together, like competitors in a strange lawn race, toward the audience, with the back-body helping the front-body to balance. This is essentially the same kind of partnering that we see in *The Cost of Living*'s beach-walking scene, except that in *Primal Matter* we find an able-bodied performer pretending to be an amputee. What should we make of this representational difference? In both cases, the disabled body (real or faked) is endowed with another person's limbs. It could be argued that both DV8 and Papaioannou are working with Surrealist tropes (i.e., monstrosity, making strange), but that the former works more toward subverting these tropes simply by virtue of having a disabled performer who controls, to an extent, his own representation. Here Cachia (2016) writes:

> Indeed, it is as if the Surrealists knew that the disabled, deformed, and castrated body is what provoked such fear, and while they searched for it and created art that became notorious for such uncanny characteristics, the disabled artist who objectifies his or her own body before a camera lens is doing something that the Surrealists could never quite attain. Surrealists made 'normal' bodies into 'abnormal' ones, emphasizing the power of having such fears through these bodily transformations and exaggerations. Yet, as far as I know, the Surrealists did not seek out and photograph actual disabled bodies. (142)

In the end, *Primal Matter* does play out many of these Surrealist tropes, including disabling, deforming, and castrating Theophanous, the nude performer (Papaioannou tucks the man's penis between his legs). When he begins to remove the man's other body parts, including his face, Papaioannou invokes textbook Freudian fears and anxieties. These reactions are not found only in response to missing limbs; they are also invoked by excess. One example of this, toward the end of the performance, involves Theophanous reaching through his legs and pulling Papaioannou's sweaty head between his thighs. Up until now, the back-body has been concealed in absolute darkness, except for the legs that it lends to the front-body. But now, the sudden irruption of Papaioannou's head into the foreground fully exposes his presence. The invasion of the back into the front breaks the illusion of wholeness that has, up until this point, been held together by choreographic sleights-of-hand. There is no more believing that the unseen back has restored the front-body. Now, the back threatens the front by giving it one more head than it needs, turning it into a symbol of excess. According to Cachia, this is one of the important differences between disabled performers representing themselves and nondisabled performers cripping up. The former is "real" and "corporeal" whereas the latter is "Surreal" and "symbolic" (Cachia 2016, 153). And to be portrayed as a symbol is to have a limited say in how one's body is perceived. To the extent that Papaioannou, in his own piece, plays the role of a god-like figure or a mad scientist (critics have made comparisons to Frankenstein), is he in any way "watering down the agency of the disabled body, or in this case, the amputee body?" (Cachia 2016, 152).

In its original context, this question is aimed at another work that features nondisabled bodies lending limbs to disabled ones. The piece to which I refer is a 1998 installation film (and photo series) called *Oko za oko* or *An Eye for an Eye*, by the Polish artist Artur Żmijewski. To my knowledge, critics have yet to address the probable borrowing in Papaioannou's *Primal Matter* from this piece. The Żmijewski film features amputees and nonamputees who join their bodies together in precisely the same illusory way that Papaoiannou and Theophanous do, in order to construct an image of "completeness" or mock-completeness. Referring to the possible double meaning of the work's title (*An Eye for an Eye* could mean either revenge or exchange), Cachia suggests that Żmijewski intends to ask with this piece "whether it is possible at all for one person to 'compensate' another for his or her impairments" (152). Between "lend," "supply," and "compensate" we find ourselves mired in language that presumes a lack as if the disabled body in the foreground has nothing of its own to provide the "non-lacking" body in the background. Speaking to this issue, Cachia (2016) says that we need "new concepts and language around notions of 'support' and insufficiency" (152).

On this point, if we are to think about the back-body as a supporting or augmenting figure that is always behind (and most often in control), how should we think about the dynamic between front and back in a way that recognizes the agency of both figures? Perhaps we should consider how support is distributed between bodies. If one body is doing the lifting, for example, how is the lifted body supporting the lifter? Further, we might think about how various theatrical and is

filmic technologies play a supporting role in framing and lighting bodies. That the DV8 scene is shot from the side and that Papaioannou and Żmijewski's performances are shot from the front important. Regardless of the perspective, however, a body that is behind another body will tend to be called the "back" no matter how that body faces the spectator (in the sense that a conga line that crosses one's path still has a back and a front). It would seem that reorientations of this sort do not supersede one's understanding of directional conventions. In this regard, the quality of "behindness" is different than "backness" in that things can be behind even when they are in the foreground. Probably the best example of this visual paradox is one that Banu mentions: that is, René Magritte's painting *La reproduction interdite* (1937), which features a man who sees his own back reflected in the mirror (a la Maupassant). The back bodies of Magritte, Maupassant, DV8, Papaioannou, and Żmijewski are always engaged in some kind of illusion, the most common of which is a reversal or blending of front and back so that the two cannot be told apart. These disorientations, in Lennard J. Davis's (1997) words, might be described as "the mirror phase gone wrong" (60). Something in us or something in the mirror causes us to doubt our sense of the body's wholeness. What we see, in these mirrors, is our own "repressed fragmented body" and this repression is likewise manifest in encounters with disabled bodies (Davis 1997, 60).

Disorientations: When People Bend Over Backwards for You

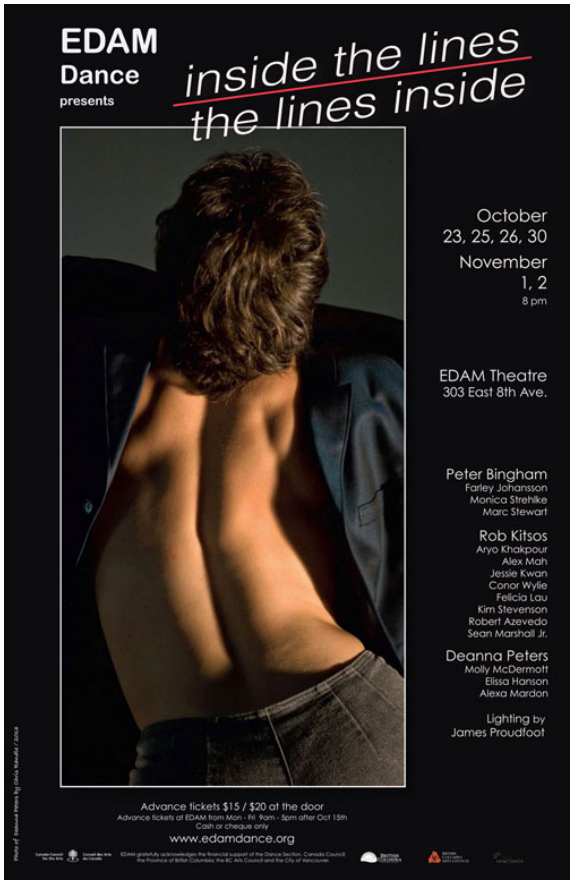
In no performance is the phrase "the mirror phase gone wrong" more apt a description than in Xavier Le Roy's solo performance *Self Unfinished*, which was made in collaboration with Laurent Golding and premiered at MoMA in 1998.[7] Throughout the piece, Le Roy contorts and dresses his body in ways that abstract the human form, rendering it alien-like. In one scene, he pulls a black skirt over his upper body and spider-crawls his way around the room on all fours. His arms, now functioning as a second set of legs, seem to bend at an impossible angle. He looks, through crossed eyes, less like a mammal, and more like a molecule—perhaps the protein kinesin as it "walks" along a microtubule. Le Roy was a biochemist before he was a dancer, after all. At one point, the dancer approaches the upstage wall and walks his feet up into a handstand (although he now appears to be entirely made of legs and so it is hard to say what are feet and what are hands, if not visually then definitionally). Once in this position, Le Roy then crab-walks along the wall, right-to-left, with his legs (arms?) in a goalpost shape. Between the black pants encasing his lower (now upper) body and the black skirt encasing his upper (now lower) body, there is a six-inch gap in the fabric where we see his exposed back (now front). The musculature of Le Roy's back—his erector spine muscles—is well defined like abs, furthering the illusion of a front-back reversal.

If he embodies any kind of mythical hybrid here, Le Roy does not resemble any textbook cross-breed that I have seen before; rather, he seems to be half man and half alien. He is made up of two lower halves and thus appears to be a composite of two bodies even though he is only one. But is he all front and no back, or all back and no front? The closest comparison I can think of, watching Le Roy, is that he looks like someone operating a two-person horse costume if that costume had two rear-ends. Once costumed in this form-busting outfit, Le Roy spins in a slow three-hundred-and-sixty-degree circle, showing us his butt, and then his other butt. You can see what I mean now by "the mirror phase gone wrong"—Le Roy's body is mirrored in such a way that it becomes unrecognizable. In an interview, the dancer/choreographer describes his intention to rearrange the body and disorient the viewer in precisely this way: "I was working a lot on fragmenting, dismembering, deconstructing and reconstructing my body mostly to explore what the limitations of my body can produce. I used this strategy to create movements to transform some ideas about handicap and limitation into illusions or other physical abilities" (Hantelmann 2002, para. 6).

Like the other artists I have discussed, Le Roy plays with forms—halves, wholes, and doubles, especially—in order to create Surrealist tableaus. But unlike the all-too-human, posthuman, and more-than-human figures found in DV8, Papaioannou, and Żmijewski, Le Roy abstracts the body to the point of rendering it nonhuman. One might say the very title of this piece goes to the heart of the problem of wholeness. The self, in *Self Unfinished*, is always becoming something else. It wears pants and a dress at the same time. It sometimes hides its face and sometimes conceals it. All the while, it never transcends the fragmentary identity that "precedes the ruse of identity and wholeness," as Davis puts it (1997, 61).

Other-Orientedness: When People Back Each Other Up

I would like now to consider one more work in greater detail, which takes up all the themes I have discussed so far and puts the subject of the back-body front and centre. And it is here that we come around to a Canadian context: Mutable Subject's 2013 performance, *NEW RAW*.[8] The piece was choreographed by Deanna Peters in collaboration with performers Elissa Hanson,[9] Alexa Mardon, and Molly McDermott and was performed at EDAM Dance in Vancouver. On the Mutable Subject website, Peters writes that "*NEW RAW* is a lot about backspace: ass backwards, baby's got back, back me up, back and forth, back off, back to back, behind your back, laid back, scratch my back . . ." (2015). In fact, the back-body is such a part of the show's iconography that one piece of promotional material features a well-composed photograph of Peters's back, which is lit in such a way that the subject's musculature is exaggerated and eroticized. The image captures a specific moment early in the show when Peters faces away from the audience while wearing a black blazer the opposite way around.



Promotional material for the 2013 EDAM Dance presentation of *New Raw*, by Deanna Peters/Mutable Subject. Photograph of Deanna Peters by Chris Randle.

There is something, however, about the photographic medium that makes this presentation of the back somehow more uncanny than the live show's. Being a close-up, it removes all manner of spatial orientation, so that the back becomes a truer front with less depth behind it. Once again, in treating the back-body as the front-body, we are presented with an illusion. The blazer has a fixed orientation so that when it is worn backwards, it signifies that anything on the buttons-side is frontal. In other words, if the image were blazerless, we would only see a back and not a back-becoming-front. As it is, the image confuses the eye. From far away, the subject of this photograph could be mistaken for George Michael, shirtless under his blazer (no doubt the intended effect). We might say, then, that the back is treated here as a gender-fluid surface. In a very literal sense, the photograph's depiction of the back-as-front challenges the binarism of orientations both gendered and physical, since it treats this ambiguous bodily surface, for which there is no third term, as "both" and "neither."

On the other hand, the live performance deals with various tropes of femininity, e.g., cheerleader stereotypes. The opening scene features McDermott sitting in a chair, wearing a red skirt and a sleeveless sports jersey. The look falls somewhere between vintage cheerleader and point guard. Standing beside the chair and resting a soft hand on McDermott's shoulder is Peters, who faces upstage and wears a backwards blazer, as in the photograph. Slowly, McDermott begins to squirm in her seat, growing more restless as time goes on. There is an element of stress and strain in her movement, but also, perhaps, euphoria. As Peter Dickinson (2015) notes in his review of the performance, "the chair carries associations of decorous bodily comportment (women don't usually get to manspread) against which McDermott might be rightly rebelling" (para. 6). Such a reading echoes Sarah Ahmed (2006), when she asks: "Is a queer chair one that is not so comfortable, so we move around in it, trying to make the impression of our body reshape its form? The chair moves as I fidget. As soon as we notice the background, then objects come to life, which already makes things rather queer" (168). It is almost imperceptible at first, but the chair begins to slide upstage, dragged from behind by an unseen performer, Mardon. At times, the hand on McDermott's shoulder seems like it could be directing the action and causing the seated dancer distress, but it could also be read as a tender and supportive gesture, intended to pacify (which motive may be no less oppressive). Because McDermott's squirming stops for good when Peters's resting hand is removed, there is reason to believe that the hand was active mover rather than passive hanger-on and that it was in fact somehow "behind" the action. The balance of power between the two performers is clear from their respective orientations: one standing and one sitting, one facing forward and one facing backward. Not only is the spotlight on McDermott, who has no choice but to be seen, but the seated dancer holds a craned-back neck for the duration of this sequence so that we, the audience, are invited to stare at a body without a face to confront us in our staring. Here, Dickinson (2015) writes that the three dancers in this sequence all "avoid the (presumptively male) gaze of the audience" (para. 7). At the same time as the dancers avoid the gaze by refusing eye contact, they also create the ideal conditions for voyeurism by abstaining from reciprocal looking and mutual desire (only to dramatically subvert this imbalance later).

Another quintessential Surrealist image comes to mind when looking at McDermott—a 1929 photograph by Man Ray called *Anatomies*, which is an extreme close-up of a model's bare shoulders, neck, and chin. The upward angle of the model's chin defamiliarizes her head, abstracting it into an oblong blur. Although there are elements of the castrated body in images such as this one, Mutable Subject does not play with Surrealism's disability tropes in the same way as the other works I discussed above. In the most general sense, every living person has some kind of face and head, and so McDermott's apparent facelessness/headlessness does not provoke any immediate associations with a disabled body; nor does Peters's turned back call to

mind any stereotypes. If anything, the transformation of the feminine-coded back into a masculine-coded front could be seen to "rupture the normative female form" without disabling it (Cachia 2016, 150).

Other modes of manipulation and support come into view in the next sequence, when Mardon (the chair-puller) emerges from behind McDermott and begins to act as puppeteer. The first thing to surface is Mardon's hand, which tugs assertively on McDermott's earlobe. Subsequent tugs and pushes are occasionally timed with the music (a manic hip hop track played at double speed). But Mardon does not appear to have all the agency here, given that McDermott also moves independently of these handlings and mishandlings. There is nothing to suggest that the front-body has any overt control over the back, however. As in the traditional acting exercise, Mardon is "sculptor" and McDermott is "clay." When the two dancers do trade places for a second, and Mardon briefly comes to occupy the front position, no explicit role reversal takes place, which suggests that the power imbalance is not simply a matter of who stands where. While behind the chair, Mardon tosses McDermott's head from side to side like a basketball. At one point, McDermott comes to rest in a coach's pep-talk position, elbows on knees. Coming around the chair now from the side, Mardon approaches and suddenly knocks out an arm so that McDermott collapses. Not a second later, however, Mardon hoists McDermott back up into an upright position. Such an action complicates our view of the back as a supporting figure in this dyad. Why the sudden about-faces in behaviour?

Recalling Peters's list of back-related themes, it is the "back and forth" in this scene that registers most strongly. Mardon goes between having and not having McDermott's back. But when McDermott finally stands up, the dynamic shifts somewhat, and their partnering becomes more like a series of compromises and traded impulses. In one instance, Mardon is put into a headlock. And in another momentary levelling out of power, the two dancers perform something akin to a Lindy Hop barrel roll, in which they turn back to back, rotating like gears along each other's back-body. One imagines that both dancers, in this moment, must become tangibly aware of their own back and that of the other. This point of contact lasts for only a second before we are back to Mardon being the sculptor and literally shoving McDermott around. McDermott, now wilful and combative, walks backwards toward Mardon, only to be shoved three more times. The surreal gold-leaf makeup on Mardon's face reminds me of a mischievous sprite, the kind of playful yet threatening force that one might wrestle with in a dream. In their final formation during this duet, the two dancers are so tightly hugged together that Mardon becomes a kind of exoskeleton to McDermott, a human backpack. Here it becomes truly impossible to know who is cueing and being cued—who is leading/following, acting/reacting, pushing/pulling, and so on. The various tells, if they could be read that easily, might be found in the dancer's arms as they expand and contract, stiffen into cactus shapes and soften into a self-hugging gesture. Such sudden vacillations, between cooperation and resistance, make the essences of back and front hard to pin down.

Sometimes, the ambivalence-cum-denial that McDermott shows to the dancer behind her suggests that the body operating in the background is something like a manifestation or a hallucination. To that end, Mardon's presence could even be read as a metonymic representation of McDermott's own back made visible—an externalization of the unseeable side of ourselves. For the first half of the piece, both Peters and Mardon appear as guardian-angel figures: the hand on the shoulder, the unmoved mover behind the sliding chair. And so, perhaps McDermott is the Jungian dreamer who experiences these outside forces as projected fragments of herself. According to Lennard J. Davis—here quoting the Lacanian scholar Ellie Ragland-Sullivan—

"because the child first saw its body as a 'collection of discrete part-objects, adults can never perceive their bodies in a complete fashion in later life'" (139). It is precisely because of the four dancers' physical proximity in *NEW RAW* that each of them is able to perceive the body as a whole, which wholeness, as I suggested earlier, is always a ruse (Davis's term). In sum: the behind-body allows a dancer such as McDermott to see, feel, and experience her own back-body as an outward presence, akin to lying on the ground and feeling every point of contact between the skin of one's back and the surface of the earth.

Self-Orientedness: When Everything Ties Back to Me

This is where I found myself on April 23, 2016, when I took a *NEW RAW* workshop with Elissa Hanson at the Scotiabank Dance Centre—i.e., on the dance studio floor performing a body scan and experiencing the ground as an equal and opposite force to mine. When lying on the ground in any kind of meditation, I like to acknowledge how pressure is distributed. On a flat surface, it pools in my upper back. A full and dull sensation. We began the workshop like this, with a guided body-scan, shortly after introducing ourselves, checking in, and getting comfortable. Hanson then led us through a brief warm-up, which involved listening to Haddaway's song "What is Love" in order to cut the tension and bring everyone into a fun, unselfconscious headspace. I recall being invited to listen to our bodies and move in our own way, and I can remember doing a few cat-cows (as a nondancer, my movement vocabulary is mostly limited to yoga shapes). Soon after, we got to our feet, about ten of us, and Hanson started to recount the genesis of this sequence and the intentions behind it.

This workshop covered the latter half (the tail end) of the performance, when Hanson backs herself onto the stage with her butt in the air (again, in a downward dog shape). By this point, I had seen the performance twice and knew what to expect in terms of this sequence's choreography. I also knew that the gestures and shapes here would be fairly accessible to me, given that they do not involve much technical movement, no big turns or jumps. Furthermore, the workshop was marketed to all bodies and abilities. The real difficulty of this sequence, I came to discover, is the courage it takes to meet the audience's eyes with extreme, bordering on grotesque, confidence (more on this in a second).

The sequence starts with everyone making a surprise entrance, which is played for laughs. In the piece, it is only Hanson that performs this part, but we performed it as two groups of five or so. Because Hanson wears a flowy ankle-length skirt, we were all invited to wear one. There were not enough skirts to go around, however, so I went with a long sleeve shirt tied around my waist. We began with our butts in the air and the skirts and makeshift skirts draping down to the floor. From the audience's perspective, the resulting figure is a bit like Cousin Itt or the Yip Yips—an amorphous bell shape. One leg over the other, we began to creep out into the centre of the room from the wall, monkey crawling from side to side, using all four limbs for support. The movement is not complicated or athletic, but it is highly physical, requiring a greater degree of flexibility than I had expected. In order to get one's butt way up in the air (in my experience) one's hips and hamstrings need to be on the looser side. Mine, however, tend to want to go not much further than a hundred and ten degrees. All the same, my butt is suspended somewhere in space, and I am shuffling backwards toward the spectating half of the group, all too aware of the subtle exhibitionist-voyeur contract into which we have entered.

We were invited to sense our backspace, to lead with our back-body, and to make the back expressive by exploring its personality. I tried to think of my butt as a face, darting about and looking around searchingly, sussing things out like an animal—meanwhile, as per the task, I tried

to hide my actual face in the unseen zone on the far side of my skirt. By this point, a small wave of pain has started to travel up my spine, so unfamiliar with this position is my body. As a result of having done some of the movement from *NEW RAW*, I have a more embodied sense now of the difference between the back-body—a line that runs from heel-of-foot to crown-of-head—and the back as it is known colloquially—namely, a rectangle atop two posts.

After a minute or so of hesitant backwards movement, we were invited to work into a larger travel across the floor, letting our arms hang and sway a bit more, and making our steps bigger, but still taking our time. Moving backwards into invisible space is scary, but it also abolishes some of the fear of being looked at and judged. It is here, at the energetic height of this phrase, that we began to roll up to stand and face our would-be audience. Once standing, I started to circle my hips around in a washing-machine motion as Hanson does in the show.

The subsequent phrase is where "grotesque confidence," as I previously described it, enters into the equation. Now standing upright with my back still facing the audience, I put on a sinister smile, cultivating a strange mix of oversold enthusiasm and campy desire. To be clear, these were not the prompts nor the words that Hanson gave us; in fact, she kept the exercise rather open, saying something more along the lines of "Imagine you are happy, almost overjoyed, to see them." My experience of both watching and performing this character is that the smiling face passes through Marilyn Monroe to Jack Torrence, before arriving at Edvard Munch—from charming to scary and finally to horrific. Hanson's smile becomes abject the moment that its circumference appears more "dental chair" than "dental poster." It might have seemed like the back was an affront, but this mouth-shape is the more confrontational of the two.

But where has the back-body gone in my discussion? It seems to have gotten away from me, so interesting is the front-body to consider. Now I see, when I consult the *NEW RAW* video, that Mardon has been dancing in the background this whole time—and quite loudly, too—while I have been focusing on Hanson in the foreground. And so it is that the front-body is an attention-stealer. No doubt, my preoccupation with the front is further abetted by the medium of documentation, too, which, being a Vimeo clip, is decidedly depthless. What is more, the reflexive experience I had as a live audience member, whereby the staging of the front-back relationship drew my attention to my proximity to other audience members, is all but non-existent on a flat screen, at home in my swivel chair. On the contrary, *NEW RAW* was originally performed on one of the deepest stages in Vancouver, at the EDAM dance space in the Western Front building off Main, which is twice as deep as it is wide. To my knowledge, the piece was created around that space, and its dimensions determined much of the piece's movement and its sometimes severe blocking, such that the dancers come to occupy a more extreme foreground or background than they typically would. This already-long space is perceptually lengthened, too, by doors on the upstage wall, which exit out the rear rather than the side, a device that is used at one point when Hanson makes a comically prolonged exit, only to return a moment later. The EDAM stage may be the only space I have encountered where the backstage of the theatre is sometimes visible from the audience, through two open doors, marked with EXIT signs, and as a result, most performances I have seen at this venue take some advantage of this peculiarity.

The group explores these spatial dimensions to a greater extent in the piece's final sequence, which involves lanework that sees all four of them squared up, marching to an industrial beat. Hanson, Peters, Mardon, and McDermott stagger themselves front to back as they approach the audience at different paces. In principle, this section reminds me of that inflatable party game, Bungee Run, where competitors must sprint down a lane with a bungee cord tied to their back,

to see who can get the farthest. The dancers do not sprint, but they do become possessed with a sudden intent to approach the audience, and upon reaching their furthest mark downstage, they are just as suddenly pulled back upstage by some invisible force. Their dancing, as they move backwards, grows in intensity, until some of them are jumping up and down like a boxer before a fight. By contrast, their downstage movement is dramatically stifled and small. Here, the dancers explore their personal and collective power through their mobility on stage. As they shift from one lane to another, they exercise their ability to queer the straight lines to which they seem bound at first.

This sequence employs a number of tasks similar to the ones we worked on in Hanson's *NEW RAW* workshop, where we were invited to see the audience, to greet them with our nearly-unhinged smiles, and then to feel ourselves carried backwards at the moment we switched our attention from front-body to back-body. One gesture we practised was called "sails" (a shorthand) where we were asked to raise our arms like a Flamenco dancer and, with crossed legs, feel ourselves almost tripping backwards due to an imbalance in our distribution of weight (a prompt much easier felt and observed than written about). As I moved forward and back, back and forward, I reached my hands behind my head to tousle my hair (another gesture in this sequence). Thinking back on this moment of action, it strikes me that the back-body has never really been inaccessible. Sure, there are spots where the sunscreen is hard to smear, but I do not need to kiss the back of my neck to experience it. For can I not reach around with my hands and touch it anytime I want? For those who have the privilege of touch and sensation, this gesture is a given. At the very least, most people can experience their back tactilely by simply lying down, even if it were the case that a person had sensation only in the back of their skull. Now, as I come to write this essay's last few sentences, these sensations creep into the foreground yet again. There's that familiar low-level ache that comes of sitting and writing for long stretches of time (and long periods without stretching). Perhaps you feel it, too.

Notes

1. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4X3rAg6lhY&feature=youtu.be&t=47.
2. See http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Horl.shtml.
3. See https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/03/07/backbone.
4. See https://www.manray.net/ingre-s-violin.jsp.
5. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx4v-oMSmBQ.
6. See https://vimeo.com/190056876.
7. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3rv1TeVEPM.
8. See https://vimeo.com/78581284.
9. Full disclosure: my partner.

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Dancing Bodies, Moving Spaces: Revealing Children's Movement Encounters in an Integrated Kindergarten Classroom

Coralee McLaren and Patricia McKeever

When I entered the gait lab at the children's rehabilitation hospital, I was struck by the room's physical dimensions, size, and how familiar it seemed to me. Despite the lab's distinct clinical features, the space reminded me of a dance studio. I felt the urge to move about and wondered whether the boy I was observing felt the same. With an apparent dancer's sensitivity, he avoided the centre of the space by walking along its periphery to where the technician and I were seated. He told me his name and sat quietly as the technician traced white markers along the angles of his legs, hips, and spine. When he stood up, he moved directly to "centre stage," i.e. the middle of the room. I marvelled at the confidence he seemed to place in his legs, much like a racehorse eager to demonstrate his strength and speed. The lab no longer felt like a studio or stage. I was seated in a grandstand anticipating a high stake race (observation and reflection: September 22, 2007).

gait (gāt), n. 1. the manner of walking, stepping, or running 2. any of the manners in which a horse moves, such as a walk, trot, canter, or gallop (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Backstory

I recall entering Dr. McKeever's office in a similar, gallop-like manner. I had recently graduated from a nursing program and was eager to meet this professor whose research involved children with mobility impairments. This meeting profoundly changed the trajectory of my career. I introduced myself to her and asked if she would supervise my graduate studies. Dr. McKeever replied: "I will only supervise you if you approach your research as a dancer." I felt surprised, elated, and terrified. I had spent years transitioning from a career in the performing arts to a career in health sciences. By unearthing my dance roots, I wondered what research could emerge from a mélange consisting of a nurse/dancer, a health sociologist, and disabled children. The following story describes the research-choreographic process that evolved.

Dr. McKeever arranged for me to begin my dissertation research by observing how a child with a mobility impairment is assessed in a gait lab.[1] My observations and reflections of his movement in this space became the genesis of my research project. Although it was difficult for me to articulate, I perceived this child to be connected to the physical space and sensed this relationship in my own dancing-body. Unsettled and curious about this experience, I reviewed related research/academic literature to determine what was known about children's bodily relationships with the spaces/places they occupy. I learned that moving freely is a crucial determinant of children's physical, cognitive, and social wellbeing (WHO 2007). This understanding led me to wonder how children with mobility impairments move with/in these spaces/places and how their movements might be compromised.

Coralee McLaren is an assistant professor in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, Ryerson University and Adjunct Scientist, Bloorview Research Institute, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Her award-winning PhD dissertation and current research draw on her former career with the Toronto Dance Theatre. **Patricia McKeever** is a professor emeritus in the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto and Adjunct Scientist, Bloorview Research Institute, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. From 2007 to 2012, she held the hospital foundation's Chair in Childhood Disability Studies.

Guided by an interdisciplinary PhD committee,[2] I considered a question posed by Spinoza almost four centuries ago and taken up by the late philosopher Gilles Deleuze. The question "what can a body do?" casts the body as a source of knowledge and reconfigures it as the sum of its capacities by asking not what a body *is*, but rather what it does (Deleuze 1988). The child moving in the gait lab seemed to answer this question by demonstrating the movements his body was capable of doing. His apparent enthusiasm conjured up memories of my own physical experiences of dancing through space. Realizing that it was impossible to differentiate my dancer-self from my nurse-self, McKeever urged me to merge my "selves" to think differently about how children move with/in their environments.

To this end, we decided to study children with diverse movement abilities in an integrated kindergarten classroom. We established and merged philosophical concepts with ecological theories, neuroscientific advances, and my knowledge of dance to pose innovative research questions. Following Deleuze's admonition (1988), we did not rely on prevailing medical or educational discourses that define, reference, or categorize children according to their functional abilities or limitations.[3] Instead, we sought to understand how both disabled and nondisabled children use classroom spaces and objects to move, explore and discover "what their bodies can do." This shift in thinking from how children's bodies "should" move to how they "might" move is supported by neuro-educational approaches that link environments to cognitive enhancement.[4] Ultimately, we developed a conceptual framework that enabled us to observe, interpret, and understand what kindergarten children "do" with their bodies in classrooms.

Lines of Flight

Although Spinoza's question was unknown to me during my dance career, I realize now that I had danced his question. In modern dance, movement experimentation is essential to the creative process. Hence, the movement choices I made explored "what my body could do." Some movements resulted in new physical insights; however, this "knowledge" was contingent on the context, i.e., other dancers' movements, accompanying music, spatial/stage dimensions, temperature, angles/intensities of light, and unsprung floors. New ways of knowing my body changed continuously because performance contexts always changed. As I gained experience, the unsettled feelings related to my inability to predict performance outcomes evolved into curiosity about what my body *might* do in different contexts.

The best performances occurred when the music seemed to creep up from behind me, enter my body, and propel me on to the stage. William Forsythe[5] describes this experience as idealized dancing: "just not knowing and letting the body dance you around" (2003, cited by Manning 2009, 21). Deleuze and Guattari[6] (1987) might have described such performances as "lines of flight" that leave the body transformed. Unpredictable encounters with other dancers' bodies, spaces, objects and rhythms led to new ways of moving, interacting and responding on stage. Although these experiences could not be recreated, they intrigued me enough to "venture from home on a thread of a tune" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 311) in search of similar sensations or movement surprises each time I performed.

In what follows, McKeever and I describe kindergarten children's spontaneous, dance-like encounters in their classroom. These observations gave new contours to the study and demanded a shift in focus when they evoked my memories of dancing-with others. Extending Forsythe's ideas,

my dissertation committee questioned whether choreographic "seeing-and-thinking" resides exclusively within the realm of dance, or whether related mechanisms and principles could be used to develop new understandings of these children. We wondered if a choreographic lens might reveal heretofore hidden movement encounters and if new methods and language would illuminate these encounters. To this end, we designed a study that "[did] not insist on a single path" forward (Forsythe 2011, 90) or result in a conclusive end goal.

Next, we discuss the steps that underpinned the ethnographic and choreographic processes that evolved. These steps involved reviewing the literature, improvising relevant theoretical approaches, gathering compositional elements, and developing data analytic techniques. We present these steps using a musical/choreographic score that includes a prelude and coda. Keeping our diverse sample/cast of child-dancers central to this score, we describe our conceptual and methodological links, hesitations, shifts-and-leaps. In the finale, we land in the middle of this study or "dance-in-the-making"[7] not with answers but with an evolving choreography of ideas/questions. This study may set the stage for future research that seeks to understand bodies-and-spaces "such as have never been seen before" (Massumi 1992, 101).

Prelude

The following literature review sets the stage for our "dance-in-the-making." We knew that moving freely in indoor and outdoor environments is optimal for all children's physical, social and psychological health and development (Day 2007; Dudek 1996; Dwyer et al. 2008; Holt 2004; Huttenmoser 1995; Kyttä 2004; Pellegrini 1988; Piek 2008; Prellwitz and Tamm, 2000; Spencer and Blades, 2006), but were unaware that unrestricted movement and gestures also optimize their cognitive and communicative skills (Broaders et al. 2007; Rowe and Goldin-Meadow 2009). The brain's prefrontal cortex and cerebellum[8] previously were assumed to function independently, but new understandings of neuro-anatomical circuitry and neuroimaging technology indicate that extensive connections link these regions (Durisko and Fiez 2010; Strick et al. 2009; Kelly and Strick 2003). Imaging studies have also indicated that these regions are co-activated when the brain is engaged in verb generation, word fluency and memorization activities (Murdoch 2010) especially when these tasks are novel, challenging or unpredictable (Diamond 2000). Finally, motor coordination difficulties are common in children who have language disorders (Stoodley and Stein 2011). In summary, movement enhances children's health and learning because their motor and cognitive processes are intertwined.

Furthermore, neuropsychological research has established strong associations among young children's unrestrained gesturing, improved problem solving, and enhanced vocabulary (Cook et al. 2008; Rowe and Goldin-Meadow 2009). These findings suggest that cognitive and bodily knowledge are synergistic, i.e., learning occurs through movement rather than through verbalization or memorization alone (Broaders et al. 2007; Cook et al. 2008; Rissotto and Tonucci 2002). Gesturing seems to be an embodied way of representing new ideas and engaging the external environment by linking mental representations to objects and contexts (Cook et al. 2008). This finding has been corroborated by advances in neuroscience that highlight the importance of motor activity to establish and reinforce neural pathways (Damiano 2006). Garbarini and Adenzato (2004) argue for a model of cognition that reconceptualizes the mind as rooted in bodily movement and environmental interaction.

Since the 1970s, environment-behaviour scholars from several disciplines have recognized the significance of physical contexts and human interactions. However, research to date has focused primarily on the social properties of environments rather than physical or architectural features (e.g. Barker 1968; Bronfenbrenner 1979). In the 1980s, interest in children's interactions with their physical environments began to flourish (Heft 1988; Moore 1986, 1987; Weinstein 1987; Wohlwill and Heft 1987). Hence, new conceptualizations and methodological strategies revealed the relationships among children's moving bodies, physical environments, and physical, social, and cognitive development. Most studies were conducted in outdoor environments with nondisabled children, leaving a critical knowledge gap about children with motor impairments (for example, Cornell et al. 2001; Fjørtoft 2004; Heft 1988; Kernan 2010; Kyttä 2004; Pellegrini 1988; Rissotto and Tonucci 2002; Sandseter 2009). We wanted to begin to fill this gap by studying children with and without motor disabilities with/in an integrated kindergarten classroom.

Children's Movement at School

Full day kindergarten programs are offered to three- to five-year-old children in Ontario and other Canadian provinces. Hence, these children spend approximately six hours a day inside a classroom. Given that movement and cognition are fundamentally intertwined, understanding how children move, explore, and interact with/in school spaces is imperative. Although movement-based, experiential learning activities have been integrated into many kindergarten classrooms, admonitions about "proper" ways of moving persist. Children are consistently asked to temper their bodies' proclivity to move by sitting still to promote learning.[9] Such admonitions are justified by the erroneous belief that moving or restless bodies disrupt learning (Bresler 2004). This belief is reflected in many classroom designs and layouts that feature tightly bounded spaces and physical arrangements that ensure eye contact with a centrally located teacher. Although such spaces are problematic for all children, they significantly challenge those with motor impairments. These children must navigate these spaces quietly using cumbersome wheelchairs and walkers that seem out of place (Prellwitz and Tamm 2000).

Since the 1980s, most disabled children have attended schools that were originally designed for nondisabled children (UNESCO 1994; United Nations 2006). Most are enrolled in segregated or integrated classrooms (Statistics Canada 2001; Canada Council on Social Development 2006). It is widely agreed that such classrooms do not ensure disabled children's full inclusion.[10] Although policies stipulate that publicly funded schools must accommodate all children, the environmental prerequisites for effective social and physical inclusion of disabled children remain unknown (Hemmington and Borell 2002).

It is widely acknowledged that physical disabilities are exacerbated by environmental and social factors (United Nations 2006; WHO 2007, 2001), yet little is known about how disabled children respond to and move with/in built environments like schools. Gross and/or fine motor impairments restrict movement and elicit exclusionary attitudes and safety concerns, and physical barriers significantly impede explorations of school spaces (Tieman et al. 2004; Wooley 2005; Prellwitz and Tamm 1999; Holt 2004). Hence, disabled children have considerably less "mobility license" (Kyttä 2004) to investigate their classrooms than their nondisabled peers (Day 2007; Rigby and Gaik 2007). Furthermore, most disabled children have fewer opportunities to develop their intrinsic physical capacities. Therapies and social rules implicitly and/or explicitly encourage them to

acquire "normal," socially acceptable bodily movements and gestures (Sapey et al. 2005; Oliver 1993; Hansen and Philo 2007).

Improvising with Frameworks

As is usually true of research and choreographic designs, my committee improvised and experimented with theoretical and methodological approaches to find a framework that would support our research objectives. To begin, I supplemented my readings of Deleuze with preliminary training in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). Laban's theory and methods for observing and describing movement offered a logical framework for studying children's movement; however, Deleuzian philosophy strongly resonated with the questions we were asking about children's body-space relationships. Although LMA provides a language for categorizing movement qualities and characteristics, it does so by extracting movement from the body and rendering it reproducible through forms of notation and inscription. As a dancer, I realized that I had come to know my body and "what it could do" not through a systematic way of knowing, but by taking risks, physically experimenting, and responding to unexpected encounters with dancing bodies and spaces. Hence, my committee agreed that Deleuzian/Guattarian conceptual strategies would enable us to reconceptualize and observe children whose movement capacities remained as elusive as my own.

Most importantly, Deleuzian/Guattarian improvisations would disrupt our observations and keep our descriptions on a "plane of composition" (1987). Together these philosophers challenge the idea that "true" objective representations of reality and stable "systems of knowledge" marked by systematic construction, linearity and categorization are possible. They conceptualize the body as a creative body that is irreducible to its functions or component parts and is known through "flows of relations" through which it passes and is produced (1987). They argue further that the body cannot be definitively "known" because it continually changes, and physical capacities can only be revealed through ongoing interactions with environments. Describing bodies according to traditional systems of classification such as LMA limits them to preconceived ways of knowing. For these reasons, Deleuze and Guattari advocate for the creation and proliferation of new concepts that re-imagine bodies anew. To this end, we assembled new theoretical frameworks that would support a choreographic lens to observe children's dancing-bodies.

Dancing Bodies: Seeing and Thinking with Deleuze

The tendency to cast the body in Cartesian, dualistic terms still underpins most Western educational and medical systems. Cartesian dualism stipulates that the brain is distinct from the body and the mind is the locus of knowledge. This is inconsistent with current scientific understandings that conceive the mind as rooted in bodily action and interaction. To redress this problem, we used Deleuzian concepts that disrupt predetermined, systematic ways of thinking that categorize children in terms of their identities, movement abilities and ways of learning. These concepts move us beyond what has been defined and habituated through familiar ways of thinking, talking, and doing, and deconstruct traditional codes and habits in order to connect them in new, unexpected ways. Some early childhood educators have concurred that Deleuzian approaches can cause the "vertiginous feeling" of losing one's balance, but it is at the same time "a very joyful and affirmative affair, since it can give us access to universes we did not know anything about" (Olsson 2009, 26).

Following Deleuze's admonition to "unsettle" rather than "settle" old questions, we cast children's bodies as sources of knowledge replete with physical capacities yet unknown. Viewing their bodies through a choreographic lens also moved us beyond conventional ways of seeing-and-thinking about children and their capacities. We did not categorize them as disabled or nondisabled. Instead, we observed how all child-dancers physically disrupted such classifications through their experimentations and bodily encounters with objects, persons, and classroom spaces. For example, we observed and conceptualized the processes by which children "deterritorialize" spaces to escape intrinsic and/or extrinsic physical constraints as "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Deterritorialization is the process of fleeing, altering habits, and discovering something new. Lines freed to travel, having pushed past critical thresholds, form new territories when they intersect with other lines of flight and elicit new experiments. We used these concepts to "[pry] open vacant spaces" (Massumi 1992, xv)[11] and rethink children's movements in terms of their intensive connections.

Moving Spaces: Seeing and Thinking with Gibson

To contextualize movement in space, we drew on ecological theory, which assumes that environments are inherently discoverable and experiential (James 1909/1978, cited by Heft 2001, 31). The central feature of an ecological approach is the notion of reciprocity: people selectively enter and engage with their physical environments to discover physical properties and modify the functional opportunities they offer (Heft, 2001). Hence, people and environments are not cast as separate, discontinuous entities, because environments are experienced through their bodies. In contrast to Cartesian body-mind dualism described above, people are considered "embodied agents that reside at the storm centre of experience" (Heft 2001, 57).

James Gibson (1979) casts physical environments in these relational, ecological terms in his theory of affordances. Contributing to the psychological subfield of visual perception, Gibson suggests that physical environments contain information that is directly, visually accessible. This information does not have to be processed cognitively for people to interact with their environments. He coined the term "affordance" to emphasize the interactive possibilities that emerge between environments and their human occupants. All environments are comprised of objects and features that offer potential interaction; however, such perceptions only emerge when observers' characteristics (e.g., size, gender, abilities, social needs and/or intentions) match these affordances (Kyttä 2004). Although potential environmental affordances are infinite, actualized affordances are those that are perceived, utilized, or shaped by occupants (Heft 1989; Kyttä 2002).

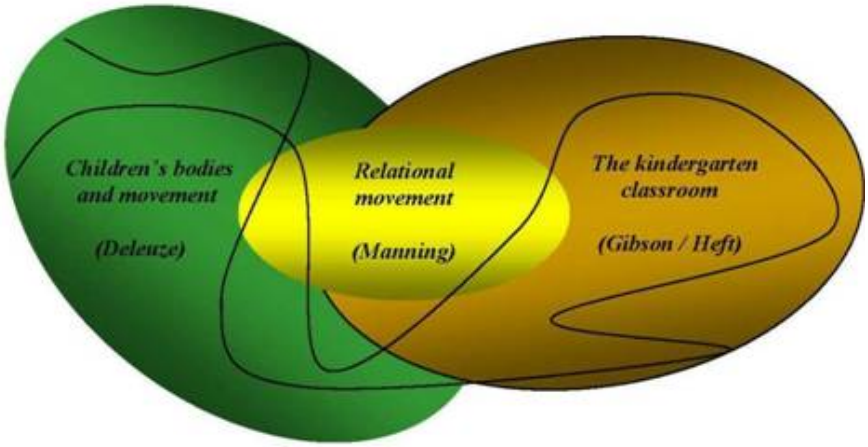
Affordance theory has been widely used as a framework for analyzing nondisabled children's interactions in outdoor environments (e.g., Heft 1988). We used a similar but modified Gibsonian-inspired taxonomy to analyze children's diverse movements in an indoor environment. For example, we observed how children balanced or leaned on tables and actualized the crawl spaces underneath. Similarly, mobile stools invited children to experience their roll-able or spin-able features. As such, the classroom was cast as actively participating in, rather than containing, children's movement (Perez de Vega 2007). This enabled us to see the reciprocity and dynamic encounters that emerged in this space.

Dynamic Relations: Merging Deleuze, Gibson, and Manning

In that no single framework provided the theoretical underpinning needed to reconceptualize children's relational movement, we merged Deleuzian and Gibsonian concepts. This conceptualization of children's bodies and spaces revealed latent connections and widened the scope of the contextual factors that influence movement. Deleuze and Gibson clearly articulated the co-constituting relationship between bodies and spaces. When their ideas are coupled, the total ecological environment, i.e., the interdependence of physical, social, and personal components, becomes visible (Moore 1985). Following Deleuze, we considered these interdependencies as "assemblages" in order to expand possibilities, inventions, methods, and perspectives. Assemblages are not static; they are processes of putting together, arranging, and organizing diverse elements (Dewsbury 2011). The goal was to attune ourselves to see/sense the assemblages that emerged between children's bodies and classroom affordances, and those that emerged between and amongst the children themselves (Anderson and McFarlane 2011). For example, we observed the dynamic relationship between a boy, his wheelchair, and the connections his body-chair made with classroom affordances. Following Deleuze, we asked: What does this actual thing repeat or synthesize in this child's habit and memory? What is it driven to repeat or synthesize in terms of intensities? What is the "sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness . . . the intensive affects it is capable of . . . its local movements, differential speeds?" (1987, 260).

Contemporary dancer/philosopher Erin Manning[12] extends Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of relational movement and the notion of the "event" (1987). She posits that events are changes immanent to a convergence of parts, sustained as pure virtualities (i.e., real inherent possibilities) that are distinguished when they are actualized. She contends that events are as much vibration as they are action and believes that "for an event to occur, movement has to be pulled out of the indeterminate and activated from the virtuality of the not-yet" (Manning 2009, 37–38). She further argues that an event is not comprised of movements that occur, but arises from a set of synthesized forces or productive intensities. Following Manning, we attuned ourselves to classroom movement events that emerged from the middle—interactions that appeared to have no beginning, end, or goal. We were drawn into the productive intensities generated by "catching the edges of their contours, and participating in the relations they call[ed] forth" (Manning 2009, 81). This "seeing-and-feeling with [children's] movement moving" (2009, 86) resonated with the dynamic sensations I sensed in my dancer body and enabled me to articulate how intensive moments transformed all bodies that were caught up in the event.

Manning contends that there is rhythm in such events. Rhythm gives affective tonality to experience by "mov[ing] us before we know where we are going" (34). Accordingly, we set out to observe how changes in children's rhythm altered the event, and how fluctuations changed movements by intensifying, slowing down, and changing them into something new. We considered these rhythmic events in terms of their potential: how they elicited ways of moving. According to Manning, when people move in new ways, they continue to experiment with that movement, thereby opening up possibilities that become emergent potentialities or invitations to "move-with in ways which even yesterday we wouldn't have imagined possible" (2009, 39). The diagram below illustrates the assemblage of theoretical frameworks we merged to underscore our research project or "dance-in-the-making."[13]



Assemblage of theoretical frameworks

Gathering and Organizing Compositional Elements

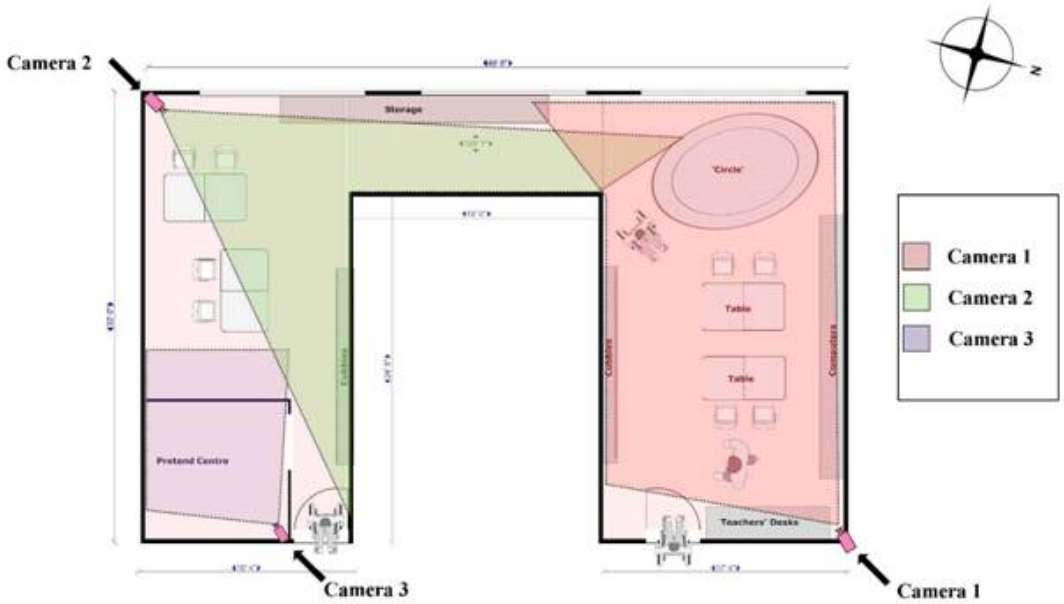
Research-Choreographic Design

Carrying out ethnographic research[14] in school settings raises ethical and feasibility issues related to gaining and maintaining informed consent from the children and adults who inhabit the space. For these reasons, this focused ethnography was comprised of shorter field visits, intensive, multi-method data collection and analysis techniques, a predetermined focus, and prior knowledge of the classroom (Knoblauch 2005). After receiving ethics approval from the hospital, university, and school research ethics boards, all twenty children enrolled in the integrated kindergarten program were invited to participate and were cast as dancers. We conducted ten weekly structured observation sessions in the classroom, followed by short interviews with each child-dancer. The kindergarten teachers told us that they believed that movement was integral to learning, that they accommodated all children's strengths and weaknesses, and that they promoted understandings of equity, fair play, and diversity.

The sample/cast of child-dancers consisted of nine boys and eleven girls. Eight had mobility impairments affecting their ability to stand and/or walk independently, sensory conditions involving reduced hearing or vision, and/or mild cognitive impairments. Four of these dancers used walkers, one used a manual wheelchair, and three walked with or without ankle-foot orthoses. The remaining twelve children had no known physical or cognitive disabilities. The cast was diverse in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and body size. The sample size was consistent with similar ethnographies designed to garner comprehensive data in a single setting (Morse 2000; Sandelowski 1995). We created colourful packages for children and parents that included study information, letters, consent/assent, and demographic forms. All textual and visual information was consistent with young children's reading abilities and assured child-dancers and parents that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Observing and Recording

Initially, Heft's modified taxonomy focused our attention on how children actualized classroom affordances. In that movement and classroom objects/features were considered co-constituting, neither was privileged. Three video cameras were mounted strategically on classroom walls to maximize and overlap fields of view.



Classroom floor plan, features, and camera positions

Video recordings augmented my direct observations and revealed those that I overlooked. Ultimately, the video recordings constituted the primary source of observational data. By staying in close proximity to the children, I noticed how they negotiated rules and shaped affordances despite teachers' admonitions to move in safe and/or socially approved ways. Hence, I began to experience the classroom physically with these children, feeling-and-sensing their movements, and the emergence of similar, past physical experiments in my own body. Following Delamont's suggestions (2001), I wrote reflexive notes following each session to record my sensations and theoretical insights, and to account for decisions made, dilemmas, reflections, and experiences as a nurse-researcher-dancer.

Seeing, Hearing, and Listening

After each observation session, I conducted twenty-minute, individual semi-structured interviews with two child-dancers. These interviews began in the Pretend Centre, a theme-related, partially enclosed area where children moved about with minimal teacher supervision. I attempted to reduce the inevitable adult-child power and size differentials by engaging in children's activities and by sitting on the floor with them during the interviews. Because children think more clearly when their bodies are in motion (Cook et al. 2008; Broaders et al. 2007), I encouraged them to move about during the interview. This enabled me to observe their gestures and movements while listening to them.

Most children spontaneously moved beyond the boundaries of the Pretend Centre and guided me on "mini-tours" of the classroom. A small, hand-held audio recorder captured their words as we moved and danced through the space. I asked them to show and/or tell me about their favourite ways of moving, things they liked/didn't like to play with, their favourite areas and how the classroom would look if they had magic powers to change it. I asked the disabled children to show and/or tell me how they liked to move with their walkers and/or wheelchairs, and the space/places where these movements could be best accomplished. Audio recordings constituted the primary source of analyzable interview data.

Analyzing Compositional Elements

Following Miles and Huberman's approaches (1994), I developed seven analytical steps to analyze the video and audio recordings. I conducted minute-by-minute analyses of the video recorded sessions (fifty-two hours of data) to identify conceptually relevant interactions between individual children and the affordances they actualized. I then created movement/affordance profiles for each child-dancer that were enhanced by field notes. Each profile included the child's movement characteristics (e.g., smooth, risky, unusual), actualized affordances (e.g., jump-off-able chairs / glide-able pathways), contextual data (where interactions occurred) and assemblages (objects, features, and moving bodies). Next I coded, displayed and expanded these profiles using Heft's functional categories. Emerging conceptual themes were tracked separately.

Movement assemblages were coded as key analytical events to enhance understanding of children's actualization of affordances. Although a taxonomy formation was integral to the analysis, it did not fully capture the dynamics and intensities of movement interactions. To redress this, I re-analyzed the video data drawing on some of Manning's concepts to describe children's encounters with assemblages of classroom objects, features, and other moving bodies. Finally, the themes that had been identified/coded in the audio/interview accounts were refined, analyzed, and compared to findings from the video analyses.

Rigorous research practices were achieved through meticulous attentiveness to the data and subsequent reflections. Analytical rigour was assured because the conceptual framework underpinned all theoretical insights. Multiple methods increased the dependability of the findings, and confirmability was established through an audit trail that clearly illustrated how conclusions were reached (Brewer 2000).

Findings (Variation) 1: Classroom Affordances

The taxonomy of indoor affordances captured the children's interactions with the classroom's physical objects and features. The resulting categories included: 1) flat, relatively smooth surface or open pathway;[15] 2) rigid detached objects; 3) nonrigid detached objects; 4) attached objects; 5) shelter/enclosed spaces; 6) modifiable objects; and 7) moving bodies. The categories actualized by most children and which elicited nonhabitual movements[16] were: 1) the open pathway; and 2) moving bodies. Some rigid detached objects (chairs, stools and mobility devices) and nonrigid detached objects (exercise balls) afforded risky movements for nondisabled and disabled children alike. All children actualized attached objects (tables, shelves) in traditional ways and those with mobility impairments used them to stabilize their movements. Enclosed/sheltered areas (the Pretend Centre and cubbies) afforded privacy and social interaction. Pretend Centre configurations included modifiable objects (castle doors, modular chairs) that elicited creative, nonhabitual movements.

Descriptions of classroom affordances explicated the functional significance of the classroom's features (Heft 1988), but those that elicited children's "flexible potentialities" warranted my particular attention (Ross 2004, 179). The "open pathway" and "moving bodies" elicited frequent, diverse, and nonhabitual movements in most children. These movements were characterized by rhythm (e.g., running or galloping along the pathway), playing with gravitational forces (e.g., suspending and gliding-with walkers), and testing the physical limits of what bodies with a range of

abilities *could do*. In less rule-bound or prescribed areas (i.e., the pathway), children experimented, mimicked, and triggered others to move in nonhabitual ways. The relationship between the open pathway and moving bodies seemed as important as the categories themselves.

In other contexts, researchers have found that pathways are associated with social interchange (Evans and McCoy 1998; Ogden et al. 2010). Although we did not set out to examine children's social interactions, their actualization of each other's movements resulted in rhythmic synchrony that connected them both physically and socially. Such movement encounters did not seem to involve cognitive decision-making, but rather seemed to be reflexive, *bodily* responses to changes in movement dynamics and flow. The video data illustrated how moving bodies swept up other bodies, transformed their rhythms, and elicited new movement responses along the pathway. This finding may be attributable to the pathway's transitional function and visibility from either side of the classroom. Furthermore, this bi-directional open space afforded children opportunities to encounter others in close physical proximity, harness their rhythms and momentums, and experiment with movement.

Rigid detached objects, the pathway, and attached objects were relate-able affordances. Depending on how children assembled them, they enhanced or inhibited movement. For example, a run-able open pathway and a glide-able walker together afforded some children the opportunity to harness the pathway-walker's speed and momentum and facilitate their ability to skim quickly across the floor (see below). In contrast, assemblages of bodies, walkers, and tables sometimes inhibited movement by restricting children's ability to penetrate in-between spaces (see below). Some children managed to forge through such spaces by abandoning their mobility devices and using adjacent tables or chairs to support and stabilize their movements. Essentially, where/when diverse objects and features were assembled, children negotiated the relationship between and among affordances.

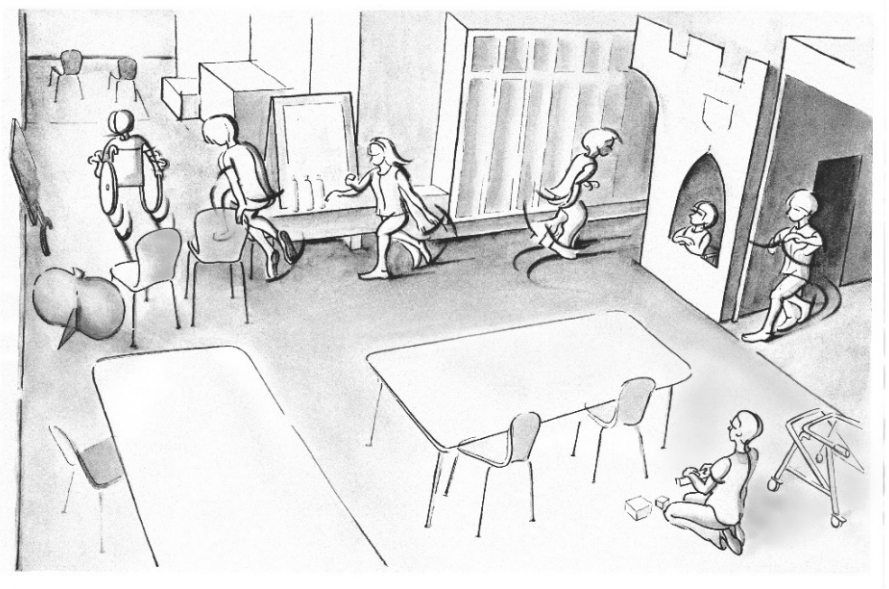
Jumping-gliding girl[17]

Navigating-spaces boy

In enclosed/sheltered areas such as the Pretend Centre, modifiable objects, rigid and nonrigid detached objects, and moving bodies were assembled in many ways. We had anticipated that children would move in prescribed ways in the Pretend Centre based on the learning theme and classroom rules. However, the privacy the space afforded and children's ability to stretch the rules and move relatively freely elicited nonhabitual movements. Modifiable objects were manipulated and/or transformed with minimal adult surveillance or intrusion. All children's bodies appeared somewhat "unhinged" in this space through unsanctioned movements, games, experiments, and risky behaviours (e.g., ball-surfing). Similar to the pathway, most children moved and played in close physical proximity to one another and frequently mimicked and triggered each other in this space.

Disabled children who were able to manoeuvre short distances device-free pushed their walkers aside in the Pretend Centre or left them at the entrance in order to move and experiment with more ease.

Although the identification and description of children's actualized classroom affordances was an important first stage of this research, the findings did not adequately describe children's engagement with the space. Missing from these categories were the seemingly imperceptible and intangible variations of movement that became visible to me when I saw-and-felt them as a dancer. I realized that Heft's categories overlooked the relationship between actualized affordances and the movements they incited: the swirls-and cascades of activity and the ways children moved (or almost moved) in response to the movement intensities. I could not ignore the changes in rhythm, movement phrasing, and the recombination of bodies, objects and features and their intensive affects. Using my choreographic lens and guided by Manning, I describe next how these intensities became visible and transformed children's interactions during one notable movement event.

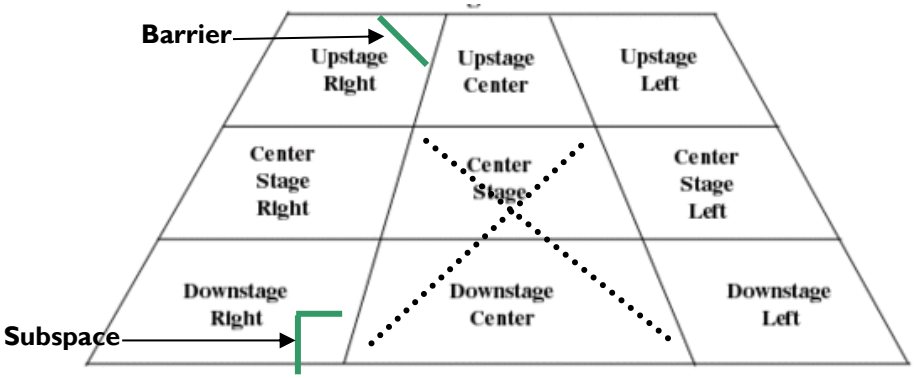


A movement event (classroom, south side)

Findings (Variation) 2: The Classroom Event

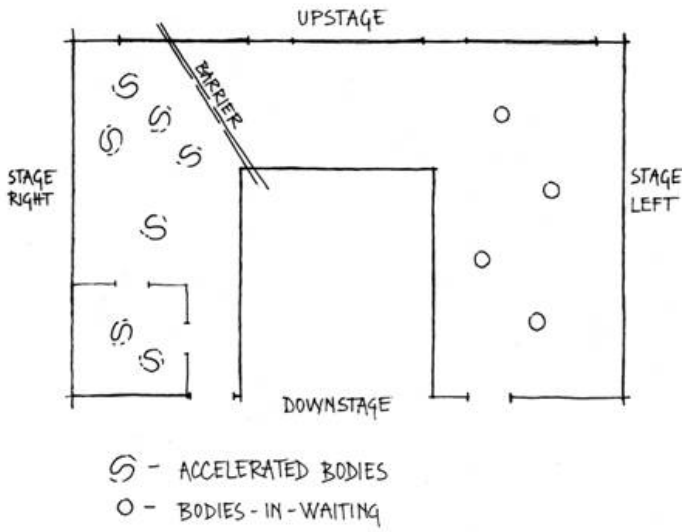
Da capo: Accelerando[18]

All twenty child-dancers had gathered on the classroom-stage when the event emerged. They were playing an improvised game that they referred to as the Secret Club. Although the rules seemed fluid, I understood through observations and interviews/informal conversations with the dancers that the game only included children, a newly configured physical barrier (a collection of chairs and objects upstage right), a modified feature (the castle subspace downstage right), and at least seven child-dancers to begin the game (see diagram below). Their unanticipated encounters with each other and the newly configured space elicited new ways of responding and/or moving.

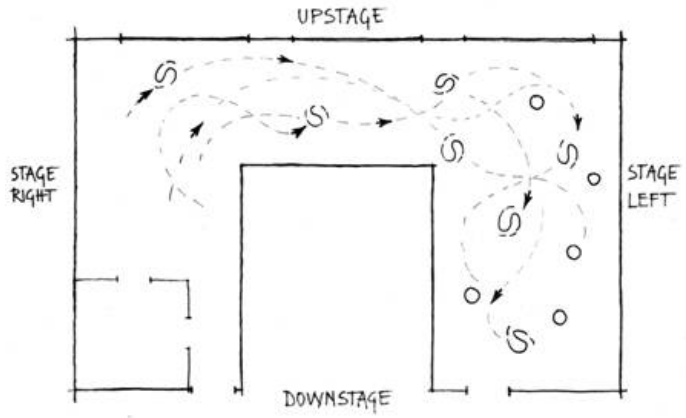


Classroom-stage areas

Although it was impossible to discern how or when the game began to change, interactions between child-dancers and the newly configured space gained momentum stage right. The change in speed felt palpable to me. Unanticipated encounters seemed to elicit excitement in the dancers as they accelerated their movement forwards, backwards, sideways and around. When I observed the game on video, I saw children mirror each other and mimic rhythms, i.e., running-and-gliding, jumping-and-galloping, suspending-falling-and-rocking. I saw only differential speeds, rhythms, momentums, and flows. Bodies collided and the pressure on stage right seemed to increase to a point when/where movement could not be contained (see diagram below).[19] Accelerated bodies dismantled the barrier to follow lines of flight, seemingly freed to travel having pushed past this critical threshold. Moving bodies permeated all areas of the stage, i.e. jumping-and-climbing over the barrier, gliding-with-walkers along the pathway, spinning-with-wheelchairs and hiding-behind castle walls. Movement flowed along the pathway and spilled on to stage left (see diagram below). The cascade of bodies and objects seemed to sweep up other bodies-in-waiting, i.e., gathering, carrying, and releasing them to other areas and spaces. I followed these lines and watched them transform into jig-like-dances and other deterritorialized refrains—dancers in search of new territories, experiments, intersections, and terrains.



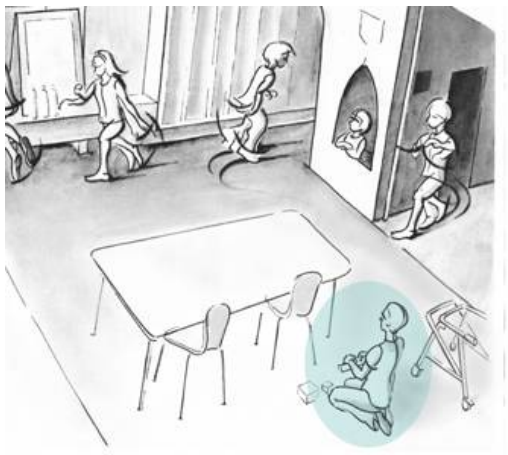
Accelerated bodies contained



Accelerated bodies released

Glissando[20]

Although a five-year-old boy belonged to the Secret Club, his involvement in the event fluctuated with the movements and speeds that moved and/or spilled in front of him, and when there was not enough space for his body-and-walker to mirror these rhythms. I frequently observed this dancer sitting along the periphery of the classroom (see below). His neurological impairment affected his gait, balance, and coordination, making his movements unsteady and shaky. However, his movement difficulties did not seem to deter him from regularly exploring the classroom-stage and its transformations. He took physical risks such as abandoning his walker, dropping to his knees to crawl through cramped spaces, running-and-gliding with his walker along the pathway, and using the device to crash through objects and barriers. Typically he took these risks to be near, follow, and/or move with other dancers.



Watching-and-playing (centre stage right)

When the event emerged, this dancer was kneeling and playing alone centre stage right, close to other dancers moving. He watched from this vantage point for several minutes before he took a circuitous route with his walker toward the newly configured barrier. He paused at the threshold and then used his walker-turned-snow-plough to crash into, dismantle, and push past the barrier. As other children rushed and spilled past him, he followed them and picked up their speed. In a moment of apparent weightlessness, he pressed down on his walker, thrust his legs forward, harnessed his speed, and glided uninterrupted along the pathway. His glissando-like movement made

it impossible for me to differentiate his body-from-walker-from-pathway. Other dancers mirrored his rhythm and speed, running, sliding and skipping a short distance behind him. He repeated the glissando over and over again, seeming to urge his body-and-walker to stretch further and move faster each time.

Gliding-walker-pathway-boy

When I spoke to this dancer, he likened his body-walker to a police car, suggesting that the movement intensities this assemblage created (i.e., changes in acceleration, momentums, rhythms and flows) were as important to him as the individual components of the assemblage (body, walker, pathway). Although he did not respond to my direct question about what it was like to glide along the pathway, he indirectly answered this question when I asked him to describe his favourite way of moving around the classroom-stage:

> DP: I like driving my police car!
> CM: Oh that's right. Your walker is your police car. That must be fun.
> DP: Yep. I can go fast you know.
> CM: Show me again how you do that (ran, picked up his feet and glided along the pathway). Wow! Are you okay? Did it protect you?
> DP: Yep!

Recapitulation/Conclusions

Our findings suggest that thinking-and-doing movement comprises a large part of young children's school lives. They concur with Deleuze's/Manning's belief that the capacity to move is immanent in all encounters. By observing disabled and nondisabled children interactions, we witnessed their desire to move and experiment with classroom affordances. These desires were accompanied by a physical tenacity that seemed to drive even the most cautious children to escape their physical limitations. In their interview accounts, children compared and/or described their movements according to the rhythms and the physical sensations that were elicited in their bodies. Regardless of their physical abilities, children sought out and assembled affordances to test gravity, experience changes in speed, incite new rhythms and elicit novel, nonhabitual ways of moving.

We concur with Manning's assertion (2009) that objects-and-spaces can become thresholds for thinking-feeling. Our findings indicate that children's perceptions of objects are not limited to seeing objects they can use and/or play with. Children perceive-with objects, "participating in the relations they call forth" (2009, 81) and finding ways to reconfigure and/or assemble them into something that moves beyond their "matter forms." Disabled and nondisabled children's bodies alike were swept-up by other bodies seemingly in search of integration and/or fusion-with environmental affordances. Hence, this cast of child-dancers dismantled ways of thinking about human capacity by smoothing-out the boundaries between their bodies-and-objects and reconstituting themselves as capable in recombination.

This conclusion is supported by behavioural and neurophysiological research that indicates that action perceived (e.g., seeing someone running or dancing) activates representations of corresponding motor programs in the perceiver (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2010). Currently, researchers are exploring how this "motor resonance" or "mirroring" contributes to interpersonal coordination. For example, Satori et al. (2011) found that the mechanisms underlying action observation are flexible and highly responsive to the social dimensions of environments. These findings suggest that observation/execution matching systems in human brains may constitute the cortical substrate not only for thinking about and/or imitating observed movements but also responding to movements in complementary ways.

Coda[21]

Composer Burkhart (2005) suggests that having gathered momentum and worked through ideas to their structural conclusions, codas "look back" and bring closure to a composition. Although a sense of "finality" characterizes most codas, many retain their own interest and offer additional information. The purpose of the present coda is not to bring our "dance-in-the-making" to a conclusive end. Instead, we "look ahead" and consider ways this research could be extended, re-interpreted, re-danced or rewritten.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), new ways of thinking do not emerge between knowing and not knowing. Instead, they emerge through the disruption of ordinary movements, habits, and notions. Revealing children's movement encounters using a research-choreographic framework revealed new ways for us to see-and-think about children and their movement at school. This disruption supported our interest in hybrid observation/creation methodologies that simultaneously engage artistic and scientific sensitivities. Dance provides a powerful anchoring for movement exploration. Our emergent methodological focus warrants further applications to understand its contributions to scientific enquiry. Innovative collaborations among dance artists, educators, health care professionals, disability researchers and children may have the potential to reframe design, rehabilitation, and educational practices and enhance opportunities for all children to move and thrive in their environments.

To conclude, Deleuze argued that by making language "grow from the middle," it becomes possible to rethink that which we no longer understand, situations we no longer know how to react to, in spaces we no longer know how to describe (1985). Our study reflects one attempt to rethink and describe that which remains difficult to understand. Description of children's dancing-bodies and moving-spaces provides only a glimpse of their school lives and relational encounters. However, by "miring language" within the affective tonalities of these relationships and keeping words and ideas

on a plane of composition, thinking, writing and dancing these bodies-and-spaces into worlds better known may be entirely possible.

Notes

1. Human movement or "gait" labs are used to assess and determine optimal treatment for children and/or adults with orthopaedic and neuromuscular disorders such as cerebral palsy.

2. McLaren's PhD committee included Patricia McKeever (Nursing, University of Toronto), Tom Chau (Biomedical Engineering, University of Toronto), Geoffrey Edwards (Geomatic Sciences, Laval University), Susan Ruddick (Geography, University of Toronto), and Karl Zabjek (Physical Therapy, University of Toronto).

3. Underpinned by Spinoza's question "what can a body do," our study aligns with curator Amanda Cachia's interest in this question to reconfigure understandings of the dis/abled body (2012). Nine contemporary artists demonstrated new possibilities across a range of media by exploring bodily configurations in figurative and abstract forms to challenge entrenched views of disability and destabilize reductive representations of diverse bodies. We extend these ideas to children's moving bodies, replete with unknown physical capacities unleashed by spontaneous, real-life encounters at school.

4. This research is described in the following section, Prelude.

5. William Forsythe is acknowledged for reorienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire to a dynamic twenty-first-century art form. His interest in the fundamental principles of organization has led him to produce a wide range of projects including installations, films, and web-based knowledge creation.

6. Pierre-Félix Guattari is best known for his collaborative publications with Gilles Deleuze, most notably *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). He was a psychotherapist, philosopher, and semiotician.

7. The phrase "dance-in-the-making" is derived from Erin Manning's Deleuzian-inspired conceptualization of relational movement. Key concepts originated by Manning are described in Section 2, Improvising a Framework.

8. The prefrontal cortex is critical for cognitive processing and learning, whereas the cerebellum is critical for motor actions and skills.

9. Bodily control was articulated by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (1975).

10. Inclusive education is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

11. Brian Massumi is a political theorist, writer, and philosopher well known for his translations of several major texts in French post-structuralist theory, including Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

12. Erin Manning is a Canadian philosopher and founder of the Sense Lab, an interdisciplinary research laboratory and international network focused on intersections between philosophy and the body in motion. Notable works include *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (2009), and *The Minor Gesture* (2016).

13. The use of hyphens between words stems from Manning's concern with the malleability of concepts that move, the expressivity of thoughts as they become feelings/actions, and the ontogenetic potential of ideas as they become articulations. She argues that to come to language is to feel the form-taking of concepts (2009).

14. Ethnographic research focuses on detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice.

15. This space primarily serves as a corridor for children and staff to move from one side of the room to the other.

16. Nonhabitual movements are defined as creative "cracks in habit," i.e., rare, inventive and/or indescribable movements performed by a particular child.

17. Through an iterative process with artist Jana Osterman, sketches derived from video data evolved to portray: 1) accuracy over interpretation; 2) a sense of dynamic movement; and 3) conceptual continuity, i.e., images that emphasized the interrelatedness of bodies and the environment.

18. da ca•po, music. *adj.* from the beginning; ac•cel•er•an•do, music. *adv. & adj.* gradually accelerating or quickening in time.

19. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a diagram is a technique or series of techniques for the open conjugation of intensities (1987, as cited by Manning 2009).

20. glis•san•do, music. *adj.,n.* performed with a gliding effect by sliding one or more fingers rapidly over the keys of a piano or strings of a harp.

21. co•da, *music. n.* The concluding passage of a movement or composition that is distinct from the main structure.

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Racism and Social Space in Canadian Dance: Actants, Structures, and Dancing Differently

Erin Silver

> The elevator goes up and the doors open and all the people of colour exit—and that's the Alvin Ailey School. And then the doors close and it's me and all other white people and then it goes up and it's Trisha Brown, and I go, "ok, this continues. So I need to talk about this."
> ~ taisha paggett, "Experimental Dance"

Introduction

The elevator is but one of the seemingly innocuous yet powerfully governing structures of the built environment. Elevators, entryways, rehearsal spaces, and other seemingly invisible "backspaces" to public-facing movement-based practices—the often overlooked spaces of the everyday—are nevertheless notable as sites of othering and of accentuated embodiments. At a panel discussion I convened on February 9, 2015 at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough entitled, "Experimental Dance: Histories, Politics, Presence,"[1] Canadian artist of Kenyan and Indian descent Brendan Fernandes and queer Black American dancer and choreographer taisha paggett, alongside Toronto-based Black dance scholar Seika Boye and Toronto-based independent curator Jacob Korczynski, considered their practices in relation to genealogies of modern and contemporary dance practices and discourse. What transpired was a recounting of a series of encounters and experiences accentuating bodily specificity based in corporeal hierarchies and orderings within the danceworld, and how pushing up against barriers to access and visibility informs, and forms, distinct embodied practices and politics.

In this paper, I reflect on contemporary dance practices in galleries. I argue that the seemingly benign physical structures that appear as backspaces within the danceworld, and their overlaps within the artworld, enforce dominant social structures, delineating a margin, but also opening up the possibility of making visible historically marginalized subjects. I posit that both spaces of the everyday and the bodies that occupy these spaces can be seen to be actants; however, the dancer as an aestheticized body within the specific space of the gallery punctuates taken-for-granted actant social dynamics within the built environment. As Korczynski commented during the panel, a "privileging of the neutral body . . . is neutral for some, and not neutral for others" (Korczynski 2015). I argue that choreographers, including Fernandes and paggett, among others, foreground aspects of movement through these spaces that are typically theorized as *in support of* a more "central" object, experience, performance, or space, and in so doing, accentuate structures that might typically be considered "backspace" (which here might include the call, the audition, and the rehearsal, as well as physical spaces including the elevator, the hallway, the exit, the bar, among others) but that also disrupt now-canonical histories of art and dance since the 1960s. Tending to both the embodied experiences of occupying these spaces and their discursive as well as social potential when these spaces are made central offers an opportunity to examine how, as Imani Kai

Erin Silver is assistant professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia. A historian of queer and feminist art, visual culture, performance, and activism, she is the co-editor (with Amelia Jones) of *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories* (Manchester University Press, 2016), and (with taisha paggett) the winter 2017 issue of *C Magazine*, on intersectional feminisms and movement culture.

Johnson writes, "we are socialized to move through our worlds and how one physically moves in dance" (Johnson 2018, 64). Overall, this paper forms part of a broader research project: a critical exploration of the join of the phenomenological and socio-political dimensions of the role of the structural "support," opening up to a consideration of how the "support role"—a role historically and typically relegated to women and people of colour—as well as various articulations of the supplemental, the marginal, and that which spills out of the frame, can also be positioned as carrying radical emancipatory potential. This paper also confronts the enduring blind spots, both historical and present-day, around racialized and queered bodies and their exclusions not only from participation but also from historical retelling and focuses on contemporary queer artists and artists of colour who reimagine and intervene in this historical terrain. In so doing, I aim to resituate the "backspace" not as inconsequential, but as inextricable to social and political dynamics that play out in the gallery and beyond.

The notion of "backspace" is not merely a theoretical apparatus but, in many cases, an actual physical site that when certain types of bodies occupy it, enforces a mirrored embodied experience of invisibility and otherness; for many, it is a space where certain bodies, notably, bodies that are marked as racialized, have been relegated—if not physically in place, then through its evocation of historical social and physical violence. The elevator is a space of liminality rife with anxious anticipation; its doors open onto distinct environments whose organization often cannot be known prior to entering. Once the elevator closes, those who have disembarked are at the behest of this organization until another elevator door opens to permit escape. The elevator, in paggett's observation, opened up to different worlds each time the door opened; however, this difference refracted back and accentuated forms of embodied difference vis-à-vis the perceived and actual discordance of space and its historical occupants, and the bodies that have been historically absented or subjugated within these spaces. In the introduction to her article "Dancing with Social Ghosts: Performing Embodiments, Analyzing Critically," Rosemarie Roberts also finds herself on the elevator at a dance studio with a group of dancers of colour and a white venue representative. She recounts the experience she shared with dance company members of Ronald K. Brown/Evidence of being guided by the representative onto the elevator and through the theatre kitchen, a space historically relegated to Black and Brown kitchen "help," to which the representative appeared oblivious and, consequently, oblivious to the psychical effects on Roberts and the dancers of being made to walk through this socially loaded space. Roberts argues that "performing Black and Brown bodies bear the burden and embody the weight of history, experience, and affect, moving them out from private and into public spaces. These corporeal articulations are the means through which insights about injustice based on race, class, gender, and sexuality are revealed to a public" (Roberts 2013, 8). I would add to this that in many cases, and as I will go on to show, performing Othered bodies not only translate private experiences into public ones, but also act as punctuations to critically examining the very spaces that demarcate bodies as "Other" within the spaces themselves.

The dancer as an actant in the gallery, rather than as a performer on the stage, occupies a space with historically fixed connotations, in particular in large-format institutions, which have in the last decade turned their attention to movement-based practices. This phenomenon is documented in art historian Claire Bishop's 2018 essay, "Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention," where Bishop questions how it is that "so many visual artists are hiring dancers, and so many choreographers are presenting at museums" (Bishop 2018, 24). Bishop's inquiry concerns the difference between "visual arts performance" and the "performing arts," issues of spectacle and mediation in relation to audiences, the problematics of movement-based practices and labour, and the economic motivators on the part of the institution to move away from what she

calls "event time" and toward "exhibition time" (Bishop 2018, 29). Bishop describes both the white cube and the black box as "ideologically loaded spaces"—the "white cube" as a "blend of neutrality, objectivity, timelessness, and sanctity: a paradoxical combination that makes claims to rationality and detachment while also conferring a quasi-mystical value and significance upon the work" (Bishop 2018, 29).

Roberts, a professionally trained dancer whose positions as dancer and researcher "afford [her] a particular view and specialized knowledge," calls for a replacement of the voice with the body, and how the "body acts in 'dialogic relationship with other bodies'. That is, how dancing bodies relate to audience and how I relate to dancing bodies" (Roberts 2013, 9). I am not a dancer, but an art historian; my white body is "unmarked" by racialization; my gender and my queerness do not block, but inform, my social vantage point, which nevertheless conforms to one of unembodied, "neutral" viewing. The effect the dancer's body in the gallery has on me as a viewer is one that both reasserts my view of the governing structures and visual organization of the gallery space and in so doing, acts as a corporeal punctuation, drawing my gaze toward the dancer's body that at once ensnares me but also points to the outside, the "over there," and back to myself, another body and, therefore, an "othered," but not "Othered" body, in the space. Distinguishing themselves from other "moving" bodies (bodies at labour and bodies of leisure) within space, "bodies in galleries," as we might think of bodies on display, work to establish our own distinctness from these bodies and, subsequently, initiate a process of examining the invisible factors that organize spaces as such at work. Like the abstract phenomenological effect of Minimalist sculpture, whereby sculpture signalled as metaphoric bodies that forced an awareness of the relationship of the viewer to space, the dancer's body triggers a similar effect, however, in de-abstracting the corporeal, confronts more directly the way in which bodies, when faced with other bodies, are defined by difference.

Differencing Minimalism

At the same time as dance was breaking out of its rigid shell and movement-based practitioners began to experiment with everyday movement, other experimental artistic practices were also on the verge of becoming. The history of Minimalism in the United States is well-mined: the legacy of "groundbreaking" exhibitions *Primary Structures* (curated by Kynaston McShine, Jewish Museum, New York, 1966; revisited in 2014 as *Other Primary Structures*, curated by Jens Hoffmann), *The Plywood Show* (the informal title of a show of seven Minimalist sculptures by Robert Morris, Green Gallery, New York, 1964), *When Attitudes Become Form* (curated by Harald Szeemann, Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; revisited in 2013 as *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, curated by Germano Celant with Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas), and Morris's *bodyspacemotionthings* (Tate Gallery, London, 1971; revisited in 2009 at the Tate Modern)—all shows dedicated to Minimalist and Postminimalist sculpture and structures, and all shows curated by men, both in their original installation and their contemporary reenactments.

These exhibitions, taken together, reflect the preoccupation, in the mid-1960s, with the phenomenological encounter and the embodied spectator—more overtly in line with what was concurrently happening at and overlapping with the Judson Dance Theatre in the early 1960s. As Bishop has observed, "it is striking that interest from museums and galleries has focused on choreography belonging only to certain traditions, above all Merce Cunningham and Judson Dance Theatre, both of which fostered rich interdisciplinary collaborations with visual artists" (Bishop 2018, 28). In Sally Banes's *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre 1962–1964*, Banes argues that dance

language at Judson represented "an assertion of the primacy of the body, of the body as the vital *locus* of experience, though, memory, understanding and a sense of wonder" (Banes 1993, 16–17). Iconoclastic experimentation within choreography at this time carried implicit political dimensions and, as was the case of Yvonne Rainer's work, emphasized a "'process' look" (Banes 1993, 16–17).[2] Banes and others have argued that prior to this historically defining moment at Judson, dancers including the Italian-born, West Coast-based Simone Forti, who moved to New York with Robert Morris in 1959, were engaging in experiments with the everyday in relation to structure-like objects. Forti's *An Evening of Dance Constructions* (1961), which positioned dancers' bodies in proximity to and directly engaging with a set of plywood constructions, has been positioned as particularly influential not only to choreography but also to Minimalism. It is important, however, to bear in mind the almost instantaneous intervention attempted by art critic Michael Fried, who, in his essay, "Art and Objecthood," first published in *Artforum* in 1967, argued against what he viewed to be Minimalism's "theatricality"—indeed, experimental dance's overt commingling with these physical structures in order to engage the primacy of the body furthers this argument (Fried 1967, 1998).

However, more recently, art historian Virginia B. Spivey has interpreted the threat posed to Fried by Minimalist sculpture as follows: "Fried . . . perceived a distinct threat in the Minimalist object's 'presence' that implies a weakened, or less authoritative position, than typically afforded the (male) critic" (Spivey 2009, 127). As can be noted in not only the original incarnations of the aforementioned exhibitions but also their more recent re-stagings, the ways in which histories of Minimalism are organized, curated, and presented simultaneously occlude and introduce the threat posed by women artists, queer artists, and artists of colour in upholding the primacy not only of the male gaze, but also of the white male spectator. One need look no further than Robert Morris and Carolee Schneemann's 1964 *Site*, in which the proto-feminist Schneemann herself became the "support" when her naked body was deemed an obscenity risk (a charge that Schneemann regularly encountered by virtue of her outright visual and performative acknowledgment of the body as a whole, inextricable from its sexual dimensions), leading to her being stationed, immobile, in the background while Morris carried a plank of plywood on his back across the stage. Reflecting on the controversies surrounding her work in the 1960s in the wake of the Culture Wars in the early 1990s, Schneemann astutely observed that censorship requires that a body, a practice, a subjectivity be permitted to come into view in the first place: "Censorship is flexible, responsive, motile, adaptive; boundaries of prohibitions are shifted, redefined. Women artists have been censored by exclusion for centuries. But what about the *other* "Others"? What of the artists so socially marginalized, so ignored as to elude acceptable controversy and *its* possible censorship?" (Schneemann 1991, 35)

This is but one genealogy among many developing at this time; however, the marriage of Minimalism and dance has proven a fruitful intersection for thinking through phenomenology and otherness, as well as an acknowledgment of the undeniable influence of these experimental practitioners on contemporary artists fusing formal and movement concerns. Artists working at this time introduced a radical break with modernism and implicit engagements with embodiment, dynamics between viewer and structure held in play invisibly via experience, and structures evoking the body in the absence of any in the space. More explicitly, and historically documented, is the relationship between sculptors and dancers in the early 1960s, with dancers' props influencing Minimalist sculpture and sculpture spectrally evoking the body in movement. The advent of these structural explorations incited a radical departure with Abstract Expressionism and, as would be felt from the 1960s onward, an inability to continue to not think about the spectator, or to think about a "neutral" spectator—white, straight, cis-gendered male. Within the intersection of Minimalism and dance, a more explicit corporeal form began to emerge. White woman artists, operating under the

feminine rubric of "dance," were permitted to become visible as makers and collaborators within experimental art scenes.

Just as important is the history of sculpture at this time for how it interrupted what was upheld, until the 1960s, as an uncomplicated relationship between viewer and artwork. The sculpture in the gallery forced a consideration not only of its obstructing and therefore accentuating presence within space, but also of other dimensional objects—actants—in space, namely, the bodies that commingled among the sculptures. In her canonical essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," from 1979, Rosalind Krauss discusses the difference between monument and modernist sculpture, arguing:

> In being the negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore, a domain cut off from the project of temporal and spatial representation, a vein that was rich and new and could for a while be profitably mined. But it was a limited vein and, having been opened in the early part of the century, it began by about 1950 to be exhausted. It began, that is, to be experienced more and more as pure negativity. At this point, modernist sculpture appeared as a kind of black hole in the space of consciousness, something whose positive content was increasingly difficult to define, something that was possible to locate only in terms of what it was not. (Krauss 1979, 34)

Implicit within Krauss's articulation of the evolution of the perception of sculpture's possibilities and limitations is a corporeal preoccupation, both in terms of how sculpture could (or could not) be apprehended in the "space of consciousness" and sculpture as a corporeal proxy and/or bridge opening up "veins" and eventually exhausting them. Krauss's evocation of a "kind of black hole" introduces metaphorical language intended to signal a space of nothingness or emptiness but also reflects a phenomenon common within art writing at the time to divorce the formal qualities of blackness from its political and social significance (one among many discursive strategies that have been historically employed to reassert white supremacy and patriarchal dominance).[3] Krauss goes on to argue that the artwork being produced in the early 1960s operated in a kind of "no-man's [*sic*] land": "it was what was on or in front of a building that was not the building, or what was in the landscape that was not the landscape" (Krauss 1979, 34).

Krauss's essay, and the concept of the "expanded field," has become a template for testing out the qualities of a plenitude of mediums that remain nebulously defined, defined more by what they are not than by what they are. Krauss evokes Barnett Newman's notorious observation that "Sculpture is what you bump into when you back up to see a painting" (Newman, quoted in Krauss 1979, 34, 36). In "Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone," Bishop discusses how many artists working in the intersection of art and dance in the gallery liken their work to sculpture, an effect, she argues, resulting from what Rebecca Schneider has pointed to as a way of avoiding "the messy, impure, and historically feminized performance-based arts of theatre and dance" (Bishop 2018, 32). And perhaps in illustrating this tendency, Bishop focuses her essay on examples of choreographies that don't seem to refer to anything outside of themselves, seemingly maintaining a purity of form (in this case, movement) more in line with the modernist preoccupation with medium-specificity in contrast to the experimental dance practices of the 1960s, whereby bodies in movement forced a view to other bodies and the built environment. She considers mediation on the part of the viewer, and other forms of looking *in* at the performance, rather than a view to how dance in galleries might also point *outward*—dance as representation of external realities and conditions, or as retreading, via repetition,

histories of social organization. In considering what distinguishes some moving bodies as dancing bodies and others as not-dancing bodies, we might also think about dancing bodies, those bodies that are conceptually and literally "bumped up" against and therefore punctuate an experience of space and the act of looking, as functioning in a similar vein. Taken in tandem with a view to Fried's warning against the theatricality introduced by sculpture in the 1960s, bodies define and are defined by the bodies they are not, accentuating distinctness, and therefore, difference, in a literalization of the relational difference that was earlier metaphorically implied by the relationship between sculpture and viewer. Punctuated bodies, those aestheticized moving bodies that share space among bodies and objects, are neither other bodies nor the built environment, yet work to delineate the others' specificity. The most seemingly benign forms of movement, either durationally or repetitively performed, then, work not to distract the viewer with spectacle, but to redefine, for the viewer, the structures of difference in which each actant—viewer not exempted—participates.

Dancing Difference

Although the conversation that unfolded at the 2015 panel at the Doris McCarthy Gallery did not intentionally centre on race, what did emerge were various experiences of difference and/or differentiation from the expectations of institutionalized forms of dance practice. The dancers at the table represented three entirely distinct practices; nevertheless, each one discussed how space and the negotiation of taken-for-granted backspace also paralleled experiences of embodied difference. Boye identified as a retired dancer and now choreographer and scholar of dance histories, specifically, Black dance histories in Canada, which, though following distinct trajectories from those of the United States, are regularly lumped into the American histories. Boye has worked to delineate a specifically Canadian Black dance history and has recently curated *It's About Time – Dancing Black in Canada: 1900–1970*.[4] The exhibition presented archival documents to explore largely undocumented and underpresented histories of Black social dance in Canada. Working with the uncatalogued holdings of Dance Collection Danse, Boye brought to the fore the influential practices of dancers and teachers including Len Gibson, Ola Skanks, and Ethel Bruneau. At the same time, the exhibition provided visual evidence of the racist practices of blackface and minstrelsy, working not to chart an uncomplicated history but to position dance as a strategy of resistance and community formation. Interestingly, in this exhibition context, visitors did not bump into bodies dancing in the gallery space but, rather, encountered these bodies as historical evocations from another time of Black sociality as expressed through dance. Dancers in the gallery are dynamic but also fleeting; dancers captured on film and in photography make important contributions to the visual archive of dance and, importantly, offer visual evidence of historically marginalized subjects: in many cases, while the names of the white dancers featured in the photographs were known, there was little to no knowledge of many of the Black dancers included in the same photographs.

At the 2015 panel, Fernandes, paggett, and Boye nodded in agreement that they have systematically been directed toward styles of dance deemed to be part of a Black dance genealogy or believed to be suited to a notion of the Black body and what have historically and taxonomically been viewed as its "unique" capacities. Fernandes and paggett recalled instances in which they were directed to Alvin Ailey (whose founding of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City in 1958 created opportunities and garnered international recognition for African American dancers in the 1960s), even though experimental practices such as Trisha Brown's and Yvonne Rainer's, they asserted, had figured more centrally as influences in their work. Fernandes's training in ballet was deemed ill-suited to his small frame, and he was encouraged into modern dance for this reason. Age

also factored as a point of difference; paggett spoke about coming to dance later in life, eighteen being considered older than most professional dancers begin their training. She recalled becoming absorbed in the university library's dance collection, and the inspiration taken from experimental practices, including Rainer's. These accounts, taken together, contribute to a growing refusal against the narrative of "neutrality" that has attached to histories of postmodern dance, and many other instances abound. The queer Filipino-American dancer Gerald Casel, for example, wrote a response to having been invited by Hope Mohr Dance's 2016 Bridge Project to respond to Trisha Brown's *Locus*. At once noting the undeniability of "embodied movement affinities and adopted compositional vocabularies" shared in common with Brown, Casel wrote:

> Formal constraints have the capacity to invigorate creativity, however, they do not function equally for all bodies. More precisely, there is no such thing as pure movement for dancers of color. In my view, it is difficult to separate structural and systemic power from race. Among other intersectional factors (such as age, gender, class, etc.), dancing by brown and black bodies is read differently than dancing white bodies.
>
> One of the assumptions that postmodern formalism arouses is that *any* body has the potential to be read as neutral—that there is such a thing as a universally unmarked body. As a dancer and choreographer of color, my body cannot be perceived as pure. My brown body cannot be read the same way as a white body, particularly in a white cube. (Casel 2016)

Contrary to racist perceptions as to the physical incompatibility of bodies of colour to certain types of dance practice, these examples emphasize the important distinction between constructions of "race" and occurrences of "racialization" as enacted on nonwhite bodies. As Rebecca Chaleff has argued, "*Any* body does not have the potential to be read as neutral, and so not *every* body has the same access to what is presumed to be ordinary" (Chaleff 2018, 79).

Radical Juxtapositions

American conceptual artist Adam Pendleton works across disciplines and appropriates found texts and images, referring to his process as "radical juxtapositions," a bringing together of seemingly disparate ideas that help to forge new views to the present and future (Pendleton 2016–17). Interestingly, the term "radical juxtapositions" was coined by Susan Sontag in describing Happenings, themselves the interdisciplinary overlapping of various mediums and movement within experimental art communities in the 1960s (Sontag 1962). In the art-danceworld, the term might be useful to artists looking for something beyond what the canonical history dictates as the official narrative; the American dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell, in *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church*, first performed in 2010, engages this practice in his rewriting "the minimalism and neutrality of postmodern dance with a new set of signs" (Harrell 2010). The white filmmaker Jennie Livingston, with her 1991 documentary film *Paris is Burning*, introduced the underground ball culture of queer people of colour—begun in the late nineteenth century in Harlem as "drag balls" and continuing into the present day—to a mainstream audience; however, as Harrell's radical juxtaposition points out, the ball culture of Harlem was well underway by the time the white-dominated postmodern dance community was occupying Judson Church in Greenwich Village. Indeed, a racialized delineation of "uptown" and "downtown" had been well established since the

Harlem Renaissance, when white "downtowners" would make the trek to Harlem to frequent jazz clubs and other spaces of Black sociality.

Just as the Harlem Renaissance's literary figures walked a tightrope in attempting to depict the social and political realities and potential for emancipated Black life in America at the same time as performing as primitivist "Others" for white audiences, the jazz clubs, which were often white-owned, were transformed from spaces that nurtured Black cultural forms to spaces that tailored to white audiences and, in many instances, where Black bodies were increasingly absented and segregated in a manner mirroring the Jim Crow laws of the South. In *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces*, Ramsay Burt has argued that, despite the collaborative work being done at the time between white and African American dancers, writers, and artists, including collaborations by Fred Herko, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), Diane Di Prima, and Cecil Taylor, the dancers at Judson did not make connections "between avant-gardism and the politics of race," nor did they recognize "the need to oppose mechanisms that maintained boundaries in terms of race" (Burt 2006, 130). Harrell imagines an inverse of this racialized dynamic, asking, "What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns at Judson Church? . . . [In] the distance between who we imagine a work is being performed for and its actual performance for those present, what kind of new relations can be created, adapted, and reassigned between performer(s) and audience?" (Harrell 2010) In this critical re-imagining, Harrell reclaims an agency denied Black performers in decades past, when Black bodies were subjugated for white cultural consumption at the very moment in which they were forging liberatory cultural forms. Harrell's choreographies at once trace these historical delineations and critically reconfigure the power dynamics inherent to performer-audience relationships, exponentially so in attending to and foregrounding racialization as further entrenching them.

Echoing the "what if" space that Harrell conceptualizes and then creates, taisha paggett and Yann Novak's collaborative three-channel installation *A Composite Field* (2014), to my mind, engages this desire to amplify the politics of historically formalist mediums and how the employment of the body as a medium in dialogue with other mediums might respond to and mould itself against political and social realities. Combining concerns for presence, movement, documentation, and witnessing with the historically fraught position of the queer Black body in the gallery space, paggett dances the same dance three times, with slight variations that become noticeable when the three videos are watched simultaneously. Novak provides an ambient score, played at conversation level; his manual manipulation of the lighting in each version of the dance evokes the Light and Space immersive works of James Turrell but here accentuates paggett's subtle movements as she performs for an audience in the room with her, tangling and untangling from a man's blazer. On the three screens, the high-tone colours influence and seemingly alter the colour of paggett's clothing and skin. paggett has claimed Yvonne Rainer as an influence; Rainer's 1965 "No Manifesto," with its opening lines, "No to spectacle/No to virtuosity," can be read, on a formal level, onto paggett's slow, unspectacular movements. On a sociohistorical level, the impossibility of paggett's body to be read as unmarked by racialization recalls Roberts's claim that "In an important moment of knowledge production when words cannot do because we have learned that the risk of speaking is too great, or will not do because corporeal gestures, postures, and movements are more articulate and eloquent than words" (Roberts 2013, 5), paggett's subtle gestures, stances, and transitions might be seen as forging links between her own contemporary embodiment and histories of the inescapability of visual Othering of the Black body induced by its juxtaposition within the white cube.

taisha paggett and Yann Novak, *A Composite Field*, 2014. Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto Scarborough. Images courtesy the Doris McCarthy Gallery and the artists. Photos by Toni Hafkenshied.

paggett's gestures, when read as transposed on and interrupting a history of the formalist mediums she engages with, are at once subtle and powerful; they recall Roberts's articulation of the need for an "embodied analysis of dance," which she argues can "harness and expose the excess—the micro-level gestures, postures, and movements, which in turn reveals the felt/social psychological experience of the history of oppression and the acts of resistance to that oppression" (Roberts 2013, 8). What choreography brings to the fore here are the ways in which perceptual and embodied shifts make visible previously unseen dynamics, juxtapositions, and statures.

Philosopher Michel de Certeau's 1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life* is an underlying guiding text for studies of everyday life, offering a magnified view of how one's position vis-à-vis the built environment influences a view to power. This position, and attendant perception, extends from the highest highs to the lowest lows (from those in the skyscraper to those underground)—take the city

bus at dawn, or the Los Angeles subway anytime, and note the types of bodies that comingle in these spaces of darkness and undergrounds: labourers, working classes, bodies resigned to the built environment's stranglehold on mobility, robbed of the illusion of a kind of emancipated right to movement. As philosopher Elizabeth Grosz writes, "the city's form and structure provide the context in which social rules are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity or position social marginality at a safe or insulated distance or boundary" (Grosz 1999, 386). These spaces magnify the classed, gendered, and racialized dimensions of everyday movements.

Even within supposed spaces of "representation," bodies nevertheless quietly organize experience and delineate power differentials at the intersecting levels of gender, race, and class; de Certeau proposed the concept of "oppositional tactics" as a strategy for subverting these governing structures via a subversion of their traditional functions. American artist Fred Wilson's institutional Critique of the early 1990s, notably, his work *Guarded View* (1991), is exemplary of this project. The sculpture comprises four Black headless mannequins (we know they are Black by the colour of their hands) outfitted in the museum guard uniforms associated with four major New York cultural institutions. In Wilson's installation, the museum guard's expected stoic, static silence and invisibility is accentuated via stillness; the museum guard is not to intervene in the museum visitor's experience; one's leisure time is another's labour time, and Wilson's headless mannequins also critique the stereotypical perception of the Black body as intellectually removed from the supposedly "heady" ambitions of the white cultural imbiber. The headless mannequins, however, are slightly elevated by their position on a plinth, signalling to the viewer that these are bodies to be looked at. But what do these bodies tell the viewer about herself? Here, the unique embodied subjectivity of the viewer is forced into a more direct and nuanced dialogue with difference. In Wilson's critique, the body, more accurately, its likeness, is static; it is its own form of relic to a past, present, and, likely future regarding the state of race relations and subjugations within white supremacy.

Wilson's static sculptures are evoked and brought back to life in Brendan Fernandes's 2014 *Closing Line*, which also engages institutional Critique and the intersections of race and class as visually organized within the gallery. However, Fernandes's choreographic work directly imposed itself within the viewer's space so as to at once close and widen the uncomfortable gap between viewer and artwork, introducing a more tactile and confrontational discomfort based in touch, force, and insistence. *Closing Line* was performed at the Sculpture Center and mimicked the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1960s practice whereby guards would usher visitors out at closing time with touch or with speech. Uniformed in grey army sweaters and black pants, a line of dancers slowly encroached on gallery attendees as they either relented or resisted the physical ushering out of the space.

After leaving his dance practice due to injury, Fernandes began to incorporate choreography into his artistic practice, with works that melded the crisp, hard edges and geometric clarity of Minimalism, often juxtaposing the bodies of dancers alongside plinths and other geometric structures to accentuate this connection. Over time, his choreographies began to explore the repetitive gestures of often invisible forms of labour, reflecting a joint engagement in institutional critique and the possibilities afforded for exploring its often overlooked dimensions via performance. *Clean Labor* (2017), performed at the Wythe Hotel in Brooklyn, magnified the labour of hotel cleaners. Visitors were permitted into the hotel room to watch as dancers and cleaners performed together, the trained dancer mimicking the movement of the cleaners. Dressed in white uniform-like jumpsuits, the dancers were distinguished via a kind of visual organization with historical precedence in modern dance, specifically, evoking a form of racialized visual organization, described by Susan Manning as

follows: "Blackness and whiteness became perceptual constructs on stage, ways for linking physical bodies and theatrical meanings, ways for reading bodies in motion. Blackness was a marked category, whiteness an unmarked category in American theatrical dance. Thus the visibility of blackness opposed the invisibility of whiteness, and spectators in the mid-century relied on this opposition to read the meanings of theatrical performance" (Manning 2001, 488). Although the performers in *Clean Labor* were not organized around racial lines, the choice of uniform/costume similarly serves to delineate "marked" and "unmarked" categories of labour, where one is aesthetic and the other is functional. One, it could be argued, has historically made the other possible (i.e., the invisible/behind-the-scenes labour necessary prior to public performances). In *Clean Labor*, the "cleaner," for better or worse, is foregrounded and instrumentalized to make a point about invisible labour; nevertheless, dance and aestheticized movement reigns supreme. In reflecting on the performance, Soo Ryon Yoon has observed, "These otherwise 'unremarkable' movements of folding linens, scrubbing bathtubs, and sweeping floors, became 'remarkable' through their incarnation in performance" (Yoon 2018).

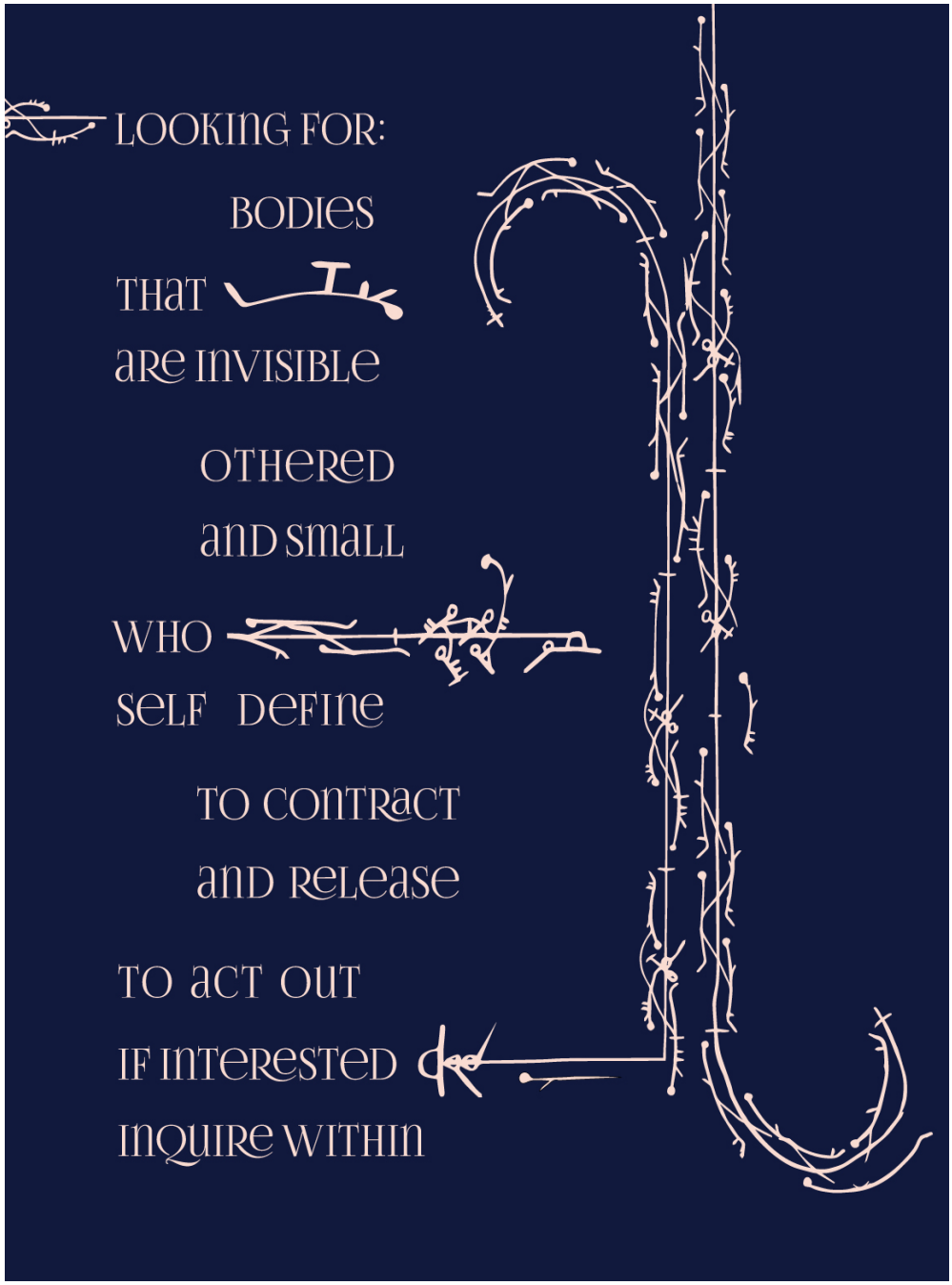
On the one hand, this might be seen to extend the legacy of other artists, including Mierle Laderman Ukeles, whose feminist-infused institutional critique took on the form of the performance of domestic labour within cultural institutions, notably, her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969) and the maintenance performances she undertook through the 1970s. In Quebec in 1975, the feminist performance group Mauve performed a similar gesture at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, arriving at the opening of *Femmes 75* in bedraggled wedding dresses and proceeding to scrub the exterior of the museum with their dresses. Returning to Krauss's notion of the expanded field and its potential use value for identifying otherwise-liminal forms of artistic output, while the work of Wilson, Ukeles, and Mauve operate within the space of not-dance, Fernandes's choreographies, which mimic and aestheticize everyday movement, are considered dance, perhaps by virtue of this aestheticization and by attempts to intervene in existing acceptable practices both within the artworld *and* the danceworld.

Brendan Fernandes, *Clean Labor*, 2017. Produced in collaboration with More Art. Image courtesy the Wythe Hotel and the artist. Photo by Chester Toye. Performers: Christopher DeVita, Charles Gowin, Madison Krekel, Erica Ricketts, Oisin Monaghan, Khadijia Griffith, and Wythe Hotel housekeepers, Angie Sherpa, Tenzin Thokme, and Tenzin Woiden.

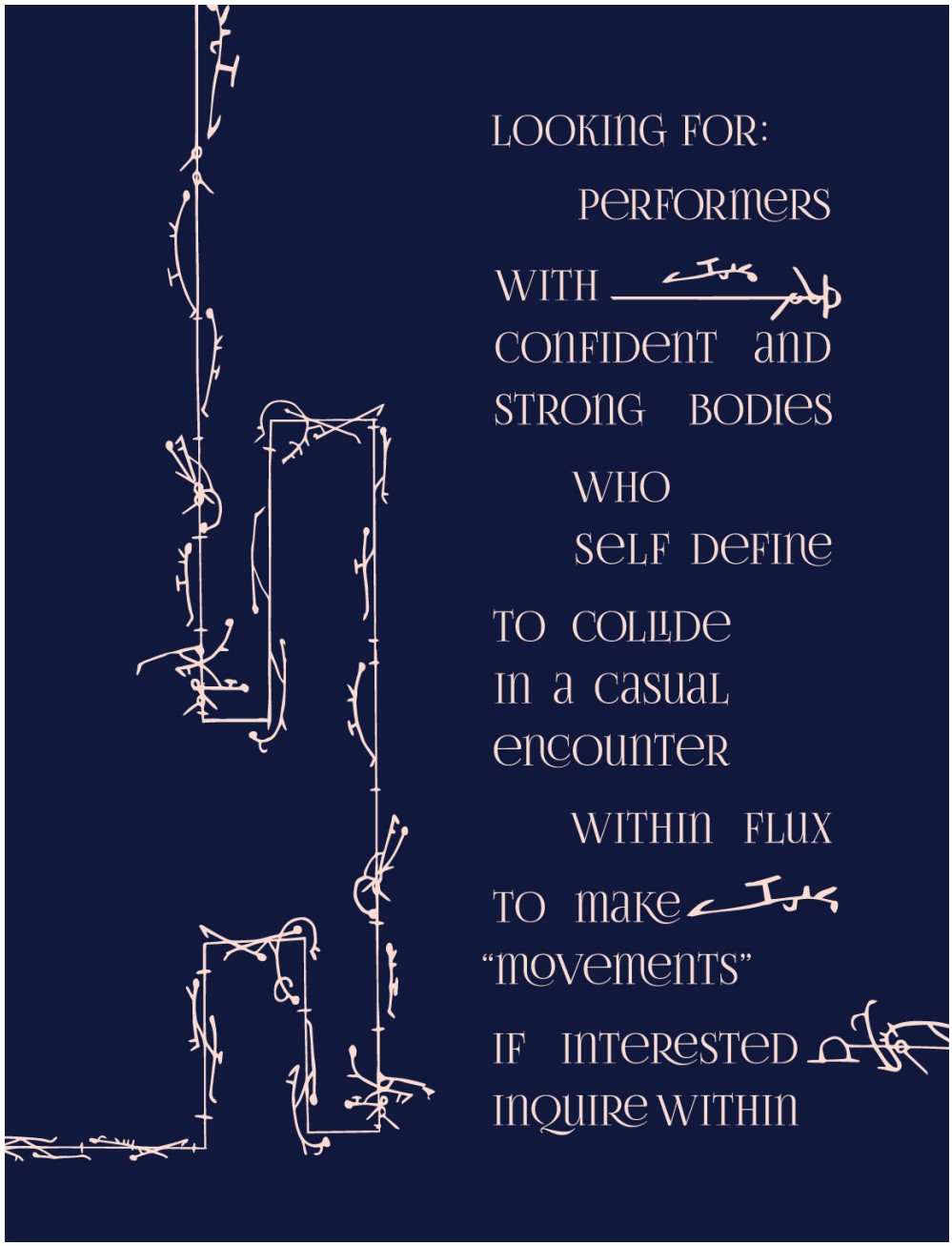
Practices like Fernandes's point to spaces of invisibility and draw them to the centre while simultaneously interrogating the organizational structures and barriers to access within the danceworld itself. In a rare occasion in which Fernandes performs in his work, *Standing Leg* (2014) presents Fernandes on the floor, using what is known as a Ballet Foot Stretcher, in which the ballet dancer's foot, if subjected to the structured form of the stretcher over time, will eventually reform toward an imposed aesthetic ideal.

Brendan Fernandes, *Standing Leg*, 2014. Image courtesy of Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery and the artist. Photo by Felix Chan.

To this end, Fernandes's *Minor Calls* (2017), a series of vinyl wall works mimicking a call for dancers, also challenges the ideals of beauty as they coalesce on and around the dancer's body. Texts boldly call out for dancers not defined by societal ideals but by internally harnessed states: "LOOKING FOR: BODIES THAT ARE INVISIBLE OTHERED AND SMALL WHO SELF DEFINE TO CONTRACT AND RELEASE TO ACT OUT IF INTERESTED INQUIRE WITHIN" and "LOOKING FOR: PERFORMERS WITH CONFIDENT AND STRONG BODIES WHO SELF DEFINE TO COLLIDE IN A CASUAL ENCOUNTER WITHIN FLUX TO MAKE 'MOVEMENTS' IF INTERESTED INQUIRE WITHIN."



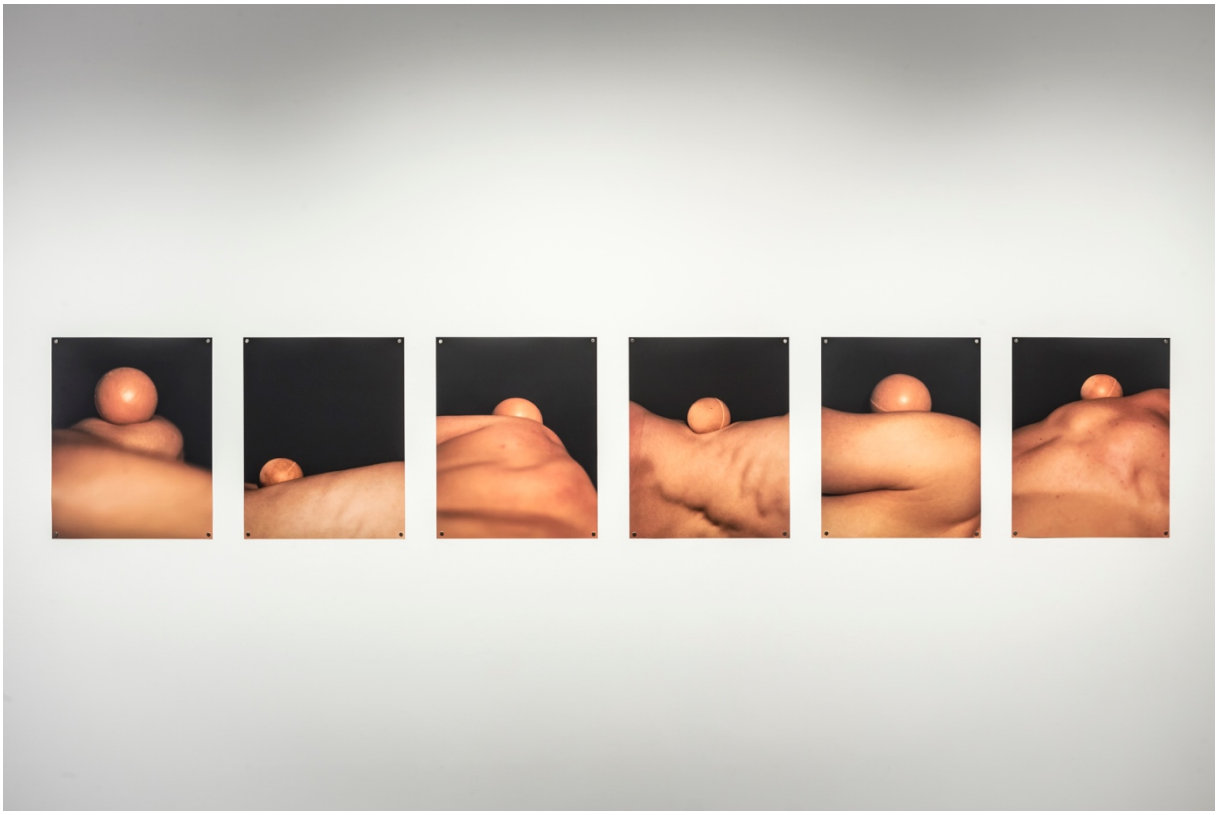
Brendan Fernandes, *Minor Calls*, 2017. Design concept by Brendan Fernandes in collaboration with Joseph Cuillier. Image courtesy MCA Chicago and the artist.



Brendan Fernandes, *Minor Calls*, 2017. Design concept by Brendan Fernandes in collaboration with Joseph Cuillier. Image courtesy MCA Chicago and the artist.

Fernandes's intervention on the scripted language of the dance call that has historically served to describe sought-after body types while discriminating against others illustrates Roberts's claim that "Black and Brown unruly bodies . . . demonstrate that race (among other social categories) and inequality/racism is not only encountered in linguistic forms or ideas and perceptions, it is also encountered intimately and provocatively in and through individuals as well as between bodies" (Roberts 2013, 8). Further fragmenting the conventions of the strength and beauty of the classically trained body, Fernandes's *Still Move* (2014), a set of six C-prints, transforms the beautiful muscularity of the dancer's body into something of a formalist grotesque, pushing the body outside of the frame and presenting a fragmented view to the dancer's muscular cohesiveness. Here, the traditional

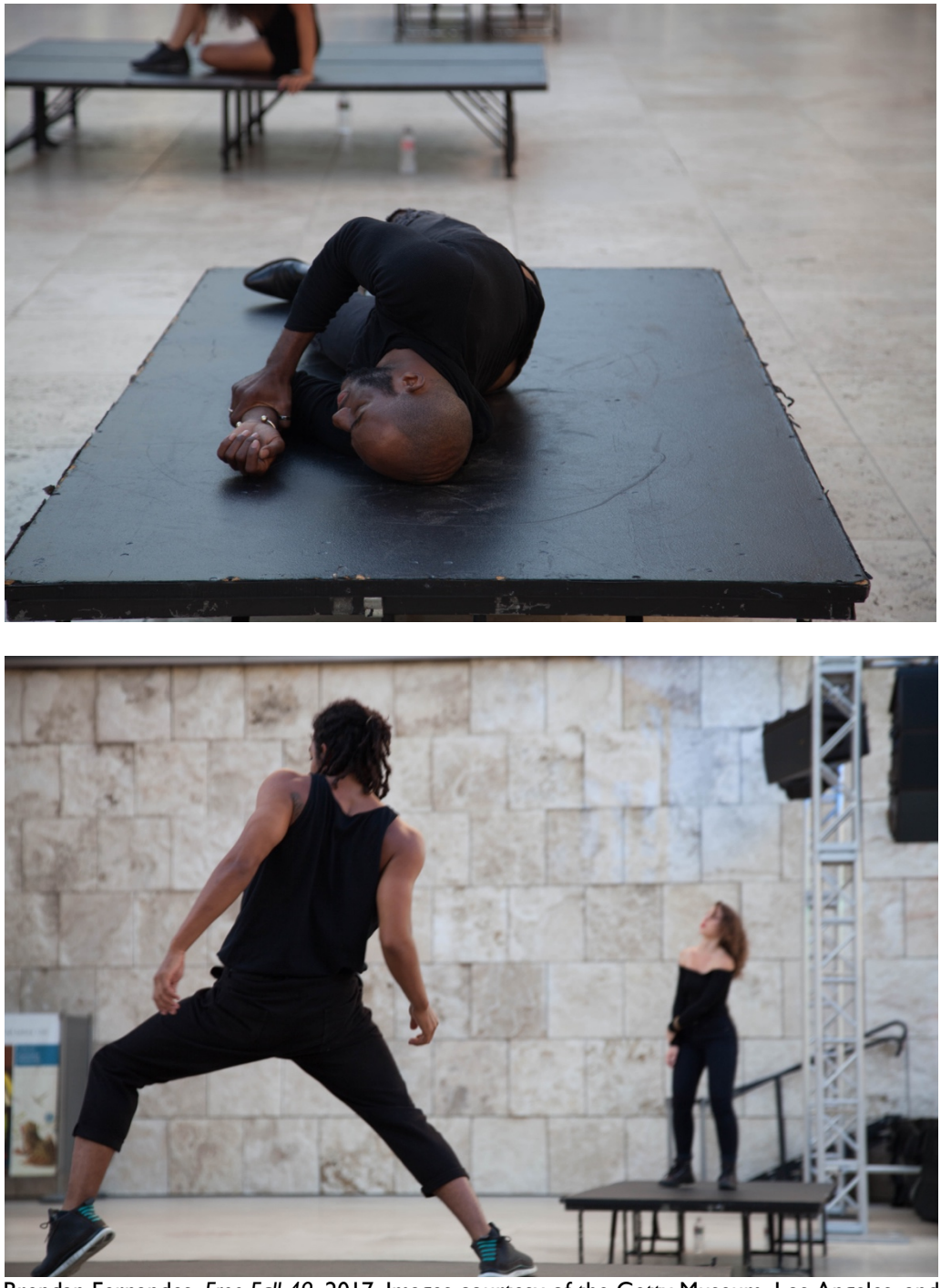
perceptions of what constitutes a "dancer's body" are challenged and in so doing engage and extend the "everyday" of postmodern dance, permitting "Othered" bodies to come into view.



Brendan Fernandes, *Still Move*, 2014. Doris McCarthy Gallery, the University of Toronto Scarborough. Image courtesy the Doris McCarthy Gallery and the artist. Photo by Toni Hafkenshied.

Beyond the physical geography of the studio walls exist other forms of spatial engagement, political geography, and phenomenology of the everyday, as well as spaces of social dance versus the formal training offered in studios, for instance, the gay dance club or disco, notably represented in art by the late Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose *"Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* (1991) holds space in the gallery regardless of whether or not one of the go-go dancers is present, the plinth extending both into the realm of the art historical and the realm of the socio-sexual. Gonzalez-Torres was devout in his belief that the audience activated his work. American artists Wu Tsang and Leilah Weinraub, in their respective art documentaries, *Wildness* (2012) and *Shakedown* (2018), offer the dance floor as a social space of worldmaking, notably, as it serves communities of queer people of colour. Fernandes takes up this space in an imagined as well as eulogistic way in his work *Free Fall 49*, which responds to the Orlando Shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016—a homophobic massacre of attendees of the gay club. Fernandes has stated, "Working with this challenging context, the work makes visible the political dimensions of spaces often viewed as outside of or ignored in contemporary political conversations. It explores the dance floor as both a space and a surface that supports, and also a space and surface that can penetrate, harm and ultimately hold still fallen bodies" (Fernandes 2017). Extending an art historical genealogy concerned with an art of the everyday, Fernandes's mimicking of everyday movement—here, in the form of social, rather than trained dance—situates his work within the contemporary political moment and its specific

urgencies, where any uncertainty as to the worldmaking potential of the queer dance floor might be assuaged in consideration of the literal world-shaking and life-taking events of Orlando.



Brendan Fernandes, *Free Fall 49*, 2017. Images courtesy of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and the artist.

Pulling from a variety of historically specific moments, including institutional critique, critical race, labour, and process, the deliberate situatedness of the dancer's body simultaneously calls all to the fore, both holding the space and delineating the chasm between bodies and the physical space of the gallery and its invisible structures of organization both within and outside. The works discussed in

this essay reveal and critically retread the canons of modern and experimental dance, interrogating dance's own organizational structures as centred on an idea of bodily neutrality—like the neutrality of the art object—that does not disrupt a view to the "pure" act of viewing. In these works, bodies simultaneously direct and point outwards, to spaces underlooked and unseen, and hold our focus inward, not in spectacular elevation of form but in deep introspection around the structures that organize some bodies some ways and other bodies, otherwise.

Notes

1. The panel "Experimental Dance: Histories, Politics, Presence" was organized as part of the programme accompanying the exhibition *TEMPERAMENTAL*, which I curated at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough in 2015. The exhibition featured works by Mark Clintberg, Brendan Fernandes, Kim Kielhofner, Hazel Meyer, Will Munro, taisha paggett & Yann Novak, Elizabeth Price, Emily Roysdon, and Alexandro Segade.

2. Despite a view to an implicit politic within Rainer's choreography, Rainer has also said "ideological issues 'have no bearing on the nature of the work' . . . 'my body remains the enduring reality'" (quoted in Banes 1993, 22).

3. In Canada in 1967, the October issue of the national arts magazine *artscanada* was titled "Black"; however, despite the political climate of the late 1960s and political urgencies surrounding race and civil rights, the issue was heavily weighted toward "the black of outer space, new jazz, and paint," and prioritized the voices of White artists in theorizing the theme. (Verrall 2011, 541)

4. *It's About Time – Dancing Black in Canada: 1900–1970* was exhibited at Dance Collection Danse Gallery (Toronto) from January 31 to June 22, 2018, and at Ignite Gallery at OCAD University (Toronto) from July 14 to August 12, 2018.

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Exploring Production Circuits through a Backstage Investigation of Competitive Dance in Ontario

Nicole E. M. Marrello

The night before...

The Competition: Judges have been picked up and taken to the hotel, catering has been arranged, programs have been picked up, the theatre is organized, and the awards are arranged and ready to go.

The Studio: Costumes are done and have been handed out, numbers have been rehearsed, music for the weekend has been submitted via Dance Bug, and the props have been loaded to the trailer.

The Parents: Tights and shoes are clean and free from holes, back-up tights were purchased, all costumes and headpieces are accounted for, snacks are packed, directions have been printed, and the girls are in bed.

The Dancers: Have practised each dance until they can perform them in their sleep, remembered their corrections, tended to their injuries, and will remember to perform.

. . . It all comes down to this weekend.

Current television shows *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dance Moms* have brought increased public awareness to competitive dance as a popular dance form in recent years; however, the practice is not new. It has long been experienced in many different ways throughout Canada and the United States. In fact, rich in history, competitive dance has been practised in Ontario for close to seventy years. Nevertheless, competitive dance has largely been investigated from a position grounded in moral panic, with the focus turned toward improper technique, suggestive body movements, and inappropriate costuming (Callahan-Russell 2004, 134; Fisher 2016, 328; Hebert 2016, 209; Woerner 2010, 29). While the exploration of competitive dance in this fashion has brought increased awareness to the topic, it has simultaneously erased the personal agency of its participants. Shifting the focus to track the location of meaning within a practice—in particular, by examining the participants who consume an art form and the conditions in which they do so (Herrnstein Smith, 1998)—makes differing evaluations possible. In the case of competitive dance, this type of investigation gives voice to those participants who have been previously allocated to the background, specifically the dancers and their parents.

By positioning competitive dance as a popular dance form, it becomes possible to recognize that while competitive dance shares many similarities with high art theatrical dance—including movement vocabulary and early history—it serves its community differently. Furthermore, for the vast majority of student participants, time spent in competitive dance is their "career" within the practice. While they enjoy dancing, they do not tend to continue dedicated dance practice into adulthood; instead, it is the development of traits such as dedication, time management, and confidence that are brought forward with them into their adult lives.

Nicole Marrello is a doctoral candidate in dance studies at York University. Drawing on her experiences as a dance school owner and current teacher within GTA dance schools, her research deals with the exploration of the social and economic history of dance competition in Southern Ontario.

Competitive dance, which is created and produced by adults, purchased by parents and executed by children, functions within a production circuit. It is, however, important to remember that although a consumer market has been created around competitive dance, the heart of the practice remains centred around children's enjoyment. More importantly, competitive dance has developed around the family unit and, as such, family values structure competitive events and the formation of dance studios. This paper, using thick description, will provide a behind-the-scenes look at each participant as they experience a dance competition weekend.

Through the theories of Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu, and Simon Frith concerning artistic production circuits, I will argue three points. First, competitive dance operates with a cyclical economic market that brings autonomy to each of its participants. The consideration of the practice within this context makes it possible to recognize how competitive dance serves its participants, especially the routinely unnoticed dancer and their family. Second, similar to other art forms, competitive dance is influenced by external social forces—forces that also influence many other children's competitive endeavours and which explain "why so many families end up spending weekends watching their children compete" (Levey 2009, 3). Finally, I argue that whether a dance practice is theatrical or popular, value judgments are made and appreciated through comparable processes. My investigation of competitive dance makes each participant's wants and needs visible, foregrounding how an individual's desires influence the event as a whole. Most importantly, my study insists that although it shares similarities with theatrical dance, competitive dance is a unique practice.

Drawn from a larger project, observations made in this article are the result of extensive fieldwork and first-hand, insider knowledge. In 2016, I spent three months travelling throughout Southern Ontario visiting a total of sixteen regional competitions and one national competition. Cities visited include London, Niagara Falls, Brantford, Burlington, Kitchener, Guelph, Collingwood, Barrie, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Mississauga, Toronto, and Ottawa. Later, I conducted interviews with both past and current participants including competition directors, adjudicators, studio directors, teachers, parents, and dancers. In addition to my position as a dance scholar, I have also remained an active participant in competitive dance, having held multiple roles within the practice. Although I came to competitive dance late in my dance training after spending my early years training at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, I was able to experience competitive dance in both Manitoba and Ontario. While completing the Teacher Training Program at the National Ballet School and my BFA and graduate work at York University, I continued to attend competitions first as a family member, then as a teacher, and finally as a studio director. While I did eventually close my studio, I have continued working at dance schools in the Greater Toronto Area preparing students for the competitive stage and adjudicating dance competitions nationally.

Early Competitive Dance

The first day of the competition, 5:00 a.m. The alarm goes off . . .

The Competition: Out the door by 6:30 a.m.—thank goodness there is a Starbucks in the hotel lobby. Arrive at the theatre by 7:00 a.m. Check in with the theatre staff, the emcee, and the sales staff at the souvenir table. Greet the judges and show them to the green room. Start greeting teachers and handing out studio bags. At 7:45 a.m., bring the judges into the theatre and make sure that they have what they will need for the morning session. After a final check in with the awards assistant at 8:00 a.m., the competition kicks off with the cutest little four-year-old novice. The

morning flies by in a blur of routines, small crises at the music table, missing medium t-shirts at the souvenir desk, and the late arrival of the catered lunch. 11:30 a.m.: adjudication time. The emcee comes out and leads fun games with the dancers while last minute mark tabulations and awards are organized. After handing out special awards, the judges return to the green room for their lunch break while the remainder of ribbons and medals are handed out from the morning sessions.

The Studio: Out the door by 6:00 a.m. for a quick stop at a coffee shop drive-through to grab what will be the first of many coffees this weekend. Arrive at the theatre for 7:00 a.m. Check in backstage with the competition director to pick up the studio bag. A quick peek inside reveals the usual: two programs, two pens, a pack of gum, lip balm, a bottle of water, and the typical swag gift item (this time it's an umbrella). A quick look through the program to confirm the studio code, see which other studios will be competing this weekend, and to highlight the studio's performances; then it is off to collect the first group of dancers from their parents. The morning flies by in a blur: warming up dancers, bringing them to the stage, cheering loudly for their successes, catching those who come off in tears (either because they forgot what they were doing or because they are being hard on themselves), and catching up with other teachers (many of whom you only see this time of year). As the last number of the session takes the stage, you fight your way through the crowds of parents and dancers, grateful that the competition has sectioned off a portion of the audience for teachers, as there is not a single seat in the house. Adjudication time! As the special awards, marks, and placements are announced, you quickly make notes in the program, and cheer for your students' successes.

The Parents: Roll out of bed and wake up the girls; fifteen minutes later, go back in and announce to your teen, "We are leaving in fifteen minutes whether you are in the car or not." Twenty-five minutes later, pull into a drive-through to grab breakfast sandwiches, juice for the girls, and an extra large coffee for yourself. You secure a great parking spot (exciting!), but dread sets in when you realize that you will have to give it up when you undoubtedly run out again for another coffee. As you help the youngest get her bag out of the car, you remind your eldest to grab her Rac n Roll full of costumes, makeup, and shoes. After dropping her bag off in the change room, the teen runs off looking for any of her friends—who, like her, have to be here at this ungodly hour because they have a younger sibling competing as well. Put the younger girl's hair up into a bun, put on her makeup, and get her into her first costume. Relieved when you are finally able to hand the little one over to her teacher, you head out front with the other moms and stop by the sales table in the lobby to buy yet another overpriced program—but, hey, at least it comes with a free pen. You shoo off your teen (who somehow has a sixth sense attuned to the opening of your wallet and is asking for some money to buy something off the souvenir table), knowing full well that by the end of the weekend you will be coming home with another t-shirt, pair of shorts, or knee-high socks with the word DANCE printed across them. Taking your last sip of coffee, you head into the theatre to find a seat. The morning passes in a blur of costume changes, dancing, cheering, and catching up on studio gossip with the other moms. Adjudication time. Explain to a new mom that: yes, really, the lowest mark they give out is high gold, and regardless of how many entries are in a category, they get a first place ribbon. And, of course, you cheer loudly for daughter's first ever category win.

The Dancers: Your mom knocks on your door, letting you know that it is time to wake up. You spring out of bed; it's competition weekend! You laugh to yourself as you hear your mom yelling at your older sister, again, to get up. You know that if she hadn't been on Facebook with her friends until midnight, she wouldn't be so tired this morning. You have a hard time eating breakfast in the car, as you begin to get nervous about your solo. Walking through the lobby, you take note of the pink bear at the souvenir table and think about how great it would look with all your other bears at home. "Ouch! Mom did you have to stick that pin in my head so hard!" "I don't want to have to put the false eyelashes on the glue stings my eyes!" "Oh, don't be such a baby," you hear your sister say, as she sticks her head in to see if any more of her friends have arrived. When your mom leaves you with Miss Jenny to warm up and go over your solo one more time, the nerves turn to excitement. "Only five more numbers," Miss Jenny says and she takes you backstage so that you can watch from the wings. The emcee announces your name and you hear your sister shout "GO LUCIE" from the dimly lit audience, the sound of her voice reassures you. From that moment on you are lost in the

choreography and the rest of the morning flies by in costume and hair changes, and of course, dancing. Adjudication time! You swarm the stage with your teammates and other competitors, learn the competition's adjudication dance, and try to catch the balls, t-shirts, and other give-away items the emcee is tossing. Sitting down, you listen for your marks to be called out. Only a high gold for ballet, but a diamond and first place for your jazz solo! You say good-bye to your friends who are done for the day—but with an older sister who has ten pieces to compete over the weekend, you are here for the rest of the day.

. . . Lunch time, then only two more sessions to go for the day.

Often thought of as a singular event, competitive dance is an annual commercial dance practice spanning a great deal of time and many geographic locations, and it involves a large group of people. Regional events are held on weekends from late February until early June and, depending on the number of entrants, can start as early as a Wednesday. Unlike competitions held in the United States, where regional tour dates occur in multiple states, the majority of Canadian competitions operate solely within a single province (Steuart 2014, 37–40). Former performers, teachers, and parents operate the competitions, scheduling multiple tour dates, and renting theatres, hotel ballrooms, and even hockey arenas to host their events. The Nationals week, usually the first week in July, is growing in popularity. Here, contestants who qualify at a regional event are able to participate in a title pageant (Mr. and Miss Dance), as well as a standard dance competition. Nationals are often held in destination locations such as Blue Mountain, Niagara Falls, Mont Tremblant, or even Disney World. As Nationals occur in the high season and lodging starts at $2000.00 for the week, this competition often doubles as a family vacation, where parents and siblings travel with the dancer. In 2016, there were thirty-eight corporate competitions in Southwestern Ontario, and in April, at the height of the season, there were more than twenty separate competitions happening on any given weekend.[1] Dance competitions attract participants from private sector recital dance schools, where potential entrants train weekly from September until June. Increasingly, many schools make some form of summer training mandatory, further lengthening the dance season. Dancers compete in western theatrical (ballet, pointe, and modern), American vernacular (tap, jazz, musical theatre, hip-hop, and acrobatics), and newly emerging (lyrical and contemporary) dance styles.

Although competitive dance is practised in Canada and the United States, Canada has experienced its own progression, with each province following its own trajectory. During the 1940s, Canadian dance teachers became increasingly aware that they were losing talented dancers as they searched for higher levels of training and employment in the United States and Europe (primarily England). Although employment for skilled dancers was scarce, it is important to remember that exciting works were still produced by small Canadian dance troupes at this time, including the Volkoff Canadian Ballet, the Alberta Ballet, and the Winnipeg Ballet Club (Collier 2004, 148; Flynn 2004, 189). These opportunities did not produce full-time work; rather, dancers held full-time jobs that often had nothing to do with dance, and they had to make rehearsals and performances work around their employment schedules (Karr 1951). The Ballet Festivals, which occurred across Canada between 1948 and 1954, would have "a catalytic effect in the professionalization of dance in Canada and created an unprecedented boom period for theatrical dance" (Bowring 2004, 75). The formation of the National Ballet of Canada in 1951 and the granting of a Royal Charter to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 1953 provided the first full-time, professional opportunities for dancers in Canada. By the end of the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the largest generation of dancers who had trained and performed in Canada would relocate throughout the country, becoming teachers and opening dance studios. Archival records—newspaper advertisements and dance recital programs—reveal that during this time it was common for dance schools to offer highland dance alongside ballet training. Scottish dancing has strong ties to competition, as dancing has always been a part of the Highland

Games. In an era before cell phones, cable television shows, and social media, the games served a critical social function by bringing teachers, dancers, and families together. It is easy to imagine why teachers of theatrical dance would also be attracted to this sort of opportunity,[2] making way for the establishment of dance divisions within the Kiwanis and Peel Music Festivals. Through the late 1960s, these venues gained in popularity,[3] becoming the first platforms of competitive dance in Ontario.

The United States, having already established strong professional opportunities for its dancers, was focused on pedagogical concerns and on closing gaps in education that resulted from teacher isolation. The development of travelling teaching conventions—including Dance Educators of America, Dance Caravan, and Dance Masters of America—provided a solution. Eventually, these conventions offered a competition as a component of their event, and it would be from these conventions that early dance competitions in the United States would be cultivated (Weisbrod 2010, 22). Canadian teachers (already accustomed to travelling for pedagogical upgrading) became members of these associations and were exposed to an alternate form of competitive dance. Through the 1980s, US competitions grew in popularity, and Ontarian dance teachers began taking their dancers south of the border to compete. As demand for these competitions grew, Toronto became a Canadian tour stop, allowing even more dancers to witness a new format of competitive dance. Driven by an impulse related to the desire to maintain Canadian talent, Canadian teachers and parents took the initiative to establish their own dance competitions; thus, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the early formation of Ontario corporate competitions, separate from the music festival.

Competitive Dance at the Turn of the Century

Herrnstein Smith explores the connection that exists between those who use a cultural event and the social conditions in which the event experience's advancements. An art practice will be "evaluated continuously, repeatedly, privately, and publicly, by us and by them and by all who follow" (Herrnstein Smith 1988, 5). To that end, when considering the progression of competitive dance at the turn of the century, it is important to consider the spending trends of the middle class, shifts in parenting trends, the advent of around-the-clock news, and the explosion of social media. Karen Schupp (via Elsa Posey) argues that the rise in corporate dance competitions in the United States in the later part of the twentieth century coincided with a rapid increase in the number of private sector dance studios. Schupp speculates that interest in the practice may be "due to the growth of the middle class, which led to increased leisure time and disposable income, and the increased presence of media featuring dance during this era" (2018, 46). In her study of private sector dance schools, Posey points toward a self-fulfilling cycle where an increase in the number of dance schools created more dancers, who then went on to perform or attend post-secondary dance programs, and eventually opened their own dance schools (2002, 44). The rising number of dance schools looking for competitive dance platforms in which to participate led to increased demand for dance competitions. In turn, a flood in the market of corporate competitions spurred the rise in competitive dance culture.

Schupp presents competitive dance as a meaningful venue through which young people are able to "perform, build communities, and nurture transferable proficiencies. Although not explicitly 'for sale,' these qualities provide an understanding of why competitors 'pay to dance'" (2018, 42). At one point, Schupp indicates that it is "the adolescents who pay for their lessons" (2018, 51), a statement

that removes parental agency. Of course, dancers are not always in control of their participation; a five-year-old does not decide to dance and then at six or seven decide to compete. In fact:

> The decision to involve a young child in a sports program is largely made by the parents, although the child has more say in the matter as she grows older. But once the decision is made, it involves the whole family, and parent and child become locked in a complex dance of action and reaction, cause and effect, as the child's involvement has a ripple effect on family, relationships and motivations. (Murphy 1999, 37)

It is the parent who enrols a child in dance lessons, and subsequently (when the dance studio approaches them with an invitation to compete) decides whether to invest more time and money in the child's dance practice—albeit with the child's input. I spoke with a family with three children (two girls and a boy) about their decisions concerning placing their daughters on a competitive dance team. Their oldest daughter[4] started dance when she was six years old and began competing the following season. The father stated, "She started dancing with the competitive program at age seven because the school offered the opportunity for comps [competitions] and because it was pretty clear that the stronger dancers participated in comps. It became something to aspire to, and it felt like an accomplishment to put our kids into comps" (Anonymous 2016a). His wife addressed their decision to start their younger daughter in competitions at age five: "It was really easy because our eldest was competing at that time, so we didn't have a choice. We couldn't say you can compete and you can't. It was pretty much because one was competing that the other started. She wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps" (Anonymous 2016a). This conversation shows that while the children are the participants in the studio and on stage, the parents are making the choices about the level of participation with its financial demands. The studio owners I interviewed remarked on parents' motivation for enrolling their young children in dance. According to one studio owner, parents often make comments like, "every time music comes on, she just has to dance, so I figure she should be in dance" (Anonymous 2016b). In total, I interviewed eight competitive dancers: all were dancing by age six, and all but one was competing by age nine.

Investigating the economy and its impact on the private sector dance school in the United States after the 2008 market collapse, Ali Woerner recognizes that each state has felt the effects of the recession differently (2011, 30). While Canada managed to skirt the full effects of the recession, the US plays a large part in the global market; therefore, communities that are dependent on resources such as lumber, mining, and some manufacturing were heavily impacted. Even though "participation in dance competition culture is a significant financial investment with little to no direct financial return [, most] parents have a strong desire to provide the best life possible for their children, including activities that bring joy in the present and contribute to a successful future" (Schupp 2018, 52).

Even in times of financial strain, parents will find a way to keep their children enrolled in the activities that they love (Posey 2002, 45; Woerner 2010, 31). As Ali Woerner puts it: "Proof of this is in the still booming dance competition market, costume ordering, and the plethora of private dance studios operating all over the country" (2011, 30). But why are parents willing to do so? In order to understand this, it is important to consider the underlying conventions of parenting during the early part of the 2000s.

Parents, wanting only the best for their children, have been influenced by the idea that extracurricular activities are a crucial part of their children's development. Already busy in their own lives, parents have turned to "experts" to help raise their children (Levey 2009, 36) under the assumption "that participating in sports helps us to learn important behaviours, values, and skills" (Spickyard Prettyman and Lampman 2006, x). I spoke with another parent about her daughter's participation in competitive dance and what she likes about the practice. She had this to say:

> I like that I know where she is. In terms of who she's hanging around with, um, I like that she's found something that she's passionate about, that she enjoys doing. That her time spent there [the studio] is a positive experience. I like that she's with people with like-minded goals, they kind of drive each other, help each other to become stronger in what they do, which I think is a great life lesson. (Anonymous 2016c)

Not only does this show that this mother hopes her daughter will gain life skills from her participation in competitive dance, but it also demonstrates that she values knowing that her daughter is in a safe place while she dances. In a time of increased accessibility to news—with continuous reports of tragic world events, abductions, and mass shootings—there is a perception that our world is less safe, and that children should not be left unsupervised (Elkind 2001; Mercogliano 2007, 3; Murphy 1999, 44). Children's activities, benefiting from parental unease, advertise their practice spaces as safe harbours, areas where parents can drop off their children and feel confident in their safety. For "many competitive dancers, the dance studio is a second home where they eat meals, complete homework, and converse with peers between classes (Schupp 2018, 53). In fact, dance studios go so far as to sell the concept of "family" on their web pages. One studio opens with "Discover what makes us Not Just Another Dance Studio! We are a family!" (Not Just Another Dance Studio 2019). Another studio states, "We are proud to offer a studio environment that provides quality training, a sense of community and a family friendly atmosphere" (Innovative Rhythm Dance Studio 2019). The word *family* fosters comfort for parents, reassuring them that they are leaving their children in a safe place.

Middle-class families have both the financial means and the time to devote to their children's activities, and they view competitive dance as one such pursuit. In fact, a 2014 youth sports report conducted by Solution Research Group found that 24 percent of girls in Canada participate in dance, gymnastics, and ballet; female participation in dance as an activity is second only to swimming. I spoke with a mother and her daughter about the changes they have seen in competitive dance over the ten years that the young girl had been competing. I was struck by the mother's comparison of dance for girls to hockey for boys. She stated:

> I think, because I know people who have their kids at other studios, it's that hockey parent mentality. You didn't have a boy, you had a girl, so for boys it's hockey, my kid is going to be the next NHL star or they're going to be whatever. I've seen dance turn into that, not to be sexist, but it is. It seams that if you have a boy they will go into hockey and be the next hockey superstar. If you have a girl they go into dance and because there are so many competitive studios—especially in Toronto—that if you can pay the money they will put your kid on the comp team, and they think their kid is going to be the next Maddie Ziegler of *Dance Moms*. (Anonymous 2016d)

In choosing dance as an extracurricular activity, youngsters and their parents have come to expect competitive environments that are similar to those of their peers in other sports activities.

Compounding the changes in competitive dance is social media (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) and reality dance television programming (Foster 2017, 58). This mother's reflection also shows this, as parents and dancers are now turning to reality television rather than their peers as a benchmark for their children's success. As parents of a given competitive dance cohort are all a product of the period—influenced by other parents, media, and social norms—they share a *class habitus* or a common system of tastes and preferences (Bourdieu 1978, 834). Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu suggests sporting events and entertainment practices are defined at any given moment by the expectations of those who utilize the event or practice, creating a case of supply and demand (1978, 833). While it may not be possible to pinpoint whether the rise in the popularity of competitive dance is due to the economic boom of the late twentieth century or a change a parenting practices through the early part of the twenty-first century, it is safe to claim that both have influenced competitive dance.

Competing in the Popular

To understand how competitive dance functions, it is worthwhile to turn to scholarship on popular dance. What are popular dance forms and how does competitive dance function as such? Theresa Buckland describes popular dance as fashionable, tied to popular music, and transmitted through schools of dance and television (Buckland 1983, 326). Yet, this description is ambiguous and lacks a fully embodied understanding of the vast number of styles housed under the term popular dance. Simon Frith and Sherril Dodds locate two key elements that are lacking in this description. In his research of popular music, Frith emphasizes that art becomes popular once it can be turned into a commodity (Frith 1990, 99). Dodds emphasizes the importance of mass production in a more encompassing definition of popular dance:

> Although popular dance is not necessarily subject to "mass participation," it is frequently transmitted through, or closely allied to, the mass media. In economic terms, popular dance is rarely subsidized through public funds or private donors: it is either created at low cost by individual agents/communities or else constructed for the purposes of commercial means by institutions such as the record industry, private dance schools, and film and television companies. (2011, 63)

Therefore, the change in competitive dance over time—by which I mean both the underlying assumption that the event is meant to be enjoyable and the commodification of the practice—have shifted competitive dance from a theatrical dance form to a popular dance form that uses theatrical movement vocabulary.

Competitive dance has become a highly commercialized practice, one that is continually researched and re-evaluated by its participants. Competition and studio directors are exceedingly aware of what approach will make them unique and attractive, thus allowing them to draw in and retain customers. Dance's current popularity on television has increased public exposure to the art form, exposure from which private sector dance studios have benefited. A willingness to accept a broader range of physiques and to make accommodations for larger class sizes has resulted in a boost in popularity, and the number of dance schools is increasing.[5] In 2016, an extensive Google search found listings for 454 dance schools in Southern Ontario, 138 of those in the Greater Toronto Area. Competitions now offer dancers who train less than six hours a week a separate division, separate venues for small dance studios, and the ability for part-time competitive students to have their own venue (a

development that has unfolded within the last year). The new part-time division allows for dancers at varying finical levels to experience competitive dance.

Type of Dancer	Training Time	Cost of Training	Number of Costumes	Cost of Costumes	Entry Fees
Recreational	1 hour	$460/year	1	$100	Recital tickets
Part Time	6 hours	$2500/year	2 to 4	$500	$320 to $640
Full-time Competitive	15+ hours	$5000/year	7 to 15	$1500 to $4000	$1440 to $3000

Time and financial commitment for various levels of dance training

While Dodds maintains that it is "problematic to look at popular dance in purely market terms as it is a movement practice rather than a commodity," and that by doing so one loses sight of the subjectivity that exists within dance as an art form (56), I argue that the magnitude of the event requires competitive dance to be explored in market terms. Exploring the relationships and expectations that exist financially, as well as socially, allows for a deeper understanding of how the practice functions.

In exploring the relationships that exist between artists, their art, and the public, Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu, and Simon Frith explain how production circuits are created. Becker maintains that conventions—which he defines as "all the decisions that must be made with respect to works produced" (2008, 29)—dictate form, function, and participant interaction. He maintains that there are three levels of participants—the consumer, the producer, and the distributor—who, in their interaction with each other, create art worlds. Consumers use the art; occupying one of three roles, they purchase objects, are audience members, or are students (Becker 2008, 54). In this regard, however, the student is not an active participant in the circuit; rather, the student is an unfinished vessel and educated audience member. While the student purchases tickets and views the artwork, their values and judgment have little impact on the finished product. As I will show, this is not the case for dancers and parents in competitive dance. Separate conventions establish how works of art are created and then distributed. Here, standardization originates in the technical vocabulary and history of an art form, guiding creation. Once complete, art is then distributed through one of three means—patronage, public sale, and self-support—each of which allows the artist varying levels of autonomy.

Building on Becker's model of the art world, Pierre Bourdieu looks beyond the internal workings of a practice. While he acknowledges that works of art are conceived, executed, produced, and then viewed, he draws attention to the external forces that influence cultural production, reminding us that "no cultural product exists by itself" (1993, 30). Bourdieu argues that, in fact, by separating pieces of art from the conventions of an art world and viewing each in relation to the grander scheme, new interpretations become available. This allows for an understanding of how works of art relate to the social conditions in which they are produced (1993, 33). Bourdieu insists that members of production circuits:

> Forget that the existence, form and direction of change depend not only on the "state of the system," i.e. the "repertoire" of possibilities which it offers, but also on the balance of forces between social agents who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the other prevail. (1993, 34)

For as long as competitive dance is explored under the same conventions as theatrical dance, it will continue to be viewed as a "'rootless body' . . . one that pops up on the surface of any dance form" (Fisher 2014, 332). However, an exploration of how competitive dance functions and shares similarities with current society sheds light on how those who participate in the practice derive value.

Likewise, Simon Frith examines "the social contexts in which value judgments are deployed" (1991, 106). He argues that regardless of whether art is high or popular, the manner in which value is determined is the same—and to assume otherwise is hypocritical (Frith 1991, 105). Frith bases this argument on two assumptions. First, at the very core of a cultural practice, all members have the ability to make judgments and assess differences. Participants within a practice know what they like and have the ability to assert these opinions. Second, there is no reason to believe that value judgments are made differently among various cultural spheres. Competitive dance is different than theatrical dance; although the practices are different, the process through which the participants make judgments is not. Furthermore, Frith maintains that judgments are made at three levels: the musician, the producer, and the consumer. Through the process of creation, musicians monitor what it means to be professional and what constitutes a successful performance; producers turn music and performers into commodities; and, last, the consumers utilize the music. This push and pull between the three levels of participants creates a production circuit, one that happens whether art is created for a theatrical high art audience or for the populace.

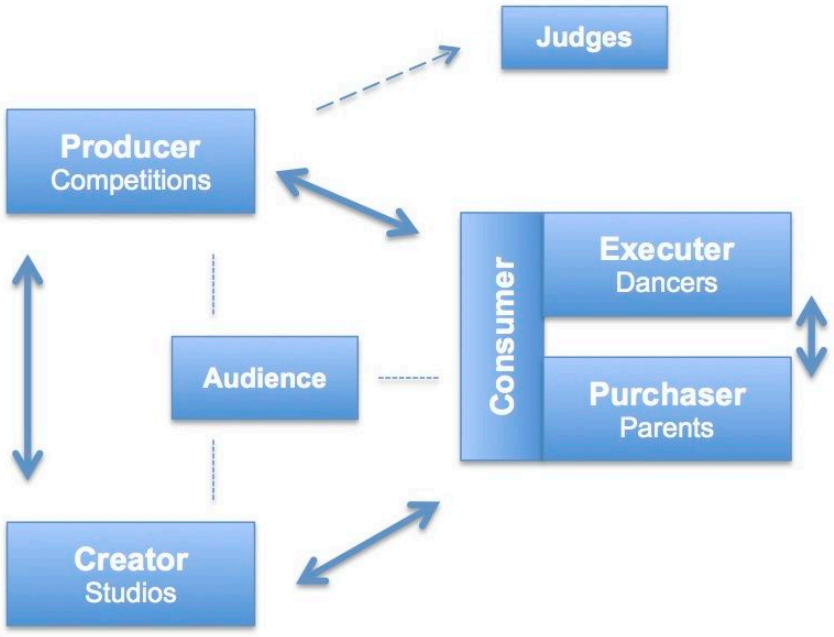
Becker's analysis of the art world makes it possible to recognize that competitive dance itself is an intricate dance practice in which participants at each level have autonomy and impact on the final product. Bourdieu brings attention to the external social forces that impact the production circuit. In this regard, competitive dance is as much a product of the participants' lives outside the practice as it is of the conventions that bind the practice together. Finally, Frith acknowledges that value judgments are made across all levels of artistic creation, whether they are high or popular. Therefore the assumption that competitive dance is a flawed practice because it does not match the values of high art disregards the actual values that participants attribute to the practice.

Before exploring the production circuit that has been created by competitive dance, it is important to uncover what makes this practice different than other forms. The first difference is the preexisting relationship that exists between the dancers and their parents. While these members occupy separate roles, they are innately linked—recall Murphy's assessment of children's involvement in sport. While parents and children participate together in other popular art events (movies and music concerts, for example), parents either purchase a ticket allowing the child to attend on their own, or attend with their child and experience the event in the same manner. This is not the case with competitive dance where parents and dancers share some values but maintain fundamentally different expectations. They do not utilize the event in the same way.

The other main difference between competitive dance and other forms is the composition and role of the audience. When thinking about an audience at a music concert or movie, one envisions a member who acts as a consumer by purchasing a ticket for a single showing and, for that allotted

period of time, watches the event. At dance competitions, the only participants who watch the competition in its entirety are the judges, and they are paid to do so. Other participants pay fees, but to participate, not to watch. Each participant (competition, studio, parent, and dancer) moves in and out of being an audience member, shifting the role of audience to a secondary task.

The diagram below illustrates the circuit of production created by the participants of competitive dance. The producers, creators, and consumers interact with each other by establishing a circular form of communication, one that has a direct impact upon progress within competitive dance. While the parents and dancers are linked together under the heading of consumer, they first consult each other when making decisions before combining into a singular voice. Parents advocate for their children, especially in the earlier years; they speak on their behalf with teachers and studio directors when problems arise, and vice versa. While the child may be the one who is actually in the studio working and on the stage dancing, parents are by their side through the entire process. The judges, a paid audience, are offshoots of the producers and have little impact on the system in this role. Many adjudicators are also teachers, studio directors, and parents; it will be in these roles that they are able to effect change. Solid two-way arrows denote economic relationships that influence each other and the progression of competitive dance, while the single dashed arrow denotes an economic exchange that has little to no influence on the circuit. The audience is allotted a position in the centre of the production circuit and has been given a dashed bar. The bar (rather than an arrow) denotes the absence of economic influence, keeping in mind that participants only exercise influence on the circuit while in their primary roles. However, the bar highlights the ability participants have to move between primary and secondary roles.



Competitive dance circuit of production

Competing within the Production Circuit

Bourdieu states that everything is interconnected, where even an agent in a position of dominance relies on its lesser parts to function. Consequently, the final artistic product cannot be read without considering the entirety of its parts. Similar to other artistic undertakings, each agent enters into the circuit of production in the desire of recognition or "specific capital" (Bourdieu 1993, 30). Thick descriptions of competitive dance made earlier in this paper mention four individual sets of people or agents: the competition, the studio, the parent, and the dancer. As Frith maintains, the relationships that exist between participants make it possible to locate meaning and value within a practice, regardless of high or popular status. There are, however, points that make the competitive dance production circuit unique.

The first distinguishing characteristic of a competitive dance circuit is the amount of time that each participant gives to the practice. Within other art forms, the creator is always working toward an end goal, while producers oversee and promote multiple artists, and consumers utilize the final product. In competitive dance, all participants are working toward the same goal over the same period. The goal, or final product, is the completion of an entire competitive dance season. Although the season may vary in length with varying levels of commitment and costs, the overall framework is similar. Training for the season begins during the summer months with summer intensives, and weekly classes and rehearsals commence in September. In February or March, the competitive showcase acts as a dress rehearsal, leading up to two to five competition weekends. In May or June, dancers perform in the recreational dance recital. Attendance at a national final in July (often on alternating years) means dancers continue to train and perform after the recital, seamlessly transitioning into the next season. Some dancers even audition for national dance teams and travel internationally, adding additional rehearsals—at another studio, sometimes in another city—to their regular class schedule throughout the year before competing abroad in June and July. At the same time, the competition directors prepare for the upcoming season. They book venues, plan tour dates, update social media, promote their competitions, communicate with studio directors, and operate anywhere between one and fifteen (or more) competition weekends in a season.

Dance competitions and dance studios are small businesses, a second attribute that defines the competitive dance production circuit. As such, directors rely on positive word of mouth and repeat costumers in order to remain open. While there are studios that operate without attending competitions, dance competitions can only remain open as long as there are studios that wish to compete. Competitive dance is currently experiencing a participation boom in Ontario, and so there are many competitions and studios from which to choose. As a result, these small businesses are acutely aware of their clientele's needs and desires. It is important to remember that competitive dance is a recreational activity. Yes, students who participate do so at an elite level (similar to other children's competitive activities); however, for the vast majority of participants, the end goal is not a career in dance. I spoke with another mother and daughter about the young lady's twelve years in competitive dance and asked which skills were transferable to her experience starting university. Reflecting on a defining moment in her daughter's competitive career, the mother said:

> At Nationals in Disney, she [her daughter] was very upset because her solo was going on and her teacher had no time for her. She [the teacher] didn't prep them [a group of teammates], left them all on their own. She [her daughter] was sort of upset going on stage. That whole weekend there were 230 soloists in her age category, because

> they group them all together at nationals and she came in twelfth. It was like, see, you didn't need her—you did it on your own. Yes, she wanted her teacher there, but I reminded her, you did it, you don't always need someone there to hold your hand, you can do it yourself. (Anonymous 2016e)

Parents don't tend to enrol their children in competitive dance intending them to pursue a career in dance; instead, they value the life skills that are nurtured, skills that young dancers carry with them as they mature.

Unlike other aesthetic sports such as gymnastics, figure skating, and even ballroom dance—each of which is overseen by an international governing board—dance competitions are independent businesses free to set their own rules and regulations. It is up to each studio to be aware of how rules can change from event to event. Both the studio and the competition operate with the intention of gaining economic capital. The studio collects payments for lessons, competition entrance fees, and costumes fees from parents; they then pay the dance competitions to bring their studios to the events. Parents pay the bills and chauffeur the dancers to and from the studio and competitions. While they hope to see their children win, they also mark success by gains in social capital. The dancers, who range in age from five to eighteen, mark value within competition not only by winning but also by how much fun they have or through entertainment capital.

While helping families to navigate a healthier approach to the negative side of sports, Shane Murphy investigated parents and children's expectations of competitive activities (1999). The expectations Murphy lists are all transferable to competitive dance culture. This comprehensive list illustrates the many reasons why parents put their children into sports, as well as reasons why children enjoy staying in competitive activities.

What the parents want	What the kids want
• Bonding with child • Providing structure for free time • Excitement and meaning • Helping a child's physical development and health • Teaching a child self-control • Developing talent • Promoting social development • Dreams of glory • Seeing the young athlete as an investment • Competition between parents	• Fun • Activity and involvement • Improvement and skill building • The physical thrill • Friendships • Social recognition • Competition • Attention

What parents and children expect to get out of youth sports

Although it may appear that competitive dance is all about awards and winning, this is not the case. In fact, very few of the parents and children I interviewed mentioned winning at all. One mother said: "I love it! There are several reasons why I love competitions. I get to connect with my daughters. It gives you, as a parent, the opportunity to compare the studio you are at with the others. To make sure that you are doing the right thing for your child" (Anonymous 2016f). The youngest

girl I interviewed (eight years old), said: "I like competing because it's exciting to dance on stage with people competing against you. And the awards at the end, I always get so excited about that" (Anonymous 2016g). Reflecting on the friendships that she has created, a sixteen-year-old recounted her favourite competition memory: "The last competition at Blue Mountain. It was really a nice weekend! If it was the last competition I ever did in my life I would be satisfied. Just being with the people I dance with, like, because my studio is smaller we all know each other. It was just a weekend to spend time with each other" (Anonymous 2016h). Competitive dance is meaningful to its participants precisely because it fulfils more than just winning.

Returning to the participants' activities within a typical competitive dance session let me flesh out more of Murphy's tactics at play. While the dance competition does all it can to make the teachers comfortable, the competition is much more interested in the dancers themselves. Functioning as a "pay to use" operation within a capitalistic service based economy (Schupp 2016, 361), corporate dance competitions "seek to achieve financial success, as any business does, by creating a niche within the industry by constructing innovative characteristic and elements that set the company apart from competitors" (Weisbrod 2010, 26). Adjudication and awards have proved the perfect opportunity to do so. Between 1993 and 1997, dance competitions switched from only rewarding first, second, and third places to a points-based system that ensures that everyone leaves with a placement ribbon. At the same time, competitions continued to rebrand their placement ribbons. In the late 1990s, bronze, silver, and gold were replaced with high silver, gold, and high gold. By the mid-2000s, silvers were rarely if ever awarded and platinum took the new top spot. Today, the lowest marks awarded are high gold (usually a mark between 87 and 89 percent), and competitions have added new top awards such as titanium, diamond, and emerald.

Further, some competitions have implemented placement guidelines such as the following: "All routines will place 1st–5th in their regular categories. All categories with 6 or more entries will be divided into two (there will never be more than five entries in a regular category" (Luv 2 Dance 2008). This ensures that each dancer leaves with an award. The "Special Award" further recognizes competitors; these awards are made up on the spot and are given quirky names such as "happy feet," "what a handful," and "up for the challenge." Because not everyone is able to leave with an overall award, these special awards offer an additional opportunity for the dancers to be recognized. By handing out three to five special awards each session, the dance competition recognizes the hard work put in by the dancers—and ensures that dancers who may not otherwise win overall or win scholarships still experience recognition.

Awards are not the only way that competitions work to please dancers. The time that elapses between the end of a session and the handing out of awards enables competitions to fit in another way to make the competitors happy: games and giveaways. Rushing on stage with their teammates, competitors dance as a group and jump to catch competition swag (water bottles, t-shirts, shorts, and stuffed animals) and other treats (toys and candy). They participate in games such as "who can dress the fastest" and "hula-hooping dance dads."

A teacher reflected on the different type of competitions she attends with her students. She mentions:

> There are a lot of different competitions out there and how they run things. A lot of competitions will, when it's award time, do a lot of games and draws and fun things for the kids. And the kids really enjoy doing that sort of stuff. Other competitions

> are more serious and get right to the results. Our studio doesn't necessarily like going to the comps with a lot of games and interaction as it draws out the time. But the kids, young kids in particular, enjoy that fun atmosphere. (Anonymous 2016g)

The change in the award system and the small games and prices ensure that each dancer leaves the stage after adjudication feeling good about themselves and having had fun. If the students had fun and come away from the weekend having received great marks, special awards, and maybe an overall award, the studio will consider returning to that competition the following season.

The studio also banks on the results of competition weekends to retain and attract students. Studio websites now provide links to their Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube sites, which they encourage current and prospective students to follow. Here, studios post videos of their routines from competition. Students and parents share these videos with family and friends through Facebook, while prospective students can see the level and type of choreography that the studio produces. Studios can also mention how proud they are of their students and tout their title wins and accomplishments from each competition weekend. These online celebrations, along with the care and support provided backstage at competitions and in the studio, make parents and their students feel encouraged and appreciated—and more likely to return the following season.

Conclusion

Competitive dance is a commercial enterprise, one that is continually marketed to parents and their children on the premise that participation in the dance event will instil a good work ethic, provide an excellent form of fitness, and—above all else—be an enjoyable activity. In line with Frith's definition of popular music events, competitions are created around "routinized transcendence that [sells] what is normally coined 'fun'" (Frith 1990, 99). It is important to remember that the presence of the word "fun" does not negate the time and effort put into the practice. Rather, once competitive dance ceases to be enjoyable and the negative moments and hard work outweigh the positive benefits, the event changes or ceases to exist. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the conditions in which the form exists, what participants value, and how they utilize the event. In the instance of competitive dance, these conditions become visible in the context of the circuit of production, the complex economic interactions between participants, and the unique composition of the audience. It is also important to remember that competitive dance does not operate in isolation; it is shaped by the social conditions of the time. Crucially, participants in competitive dance have the ability to make their own value judgments, decisions that impact other participants as well as the progression of a competition event. But, really, who doesn't want to win? It is a competition after all.

Notes

1. In addition to using Jacqueline Steuart's chart in "Canadian Competitions: Everything You Need to Know for the 2015 Season" (2014), I conducted online searches and consulted print sources to create a database of Ontario competitions. I consulted the website for each competition in order to determine the weekends each competition was hosting a tour date, which allowed me to create a complete list of competitions and tour dates for the 2016 season.

2. There is no written documentation proving that competitive highland dance was the seed for early competitive dance in Ontario. However, the connection between highland dance being taught in dance

studios (alongside ballet and other forms) and the appearance of a dance division within the Peel and Kiwanis Music Festival during the 1960s is worthy of consideration.

3. The increase in archival material from dance festivals held throughout the 1960s and the recollections of early participants show the increase in attendance at festivals during this time.

4. All interviews were conducted in confidentiality; therefore, names have been withheld.

5. The studio directors I interviewed who ran schools before and after the initial broadcast of *So You Think You Can Dance* all mention an increase in enquiries about lessons as well as an increase in enrolment after the show aired.

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ARTICLES

On Popular Dance Aesthetics: Why Backup Dancers Matter to Hip Hop Dance Histories

Mary Fogarty Woehrel

> We appear to have reached a peculiar pass, wherein everything is culture (or so it seems), or everything mimics culture.
> ~ Hortense Spillers, *The Idea of Black Culture*

Although breaking was practised in the early 1980s in Toronto,[1] as it was wherever movies like *Flashdance* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984) were available and captured the imaginations of youth (Fogarty 2016), the dance form essentially died out for a time in Toronto (Fogarty 2006). The dance styles that took over locally were newer hip hop dances, featured in movies such as *House Party* (1990) starring rap artists/dancers, Kid 'n Play.[2] Similarly, the hip hop dancers who performed with rap artists such as EPMD,[3] Big Daddy Kane, and Maestro Fresh Wes became trendsetters, inspirational to dancers of all ages. The early 1990s mark a particular moment in hip hop history when the backup dancers for hip hop artists were seen as artists in their own right: as hip hop dancers who were recognized for their talents and style. I am not speaking here about dancers who work for a choreographer on a project and, in doing so, are generally asked to fade into the background enough that the star singer is foregrounded. In this context, backup dancers—dancers who work professionally performing alongside musical acts—are a prime constituent of a performance whose many elements are put together to complement each other in specific ways. I will argue that these dancers, at this moment in the early 1990s, were aesthetic innovators whose contribution has played a larger role than has been recognized in the developments of breaking: the original dance of hip hop culture that was marketed as "breakdancing" in the early 1980s by managers and dancers trying to make a living in New York City.

In order to show the impact of the innovations these dancers introduced, I will analyze some historical examples of popular performance by their own aesthetic rubrics, treating the work of individual dancers not as "works" by choreographers but as individual moves (such as those captured in music videos in shots) that express not only their creativity but also their community. My approach is rooted in sociological, ethnographic methods including interviews (some anonymized, some named) and participant observation over a sustained period (2003–19), although I focus in depth on the experiences and influences of a few particular b-boys to provide some social backdrop to the topics at hand. In doing so, I build on the work of various scholars who have considered how people working within infrastructures shape art practices from Howard Becker's (1982) identification of a coffee porter's role in a writer's practice, to Vicki Mayer's (2011) analysis of television producers in *Below The Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, to Lucie Vánerová's (2017) considerations of women in electronics assemblies, Will Straw's (2011) analysis of film "extras," and Christopher Small's (1998) considerations of roadies and ticket agents in live music.

Mary Fogarty Woehrel is the Graduate Program Director in Dance Studies (MA/PhD) and an associate professor of dance at York University. She has written about music, film and dance and is most well-known for her ethnographic research about international breaking scenes that appears under the name Mary Fogarty. Her work can be found in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Competition*, *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, *Continuum*, *Music and Arts in Action*, and *Ageing and Youth Cultures: Music, Style and Identity*, among other publications.

The aesthetic trajectories of hip hop dancers performing as backup dancers are critical to this discussion, and I will draw out their importance to audience experience, while also examining how producers have downplayed the value of backup dancers, reducing them to a background status that belies their influence. What's at stake in this argument for the contemporary climate of international breaking culture is the significance of the role that professional hip hop dancers have played in the development of the dance form from very early on. This analysis will, I hope, demystify the structures that have influenced the dance, and challenge the assumption that hip hop dance is only authentic if performed in a competitive, battle context.

My topic addresses an area that deserves more attention in performance studies: popular dance aesthetics. Note that the "popular" here is often set against both art and subcultural discourses; the "popular" is also a descriptor commonly used to identify the commercial labour of dancers who work in professional settings within various entertainment and cultural industries, especially in the music business. I build on the work of Marc Lamont Hill, who notes:

> In line with my neo-Gramscian approach to popular culture, I strongly dispute the notion that "conscious" hip-hop provides a transcendent sphere within an otherwise hegemonic culture industry. Such a notion hinges upon the invocation of a faulty (and elitist) modernist dichotomy between high and low culture—in this case mainstream vs. conscious rap music—that obscures the complex interplay between reproduction and resistance in all sites of hip-hop cultural production. (Hill 2009, 51n8)

These observations apply to hip hop dances such as breaking, which are often compared to commercial hip hop dances, marked by their relationship to industries as opposed to communities. The tension between what Hill characterizes as the "transcendent" and the "popular" or "mainstream" has resulted in a rejection of a particular kind of professionalization and aesthetic that involves a perceived loss of integrity (often the integrity of dancing your own movements even if that means creating choreography for others). Dismissing the aesthetic possibility within commercial dance performances, the "transcendent" accords value to "community" above all else—a dynamic that comes with its own set of problems, which match those outlined in Miranda Joseph's (2002) seminal text, *Against the Romance of Community*. Breaking practices can be romanticized and set apart as antagonistic toward outsiders, other hip hop dances, commercial and studio contexts, and counting and "choreo" movement vocabularies. Many of these arenas are female-led, and the rejection of these forms has come with the globalization of hip hop culture and the shift away from its roots in black communities.[4] This makes professionalization for dancers very difficult, as the more they want to make a professional career of the dance, the more they are seen as not being true to a romantic notion of its origins that is not borne out by the facts of its own global developments. In order to open out the details of the discussion, I develop a case study of a few key b-boys from Toronto whose lineages demonstrate how professionalization was both an ambition of participants and represented by the dancers that they looked up to, who were professional, "backup" dancers performing on theatrical stages, in music videos and in live music contexts.

In the fields of performance studies and sociology, the amateur has been thought of as a dedicated participant (Hennion 2001, 2007) who can offer a grounding or resistance to a particular type of professionalism within capitalism or enterprise (Ridout 2013). However, anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (1989) has argued that the everyday lives of musicians usually involve the blurring of these distinctions and participation happens across genres and spaces that involve both amateur and paid

performances. Following from Finnegan, the argument I want to make here troubles this opposition between the amateur and professional in hip hop dance: the innovations of professional backup dancers who toured with musical acts inspired shifts in breaking which, like any artform, is practised by amateurs, some of whom may go on to have short-lived, or, if they are lucky, longer professional careers as dancers. This is complicated because the aesthetic legitimacy of b-boys—which dictated the way that styles developed in Toronto, for example—is not quantifiable in terms of professional success, and yet it matters. Dancers aspired to have professional careers and, in doing so, tried to locate the institutional structures that might support their development and their aesthetic agency.

In addition to this troubling of the distinction between the amateur and the professional, I want to speak to new generations of performance studies scholars who specialize in hip hop studies; scholars such as Sean Robertson-Palmer, Vanessa Lakewood, Helen Simard, Serouj Aprahamian, Deanne Kearney, Jacqueline Melindy, and Joshua Swamy, who are posed for a finetuned and very specific, local argument about how communities tell histories to each other over time. In other words, my writing is implicitly politicized as I write for a community that has been underrepresented in dance scholarship, who may not exist yet in the field, and who hopefully will engage with this topic to fill in the gaps that I have left. Acknowledging that some of the most reputable and respected international dancers and teachers are professional dancers who often have to perform a rejection of institutions for their livelihood (or at least encounter participants who want them to perform rebellion) explains the historical moment of the present, where attempts to professionalize the field are interpreted as threatening the existence of the form in its "authentic" state: a state that, quite possibly, never existed.

Dance Economics

In the professionalization of hip hop culture in Toronto, emerging musical acts (rappers and producers) were supported by government job programs. In this way, music was seen to be an economically viable option for young black artists in a way that hip hop dance was not. Yet, in the same period, backup dancers were being employed by the music industries[5] as a means to offer support and volume to a show. These dancers came to define the music for audiences, providing prototypes for how to engage with it. Backup dancers perform a particular kind of bodily organization and control: an expression and articulation of sound. They are bodies on display that, through their technical engagement with the music, show us how to (ideally) ride beats with our bodies and participate in the spectacle. Despite this centrality to audience experience, the process of writing about backup dancers reveals their precarious position and their marginalization, both in scholarship and in their professional capacities.

The marginalization of dancers is not unusual. B-boys and b-girls, although central to the development of hip hop culture, have often been backgrounded. For example, DJ Kool Herc became a household name, but the b-boys and b-girls that danced at his parties are not generally known. The Legendary Twins, two b-boys that had big reputations at Kool Herc's parties, used to create routines, wear costumes (trench coats with cigars), and enter dance contests, and although they were not part of the early 1980s movement when breaking became popularized globally—having moved on to coach basketball—they are still invested in hip hop as (ideally) black-owned business.[6] The aspiration to a business model is important. Some of the earliest images of breaking that circulated around the world feature b-boys in the act of getting paid. In *Flashdance*, there is a scene where the protagonist comes across a group of b-boys dancing on the street, and herein lies

the contradiction at the heart of breaking: the b-boys and poppers in the movie were getting paid (as extras) yet they were represented as b-boys out on the street dancing publicly for free. In the scholarship about breaking there is little discussion of the paid labour of b-boys, including discussion of dancers, such as backup dancers, working in the entertainment industries. Thus, many local b-boys and b-girls who took up the dance globally subsequently idealized the form as an authentic street dance (how it was represented in the movie), rather than seeing the dancers in the scene as extras doing a job for pay (however marginal).

One of the b-boys in *Flashdance* was Frosty Freeze from New York City. His performance is emblematic of the spirit of the dance, with his bouncy steps, direct address (he blows a kiss to the camera), and spectacular moves. Frosty Freeze became a sort of celebrity, so although he was only an "extra" in the movie, that movie made him a household name in hip hop dance circles internationally. When I interviewed Frosty Freeze (2003), my final question to him was what advice he had for up and coming dancers. His response was, "get a lawyer to look at your contracts." At the time, this comment surprised me: I was an amateur dancer, and someone who travelled to compete, socialize, and learn histories of breaking as a passionate hobby. I hadn't yet thought of breaking as paid work. However, at the same time, I was a dedicated practitioner until an injury took me out of my physical practice and into a research role. I had thrown events that involved getting sponsorships from local businesses (mostly to donate prize money or merchandise) and had been the recipient of some free merchandise at events. I was occasionally paid a small fee for a one-off performance, and I was aware that some of the more elite b-boys and b-girls in the international scene had deals (usually with clothing companies) to wear their products as tastemakers. Breaking, for me, was something that happened in social spaces rather than as a commercial enterprise. I would go to a club to dance, and I would practise in deserted areas of shopping malls or share the fee with other dancers to rent out a dance studio for an hour to practise on our own. Looking back at footage of the emerging breaking scene in Toronto in the early 2000s,[7] there was emerging talent, but not many people had yet transitioned into any sort of professional context for their work. In other words, we were amateurs who defined ourselves in terms of our identity, lifestyle, and culture.[8]

The b-boys with more experience from Toronto, however, had been going through a process of trying to cultivate professional careers as artists. They had managers, got booked for live performances and music videos, and some had even begun to teach classes in breaking (which was a novelty, and rare at the time). Teaching breaking technique was complicated by the fact that people didn't want to teach their signature moves, and most classes were a mixture of a general dance up top ("toprock"), some basic foundational floor moves (the six-step quickly became a starting point for many teachers during this time), a backspin and maybe a freeze.

Breaking has undergone a rapid professionalization since that time, although the story of dancers from New York City involved professionalization on a larger scale and earlier on: when "breakdancing" exploded in the 1980s, there were opportunities for world tours with rappers and spots in films as "extras." This is why Frosty Freeze's insight makes sense, given the context of his experience, an experience that has been framed in most accounts of hip hop dance as "exploitation" because of the poor remuneration for b-boy labour. Thomas DeFrantz (2014) argues that the early films, such as *Flashdance*, set the standard for the exploitative movie business practices directed toward young hip hop dancers that would define their involvement as cultural labourers. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Fogarty 2006), many of those same dancers evolved their knowledge of various entertainment industries through this early success in building reputations, but not an economically sustainable career. Many of the well-known b-boys and poppers moved into live

theatrical performances as an avenue where they might gain more control over their artform than what the film industry had offered.

Backup Dancers

In the early 1990s, prominent, professional New York City dancers such as Ken Swift and Mr Wiggles were either working with professional dance companies or starting their own, becoming the named choreographers (although they had always been creating the movement of their shows) and working their way into contracts with entertainment companies to set up theatrical world tours. In fact, Toronto was the first stop on one of those tours of predominantly NYC dancers, and this event facilitated the "return" of breaking locally; the new batch of local Toronto dancers, inspired by this American tour, would work toward professionalization, with managers, stage shows, and routines.

Part of that professional work, for some of the dancers, involved becoming backup dancers for rappers who worked in the music industries. Within the context of hip hop culture, those dancers would be called "hip hop dancers," but the vocation that they were getting involved in was a tradition rooted in variety entertainment television shows (like *Soul Train*), a tradition that continued into the emergence of music videos with the rise of television channels such as *MTV* and Canada's version, *Much Music*.[9]

The work of backup dancers is integral to Toronto b-boy history in a few ways. First, many of the young b-boys and b-girls active in Toronto in the 1990s had looked up to the hip hop dancers that performed for groups such as EPMD, Big Daddy Kane, and Maestro Fresh Wes. Their admiration for artists featured in music videos was performed in a form of partnering, with two dancers doing routines together. The social hip hop dances of this period, popularized in movies such as *House Party*, played an important role in the development of hip hop choreo aesthetics. These new trends and styles contributed to a dwindling of interest in breaking. As b-boys in Toronto recalled to me, females didn't want to see breaking anymore; they wanted the social dances, and so many b-boys were motivated to move into these new arenas. However, these social dances would go on to inform the stylistic modifications and innovations for which Toronto breakers would become renowned in later decades, such as "threading" or "origami" styles. The idea of social dance, unlike dance for an explicitly theatrical performance, is that anyone can do the dance and make up their own moves as they go. And so, in the commercial representation of hip hop, dancers make sense as "extras"—consider *Soul Train* party scenes where everyone is dancing to the latest hit record or music videos where dancers are made to look like part of a regular party (just ordinary people) and yet dancers are selected by talent scouts.

Breaking history in Toronto is inseparable from the larger history of hip hop party dances that made their impact in the 1990s during one of the lulls in breaking practice locally. Hip hop dancers who performed as backup dancers to local rap acts doing upright hip hop dances became instrumental in the development of local b-boy styles. In fact, in a guest class he taught at York University, B-boy Lego, the b-boy who taught two of Canada's most iconic b-boys, Dyzee and Megus, recalled that a local producer suggested that he take upright popular dance styles like threading the needle and bring them into his floorwork for breaking on the ground. He did this, and the rest is (local) history.

The relationship between the "commercial" or "professional" work of dancers and the "underground," "local," or "subcultural" practices of passionate amateurs is defined by tension, with the two domains separated not only by vocation but also by vocabulary. And yet, the two approaches to the form exist on more of a continuum than is currently recognized. In the 1990s, backup dancers for rap artists created innovative steps and styles (recorded in music videos and also performed at live events) that led both to the decline of breaking practice locally, as people in Toronto moved into party dances, and also to the return of breaking, as b-boys went back to the ground with moves inspired by the hip hop styles of the time, including party dances.

Breaking aesthetics rely not just on a taste for moves but also on the same systems that allow social groups to form: crews are crucial to breaking. How crews choose who joins is a reflection of who they are as a group and how they navigate their aesthetic credibility. To understand the practices of a b-boy or b-girl, you have to get to know their crew dynamics. Crews have often been made up of dancers, DJs, rappers, and (graffiti) writers. Unlike backup dancers, who are hired for a job, hip hop dancers have often been part of crews that levelled the playing field across the arts even as the entertainment industries weighted economic value toward music over dance. This is where partnering comes in, finding someone to practise with and making up moves together.

What Is a Crew?

Almost since its earliest days in NYC, breaking has always revolved around hip hop crews, groups of individuals who decide, formally, to make their affiliation with each other known. They name their crew, compete together (known as "battling"), and decide how to enact and negotiate their crew politics. Each crew has a collective reputation based on their abilities to dance and win at competitive performances.

Since crews battle together, and there is more and more at stake in larger international competitions, some contests have tried to set boundaries or criteria for dancers as to what constitutes a crew. Organizing a crew of elite, professional b-boys rather than one that consists of people who practise together as amateurs in one locale yields questions of fairness, meaning, and cultural codes and practices within hip hop culture. This discussion of the tension between amateur and professional practice reveals just how central the codes of conduct surrounding crews have been to breaking culture to date. For example, Ken Swift, an internationally influential b-boy, has often suggested that a collective of dancers is not a *crew* unless they do crew routines.

The social dynamics within a crew are quite complex. Some crews have an acknowledged and agreed upon working leader (known often, in long-standing American crews, as the "president"; in the UK, I have heard one DJ referred to as "coach"). The difference between Toronto crews of the 1990s and the present is the multigenerational component of many crew formations. Within breaking culture, the meaning and purpose of a crew is hotly debated. Like rock bands (Cohen 1991), breaking crews often regard themselves as a "family." This analogy expresses an authentic relationship between the members that extends beyond their practice to suggest a closeness and type of bonding. For this discussion, it is important to understand that some crews undergo a process of professionalization while others do not. Some see themselves as a business and try to create careers out of dance, and some crews just do the dance for fun. Crew members that have had the opportunity to tour with rap acts (especially internationally) undergo a radical process of professionalization that forever alters their feelings about crewmates. The shift from "family" to

"business" has had many consequences for dancers' lives, and the process of entanglement over who can represent the name of the crew once the crew has become a business has more often than not ended in the courtroom.

Dance as Art

For many fields in the arts, professionalization is tied not only to contracts, unions, and pay but also to discourses of art. I asked a second-generation New York City b-boy when people began to call breaking "art." I wanted to know when dancers began to self-identify as artists, rather than having the label applied by people looking at the cultural practice from the outside. He thought about this and returned the following day with the answer that he started to call breaking "art" after the year 2000. From what he could remember, he was inspired by a Bruce Lee book that referred to martial arts. In other words, there wasn't much at stake for him in aligning with an art discourse, and the external influence of kung fu cinema and aesthetics is apparent in his recollections.

The question of when and how outsiders consider breaking art is also crucial for unpacking some broader societal constructions about practice and meaning. This issue is taken up by French sociologist Roberta Shapiro (2004), who argues that, in France, breaking only becomes art when it goes through a series of "artification" processes, including being put on theatrical, proscenium stages. Shapiro and Nathalie Heinich (2012) further pose the question: when is breaking an art? This research does not account for the popular or commercial notions of art that also circulate but rather focuses on theatrical, proscenium stage contexts. Simon Frith's (1983) comparison within the study of popular culture offers an analysis of how interpretations of "black music" produce a "paradoxical mediation." Frith writes:

> The assumption was that while black music was important as an expression of vitality and excitement—was, in other words, "good to dance to"—it lacked the reflective qualities needed for genuine *artistic* expression. . . . This position assumes a straightforward distinction between mind and body. Black music, as "body music," is therefore "natural," "immediate," "spontaneous." Art, by contrast, is something deliberately created, self-consciously thought, and involves, by definition, complexity and development. (1983, 21)

Thus, one might be a good dancer, but the value that art world professionals will often place on a dancer or choreographer is their ability to stage their art as sophisticated, theatrical, and mediated. Who is afforded this interpretation is racialized. The same may hold true when we think about how dance practices are framed in contemporary culture, and how the development of breaking is understood. As Hugues Bazin (2002) points out, those b-boys who can work in theatre become doubly legitimate, both within their own dance communities and within art worlds. In Fogarty, Osborne, and Kearney (2015), we argue that dance companies such as Montreal's Tentacle Tribe have "multiple legitimacies" across theatrical, competition and commercial worlds, and that they maintain these legitimacies by having mastery over the making of slight, aesthetic adjustments in order to appease the expectations of these various worlds. Again, this is afforded to participants who can navigate multiple spaces, and this is a site of privilege and exclusions.

Hip hop theatre is an example of a hybrid form that remains at the edges of the art world. It is a broad category that often encompasses movie scenes as well as proscenium stage performances, but

here I focus on theatrical stage productions (see Fogarty 2014). This line of work is regarded as less commercial than the entertainment industries, and it is meant to be taken more seriously as art, although a large amount of the work appeals to youth, a trait supported by the use of clear narratives and experiences that young people can relate to. It is an emerging field that began quite quietly in the early 1990s. This performance avenue became hugely popular in France and is growing right now in the UK with the development of Breakin' Convention, the largest hip hop theatre festival in the world, and one that is developing off-shoots in various countries, including Canada. Dancers who headline this tour tend to train in their own city and then migrate for the final rehearsals, performances, and tours. Alongside these dancers, there are now DJs, tour managers, lighting technicians, and so on, that turn the breaking crew into a cast and technical crew.[10]

In addition to this art discourse, most of the early accounts of hip hop culture, and of breaking's position within that culture, can be understood within the context of subcultural theory. Steven Hager (1984) describes hip hop as an "experimental laboratory," and from his account, breaking fits within art discourses of originality. He writes, "[Hip hop] has created an art form so original and vital that black and Hispanic artists have gained access to the established New York art world for the first time" (103). Given that many of the b-boys, poppers and writers (graffiti) who were successful attended art-focused high schools then is less surprising than it might otherwise seem.

Notably, breaking was a style invented by young people who were heavily influenced by popular cultural forms—"television, movies, radio, and video games" (Banes 1994, 132). According to Sally Banes' account, these stylistic influences provided a "relationship between the dance form and the mass media" that was "densely layered, beginning with the use of pop culture imagery and with brevity of format, and evolving with the succession of responses to media coverage and dissemination." In her concluding thoughts about this mediated relationship, Banes argues, "these kids' sensitivity to—and sophistication in the use of—the popular media is essential to the nature and development of this urban folk dance" (132).

Although Banes relates breaking moves and styles to African American folk traditions, she acknowledges that the youth are also incorporating influences and aesthetics from other cultures through mediated representations and narratives (such as kung fu films). The situation of the arts in the United States in the early 1980s, and the popularity of pop artists such as Andy Warhol, possibly assisted this celebration of popular cultural forms—not only as inspiration for consecrated artists, such as Warhol, but also as arts on their own terms. In comparison, accounts that focus on the anthropological aspects of youth culture—predominantly that of ethnic minorities who are being assimilated, problematically, into educational systems and urban centres dominated by white people—do not place so much emphasis on the dance as art (see Kopytko 1986). They are more concerned with the way the identities of the participants are fractured by social forces, and with the resistance of young people who identified with the oppression of African Americans represented in movies, or in other media. For this sort of account, the dance is situated as a social practice with no mention of the professional development of artists or the situations where dancers are getting paid. In other words, these accounts address identity rather than vocation.

Gizmo's Chapter: From Amateur to Professional Experiences in Breaking

In this section, I discuss a local, Toronto b-boy's forays into professional work. Although he was invited and paid to dance internationally, he continued to define his involvement with the dance as a

lifestyle and identity (being a b-boy). Gizmo, of Toronto's Bag of Trix (hip hop) crew, was influenced by developments in dance styles in his particular locale in the 1990s. Some biographical background demonstrates a range of influential sources and materials. Gizmo had a background in both gymnastics and martial arts (Gizmo 2007).[11] He also grew up with influences from the dance and pop music worlds, such as Dick Van Dyck, Sammy Davis Jr., Michael Jackson, and a variety of musicals. Around 1983, when he was eight years old, breaking blew up and he danced for a few years, before shifting to become more involved in martial arts. At thirteen or fourteen he was going to clubs. There were all-ages nights at places in Toronto such as Inner City, RPM (which is now called the Government), Club 44 in Brampton, Club Focus in Toronto, and Club Mecca. His preferred form was house dancing, but with his partner TicTac he also did a locally inflected form of hip hop dance called *'95 South Style*—the same style performed by EPMD's[12] dancers, which included trendy hip hop dance moves such as "the running man" and "cabbage patch." From there, the dances became more complex, and as Gizmo would describe it, "artistic."[13] He names influences, including Big Daddy Kane's dancers and the local dancers who represented with Maestro Fresh Wes.

In 1994, Gizmo went to New York City and met many of the key international figures there. He danced for them and was quickly put down by the Rocksteady crew. With the Rocksteady crew, he went to Zulu Nation Anniversary in 1994 and Rocksteady Anniversary in New York in 1995. Dancers in Japan saw a tape of his performance at the Zulu Nation Anniversary and recognized him from that footage the following year, when they were together in person at the Rocksteady Anniversary. In a mutual creative exchange, Gizmo invited this group of dancers to Toronto, an invitation that was quickly reciprocated with invitations to Japan to present shows and workshops. Gizmo recalls his time in Japan, where they would practise in train stations and malls. On each floor of the mall, kids would be practising a different style like house or popping. Gizmo commented that this setup and the scale of this scene was larger than what had been going on in Toronto.

He recalls that at this time the Rocksteady crew had different chapters, including a Toronto chapter. The president, Crazy Legs, would organize a team of dancers to perform in Switzerland, Italy, and other countries, and they would do rehearsals and fly out. Crazy Legs acted as an agent and manager, setting up shows for up and coming b-boys' shows. Gizmo took time off school for these travels, but when he returned, he picked up his studies again and, for a time, became a legend of the past. Although Gizmo ended up in a different line of work than most dancers who remained in "the scene," the career paths for b-boys and b-girls committed to the dance have splintered off into various types of dance industries and types of employment. For example, the famous New York City b-boy, Crazy Legs of the Rocksteady crew, works professionally as a DJ.

Biting vs. Innovation

This discussion of influence and innovation across amateur and professional boundaries has to consider the issue of "biting." Toronto, possibly more than any other locale where I have conducted research, is obsessed with the notion of originality, and its opposite, biting. Dancers regulate issues of originality through the development of rules around biting (taking someone else's moves or ideas); discussions about originality and the ownership of different moves abound in the practice. There is a substantial emphasis on "flipping it" (making moves your own) because of the centrality of competition in determining the status and earnings of dancers. Dancers are also concerned with corporate exploitation; the use of dance moves and dancers by commercial enterprises of various

kinds (advertising agencies, film and TV personalities, theatre companies, and especially music videos) is often unaccredited, unattributed, and unremunerated.[14] Both of these issues have become a problem because of the difficulties dancers have protecting their rights, and even defining those rights. Whereas in the history of music, the concept of work/author developed in symbiosis with copyright law (and publisher interests), this did not happen for b-boys and b-girls—especially those who did not move their craft toward contemporary dance and its aesthetic values and contexts.

For example, Gizmo met Benzo, Daze, Caso, and Magic, who were all doing the *'95 Southstyle* in the early 1990s. He battled Benzo and Caso and Daze and then got into the Bag of Trix crew. There were about fifteen crew members, and they used to hang out, practise, and go to parties. They were focused on the art of dancing, and they each had their own style of breaking. They had a main rule in their crew that no biting was allowed. A lot of crews learn each other's moves and yet, within these crews, biting is not permitted. Gizmo (2007) explained:

> Biting is when you take a certain move from another dancer and claim it for your own. You take it straight. But what Bag of Trix thinks is that you need to take a move and flip it or give recognition to the person you took it from. It only takes a minute to take it but it takes a long time for people to come up with moves. With execution it's the same you have to flip it for example doing an elbow drop to a lotus position. You've got to flip the move and change the position in your retaliating move.

Gizmo explains that his crew had "everything," not just dancers but also emcees, graffiti writers, and DJs. This is significant to his understanding of what constitutes creativity in cultural practices. Another b-boy who grew up near Toronto added that dancers are not just biting moves now; they are also taking whole feelings, characters, and looks of other dancers as their own. Basically, *identities* are being copied as they relate to dance. I will return to this idea of copying dance identities in my conclusion.

Karl "Dyzee" Alba: A Case in Point

Another small case study of an individual Toronto dancer, Karl "Dyzee" Alba, who became well known internationally, will situate this part of the discussion more clearly. Dyzee recalls that he started dancing in 1994, when he had just turned fourteen years old.[15] The first local crews he saw were Bag of Trix, Intrikit, and Supernaturalz; he was also inspired by seeing the b-boy Crazy Legs on television. Dyzee remembers being told Crazy Legs was the best dancer, and so he emulated the unique qualities of Crazy Legs' aesthetic. In doing so, Dyzee developed a style of footwork defined by sporadic and intricate legwork.

His crew practised at a recreation facility in the Scarborough Town Centre as part of an initiative to provide a space to deal with problems of youth violence (rather than as an arts initiative). Here, he recalls being mentored by an older b-boy, Lego (recall my earlier mention of Lego's upright styles). Dyzee recalls:

> Lego, the oldest member in my crew, the guy that was like a father figure to me, he was still coming and still dancing every Friday. So every Friday that's what I was looking forward to and I started meeting all the kids there, the punks and we formed

> a crew, Skills to Kill. And we were all a bunch of friends. In '99 we entered the Unsung B-boy battle [in Toronto] and that's the first battle that we/I ever entered and we won that in '99.

An older b-boy being treated like a father figure was a common trope in my interviews with other dancers as well. The involvement of particular individuals in the crew reveals some other important factors about aesthetic choices and familial-like ties in the formation of this specific type of social group. Within this crew, the organization of aesthetics is around your individual moves, not the creation of a "work" for stage.

Crews also can grow to incorporate new generations of dancers, and this social restructuring is complex as it involves relations between many different people. Dyzee explains:

> So me and Lego talked and we decided that we were going to start Supernaturalz and bring everyone from Skills to Kill into Supernaturalz. So that's the 3rd generation [of the crew], we started getting big and battling everybody. Then we started meeting people and expanding out of Toronto so we met Jester and Trx from Hamilton, that's when I met Jessfx from Seattle and she joined the crew, A-B-girl and Problem Child from New Jersey so they joined the crew. So it was more outside influences, that's how the fourth generation came about. [There are six generations now.] After that, we got so cocky that we were winning all the battles that we decided we weren't going to let nobody into the crew anymore. The fifth generation is when we decided to open up the doors again and we brought in Puzzles, who is now one of the biggest guys in Toronto who usually battles. This guy Rubex Cube who used to be Ground Illusionz. There was Lee (Lethal) whose like my little brother that I've known forever and Antics, his friend, Ozzy.

There is a dimension of respect for the elders that informs decisions about who to let into the crew. When I asked who decided who joins the crew and whether this was up to particular people, Dyzee said:

> We were just a bunch of friends. But I know a lot of guys look up to me to make decisions. Jester started becoming the oldest. Everyone always still looks up to Lego but then he's become very relaxed, he goes: whatever you guys want to do. Everyone respects his opinion the most. Right now it's the most organized where I'm considered the president, or the leader. Then you have guys that are still at the same level as me but don't try to push the crew as hard which is Jesse [that's Jester referenced earlier], J-Rebel, Puzzles. . . . We'd probably consider Lego the owner.

At the time of this particular interview, August 9, 2007, Dyzee was aware of his international reputation and suggested that he is well known outside of Canada because he has had longevity. He has won the most international one-on-one competitions and has been asked to judge competitions more than anyone else.

The Supernaturalz crew has done theatrical performances and commercial work, yet their internal evaluations and aesthetic judgments revolve around the battle format and crew formations. Dyzee's understanding of his art revolves around a definition of work borrowed from popular music. He thinks of his sets as songs, and his "album" is the compilation of various "sets" that he has

developed.[16] This leads me to questions about where considerations of popular dance aesthetics might fit within the field of performance studies. How can we move from aesthetic theories of "works" to an aesthetic theory of popular dance that encounters moments, battles, and moves on their own terms, without locating them as amateur performances? How can we approach these forms in terms that are judged neither by commercial success nor by a contemporary dance aesthetic valuation of what makes a practice count as art? More importantly, how can hip hop dancers professionalize and unionize for the particularities of their various contexts from music and film industries to the contexts of various art worlds?

The point here is that those "backup" dancers who did "commercial" work also inspired the creative practices of b-boys. These circles of influence and creation are deeply embedded in the social practices of dancers and crews. Contexts in which hip hop dancers performed as "backup" dancers with rap artists in Toronto were never seen as art by the local art world, nor were the theatrical shows that b-boys put together. In fact, a promoter of a local b-boy crew described in a panel at York University how he had applied for arts funding and was told that breaking is not an artform like ballet and thus didn't qualify. At that time, Toronto b-boys were getting recognized internationally at b-boy events and known for their dynamic and sophisticated showcase rounds (i.e., theatrical performances rather than battles within the competition framework). Of course, this definition of "art" reveals how aesthetic gatekeeping is racialized, classed and, most importantly, that the logics of legitimacy and gatekeeping have historical weight. Once kept from developing their skills through art world and Higher Education institutional contexts, the dancers are now criticized for their lack of "autonomy" and their connection to commercial ventures.[17]

Popular Aesthetics in Dance

This consideration of how breaking's aesthetic conventions are produced, stabilized, translated, and disseminated on an international scale, bridging the fraught divide between the amateur and the commercial, has shown the significance of hip hop dancers appearing as backup dancers. Mediation and circulation, by means of videos, the Internet, informal educational structures, competitions, and the travels of dancers themselves, have been central to this significance. As a cultural sociologist interested in performance, I have detailed the agency of the participants, in terms of aesthetic choices, while also identifying the structuring forces that both aided and excluded participants in the course of their professional development. Note that in these personal biographies of influence and experience, the role of dance institutions and educations is absent. It seems paradoxical that the music industries provided more opportunities for aesthetic innovations than the local contemporary dance scene and its supportive infrastructures. This is worth a moment of pause as my argument is as much pointing to how arts communities might support new and emerging forms as it is about how it might support forms that have established their own aesthetics over forty-odd years as in the case of hip hop culture.

Locality is central to how styles and moves are organized, understood, and transported into the present professionalization of the dance. This is evident in how the infrastructures in France, or a few key cultural workers, fought to establish hip hop dance within art world dance contexts in a way that did not happen in Toronto. However, understanding breaking aesthetics is less about homologies between style and place than it is about the circulation of aesthetics in complex international networks. And there are levels to this. First, the "era" within which a b-boy or b-girl begins their practice is critical for the values and meanings that they link to their particular style, and

this is as central to their understanding of style as their locality. Francis Sparshott (1995) has suggested that dance, unlike other arts, is so firmly rooted in perceptions of specific localities that people assume dance must be observed in its own habitat. In this article, I have explored one particular locale, but also the ways in which that locale participates in a wider discourse. Second, although the dancers never claim to be, or position themselves as participants in an autonomous art form, they imagine and construct their discourses around values that are not dependent on income or commerce. This is one of the unique characteristics of breaking: the work of the dance may involve a desire to earn money, yet the desire to earn recognition ("props") from one's peers dictates the development of particular styles within the practice, adhering to trends in the culture.

There is a tendency in histories of art to discuss the great figures. This style of historicization is reproduced in the attempts by breakers to legitimize their art within international configurations. The great figures of breaking are those who have contributed a move, a style, or a value to the international culture. As one b-boy explained, if people copy what you do, then you have made an impact on the scene.[18] So, although copying the moves of others is seen to be unethical, b-boys and b-girls also build their reputations by being internationally influential, which often involves being copied. Regardless of how dancers feel about their imitators, what is revealed in these comments is that these dancers see themselves as contributors to a culture. They also liken their practice to an art form. These values are crucial to considerations of the political economy of the style—the work of dance.

B-boys internationally don't talk about "backup" dancers in the 1990s as part of the overarching history of breaking. However, local Toronto b-boys talk at length about the importance of "hip hop dancers" of the 1990s to the development of their styles. These conversations speak to the intimate values of the dance: where it was done and who it is for, as well as to the pressures that shape wider histories. What I have argued is that hip hop dancers' identities are complex, holding commercial values and the "autonomous" art discourses of local contemporary dance aesthetics in tension. In that way, we are primed to rethink what professionalization means for dance as an art form beyond "autonomy" and "commercialism," and behind the collectivity that progressive crews animate.

Notes

1. See Robin Coltez's video documentary, *Break In and Out – Toronto 1983–1985 – Toronto B-Boys*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CttgJ8BOWbc.

2. Popular music acts that can also dance, such as Kid 'n Play, were able to capitalize on star structures in a way that backup dancers could not because they were rarely named.

3. EPMD is an American hip hop group from Brentwood, New York.

4. In my field research in New York City and Toronto, I have observed that black men defend other hip hop dances and the black women that do them as legitimate hip hop culture whereas these same styles were dismissed by many b-boys who came to the practice without any background in other dance forms or styles. In the past, this has usually meant (white) males as most women interested in dance have been exposed to and practised other styles growing up besides breaking. Traditionally, females came to breaking later in their youth than males, although this has changed dramatically over the last ten years of the dance.

5. See Williamson and Cloonan (2007) for an extended discussion of why "music industries" is a more accurate depiction than an imagined monolithic "music industry."

6. Legendary Twins have recently been recognized as pioneers by Breakin' Convention, the largest hip hop

dance festival internationally, and appeared onstage with Jonzi D in Harlem and London, England. They were also guests of my breaking class at York University (December 7, 2015), their first appearance and invitation to a postsecondary university dance program.

7. See for example, a video from the Back 2 Da Underground events of a legendary battle, *B2DU 4 – Supernatz/Redmask vs DDT/Flowrock – Toronto 2000* at Scramblelock's YouTube channel that hosts a lot of archival footage of the Toronto b-boy scene and battles like this one between dancers from different cities: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL_gZow58vw.

8. We would never have called ourselves "amateurs," though because there was no distinction to be seen. Part of this can be explained by our novice experience but the brand deals of the time, and contracts with companies that some b-boys had involved secrecy. They were tastemakers wearing clothes to sell products without transparency. This is difficult to research, although in my ethnography some b-boys hinted at this situation and used similar corporate speak about "mutual benefits" in their relationships with sponsors.

9. Further research is needed into the various unions that dancers have belonged to (or not) in the United States and Canada, which is complicated as dancers are affiliated with different unions (or not) with every separate context from music videos, to live performances, film industries as extras (historically although that is changing), dance companies, corporate events, etc.

10. See Howard Becker (1982) for an extended analysis of the groups that create art worlds, a sociological account of art foundational to this sort of study.

11. Interview with Gizmo, July 14, 2007.

12. From interview with the author, August 2007 (b-boy is anonymized).

13. From interview with the author, July 14, 2007.

14. One area where dancers have received more sufficient payments and credit is in their involvement with video game motion capture: consider the game *B-boy Playstation,* for example. Also, the recent bid to be considered in the Olympics has heightened the international discussions on infrastructure and what it means to be a professional within this emergent field.

15. From interview with the author, August 2007.

16. From interview with the author, August 2007.

17. Numerous conversations with contemporary dance artists working inside institutions and part of the local art world and its logics, 2013–19.

18. From interview with the author, August 2007.

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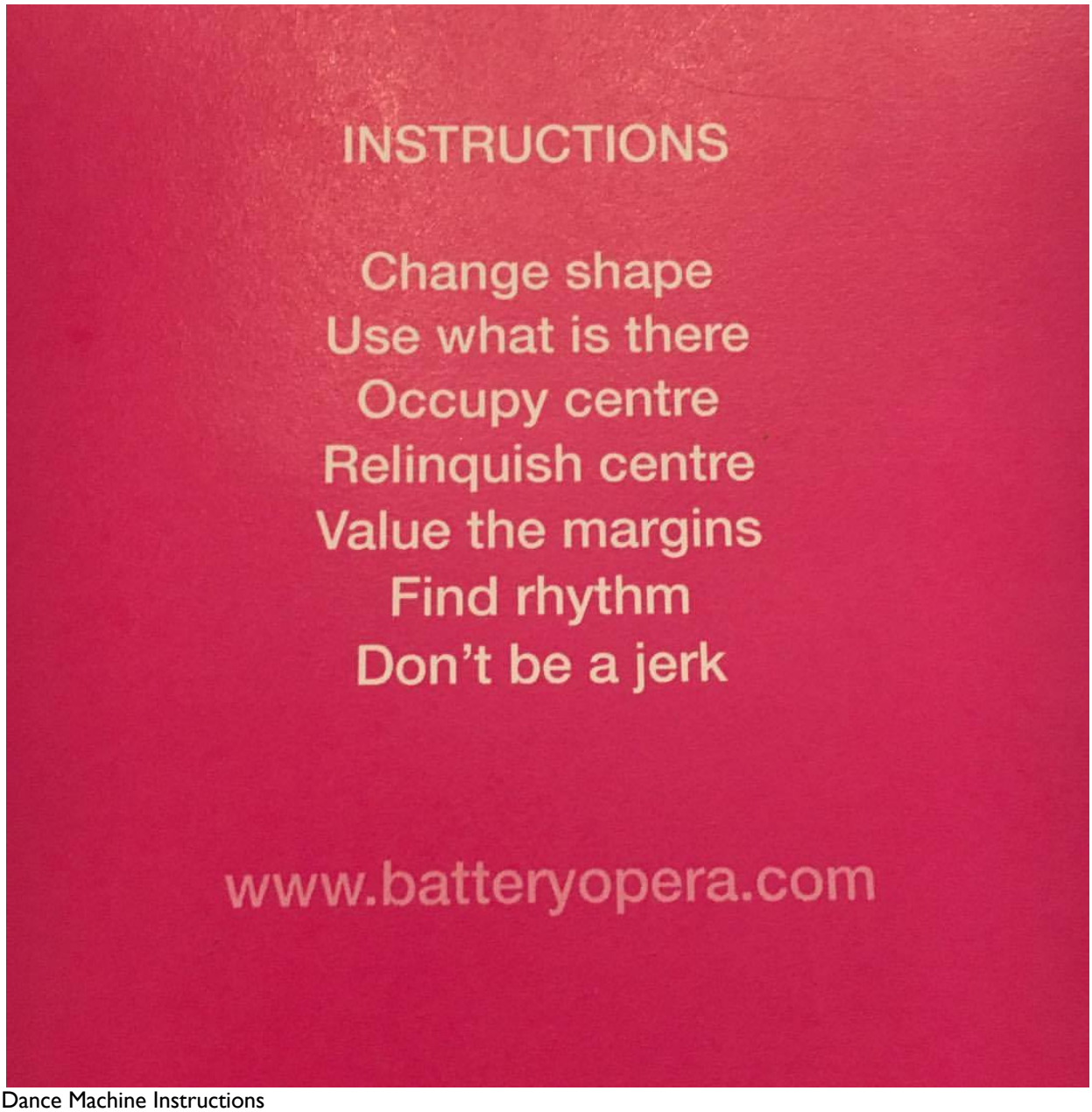
Dance Machine
Reflections on the Installation *Dance Machine*, by Lee Su-Feh

Daisy Thompson

Lee Su-Feh and Justine A. Chambers. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques

Produced by battery opera performance
Co-producer: Festival Trans-Amériques
Conceived by Lee Su-Feh
Designed by Jesse Garlick
Assisted by Justine Chambers
Guest artists: TBA according to site and context

Daisy Thompson trained in dance at The Laban Centre, London. She holds an MFA in interdisciplinary studies from Simon Fraser University, where she is currently pursuing her PhD in the School for the Contemporary Arts.



Dance Machine Instructions

Lee Su-Feh's Project Description

Dance Machine *began in 2009 as an exchange, a conversation between myself and Paris-based designer Alexandra Bertaut, about the energetic relationship between the body, objects and matter. It has evolved, through a long period of wide-ranging research into the body and its relationship to objects and machines, into an exploration on ceremony and what that might entail.*

It is also part of a larger consideration on place and belonging. I was born in Malaysia, a former British colony with a complicated set of socio-political realities. When I immigrated to Canada in 1988, these complexities were then juxtaposed onto the complexity of Canada, with its history of settler-colonial oppression, its history of displacement of indigenous peoples from their land and culture. As an immigrant, I confront and grapple with my role in the settler-colonial machine. In my recent works, my focus has simply been: how to acknowledge who we are and where we are -

how to embed this acknowledgement in all the works in a way that is unique and coherent to each work, so that this acknowledgement becomes part of the protocol of making work here in the Americas. This continues to be my concern with Dance Machine*, and I am interested in inviting others—artists and the public—into a dialogue about how the history in our bodies encounter the history of where we are.*

Dance Machine *posits dance-making as a communal process: dancing as an act of being together - woven into the fabric of labour, rest and play. It also puts into question the notion of authorship and creative territory: asking when a work stops being mine and becomes another's. It invites others - artists and public alike - into a conversation about what dance is, what dance can be and what dance can speak to. It invites them into a conversation around issues that concern me – philosophically, politically and aesthetically.*

Dance Machine *is an attempt at expressing my body through the construction of a set/costume rather than through an orthodox "dance"-making i.e. making gesture and movement. It remains "choreography" because it deals with time, space and the human body – both mine, and others. As an extension of myself, it must contain principles that matter to me and yet must be open to ideas of others.*

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Natalie TY Gan, Justine A. Chambers, and public. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques

Daisy Thompson:

I acted as "host" within the *Dance Machine* in 2018 for the iteration presented at the Anvil Centre, New Westminster, British Columbia. My experience within the process raised many embodied

questions related to both my personal life and my practical and theoretical research in dance. The work, having no front or back, is to be encountered from all sides; one can play within or quietly observe from the peripheries. My day-to-day sense of time changed, slowed down. It took a while for the forward-moving logics of political and economic progress ingrained in my body to subside. The feeling of becoming entangled in the multidirectional pathways became a departure point from which to question the entangled connections of my body to land, technologies, disciplines, and institutions. During my three days within the *Dance Machine*, I experienced and witnessed how the structure foregrounded spaces of being together, where creative and collaborative practices of movement re-invested in the individual and collective mobile body.

Dear Su-Feh,

New Westminster. On our last day with the Machine, I got hives. I took this to be an initiation, a rite of passage. It was as if the rashes were a sign that I had finally spent enough time in the Machine. The cedar was absorbing into my pores, shifting my chemistry and turning my skin erratic blotches of red. I welcomed it. The tops of my hands and feet felt hot with sparks.

We thought the load-in and construction of the Machine would be more smooth and manageable at home. It wasn't. It was harrowing for you, enough that it kept you up at night. I do believe it takes an incredible amount out of you every time, but I've seen that it always gives back. At least for a moment (how deep is your love how deep is your love), or two, or three.

I had one of those moments in New West. For a first and a last time, the Machine gifted me something that I think it had been offering the public all along; something I hadn't been ready to receive until I hung up my host hat for the last time at the Anvil.

In New West, I felt big. I felt roots and wings. Each three hour shift flew by.

Montreal. Festival Trans-Ameriques. I felt so inadequate surrounded by established artists so damn steadfast in their re-solve. Artists with a distinct and distinguishing point of view from where they were standing, and they were ready to argue for it. I can hear it right now in my head— in Zab's assertions and in the palms of her feet, in Peter's low mutter, in Bryan's stories, in Justine's wise exhaustion. What did I have?… A clarity of some impulses, a desire to play and meet the unknown, and my overwhelming desire to be loved by you. Such an overwhelming want to do good for you.

When we listened to George Wahiakeron Gilbert of the Mohawk Nation speak, and you invited us to consider how the history of the land we are on informs our relationship to the Machine… I listened to George's words, foolishly hoping that they would shift me— the ignorant, colonized settler into someone who knows how to take up space without wrecking it. I recorded pieces of his stories on my cell phone. A year later I am still struck by the quality of his voice, and how one's last name can draw maps.

Later, when we went around the circle introducing ourselves and what is important to us, I had such a profound aversion to speaking. I wanted permission to not know, to not define, and to be an observer, a listener, to be failing. I remember that I spoke to my concerns about being too good a host, and that it is often a concern for me, as a Chinese woman, as a model minority, that my hospitality leads to my annihilation. How might I balance this fear with the urgent need for all settlers to give space, and make space, and learn from those who know and hear the land? This kept me thick in the sludge of discom-fort the entire time.

There was an important moment where the group had to unpack "white spaces" together.

In Montreal, we learned to wait and let the Machine breathe. Each four hour shift felt like a lifetime. In Montreal, I found that I couldn't share secrets with the Machine while you were in the room.

Ottawa. The room had fuzzy red carpet. It had pentagons. We could put all of our weight on the bamboo. The acoustics felt dense. Where there was no carpet, the floor was wooden. In some ways, it seemed like the space was made for the Machine, with a pentagonal skylight directly above her copper disk. This meant daylight would dominate at the beginning of our shifts, and then cross-fade with the more dramatic lighting in the evening.

It was the first time I ever took part in a smudging and I was terrified. I watched completely mesmerized as each person in the circle found their own ritual of receiving the smoke— washing the face, soothing the eyes, painting the arms, inhaling the smoke through the skin.

Our Haudenosaunee Elder was named Claudette Commanda. So much spirit and humour. She sat in the Machine with us on a plush green chair. I remember the profound connection made between Claudette and Christine Friday. She spoke a great deal about bears, about their power to heal, their wisdom and knowledges. I loved this. I'm always talking about bears.She spoke to living in a good way, in an honourable way. She talked about ecosystems of diversity and how each animal brings their own gift. Each of us has a gift; if you are an artist, that is your gift to give. To question your gift, to recoil from it, is to deny your responsibility to give that gift to the world. We are all needed, and we need one another. This was a moving and heart-breaking notion as I began to think softly of all the ways that our societies are sick and how we break our own. The lives valued less, the missing, the murdered, the forgotten.

I felt like I knew what it meant to be hosting, by this point. By then it was much easier to wait. I felt like I had the muscle well-flexed. The smaller room made it feel easier to dance with chaos. Ottawa was the first time that Su-Feh expressed there is space for rage. We learned how to give no fucks about the people who weren't worth it. We learned our own boundaries. We learned that caretaking involves disowning guests.

My sister came again and she sat in the corner.

I wear the same clothes often when I am in the Machine.

The Machine is a mirror to oneself. It is a mirror, conveying sonic consequence, spatial consequence, and consequence to others in the Machine. We've spoken a lot about that evening. About violence. Why we don't police the Machine, because we want to encourage the body/fascia/frequency of the Machine to affect the bodies it meets. To organize, to choreograph.

I brought one of the men, one of the inebriated three going hard at the yanking of counterweights in order to slam the bamboo against the disk— I invited him to join me inside for a moment of rest underneath the bamboo (because naturally, the room settles down when this occurs) and he didn't last long, hurriedly exiting after a matter of seconds.

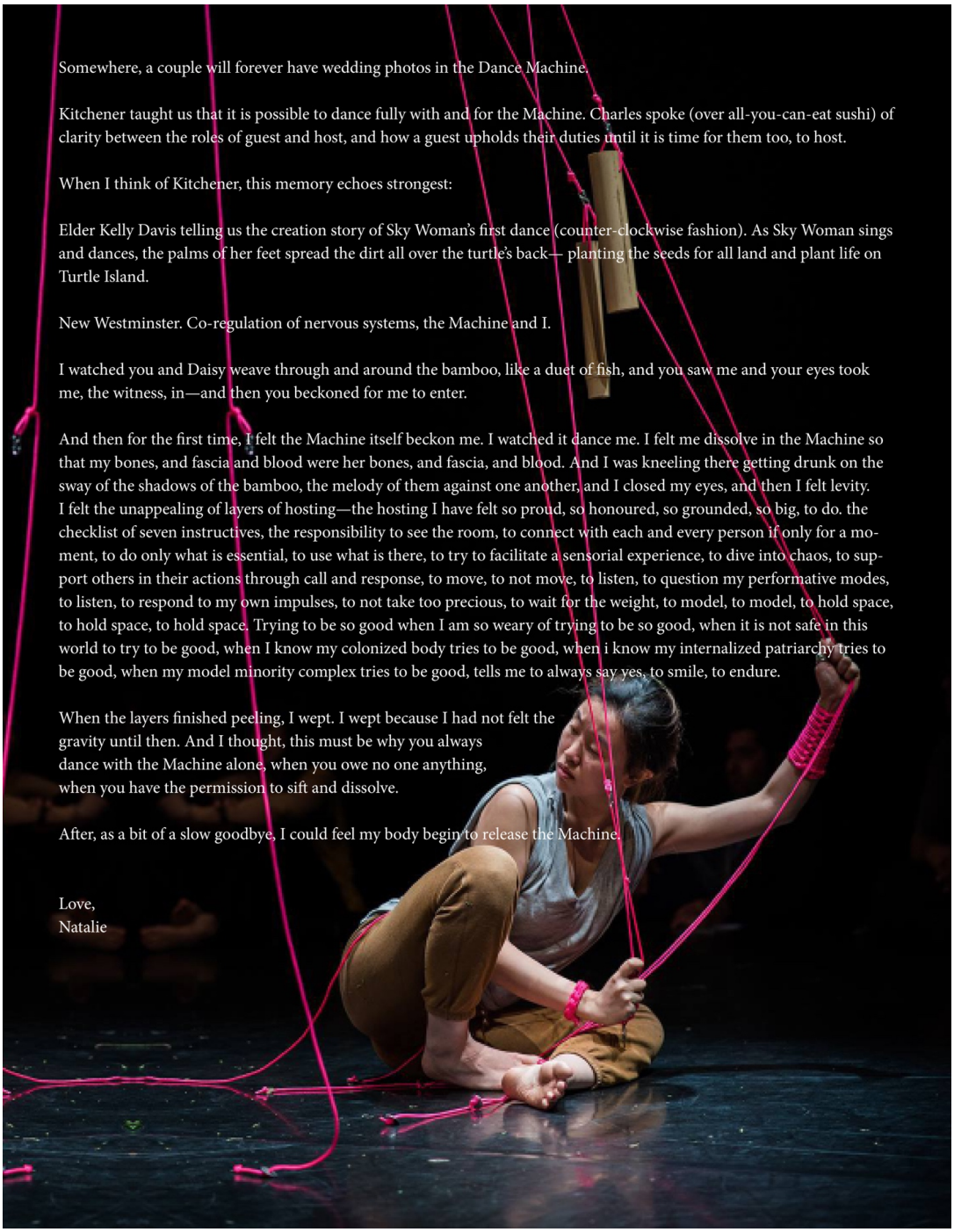
I'm aware that if I didn't feel in service of you, I may not have been so bold to occupy centre, when the temperature and the chaos was rising. I wrapped my arms around the bamboo, in a very literal expression of no more. what else? and this led to a long contact improv dance in the bamboo column. I remember them surrounding me, covering me up in cedar. And I was really hoping that I was the one in control. I was enduring. And I promised myself that I was situating my body in curiosity and desire first. I was scared, and I wasn't entirely certain that I was safe, but I was determined to move in my pleasure. I knew the others of our team were there on the margins.

I made my way to standing. and then one of them from the side made some comment hey, we got her and it stung deeply with humiliation. I immediately parted the counterweights and exited. Su-Feh asked me if I was okay and I said I thought so, and I asked her if it had appeared that I was the one in power, and she said yes. And that was very important to me, I wanted to know that they hadn't asserted their violent dominance, hadn't consumed me into submission, hadn't robbed from the Machine. That night, we hugged the Machine and cried with it. The next day, our last day, was gentle and healing.

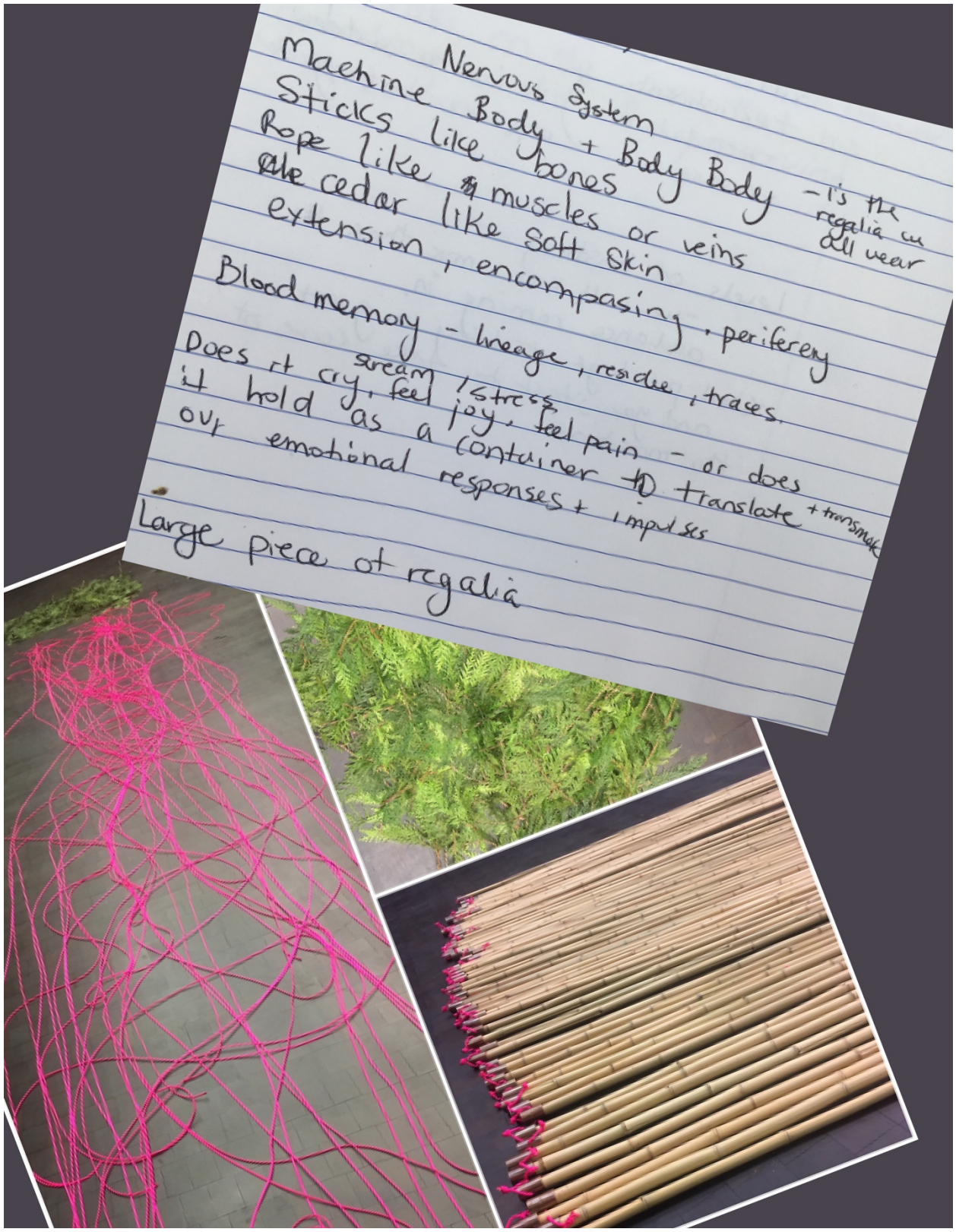
I don't want to forget the moment with you and Jeanne and
I've been afraid of changing 'cause I've built my life around you.

Kitchener.

'Cause honey your soul can never grow old, it's evergreen
Baby your smile's forever in my mind and memory



Natalie TY Gan. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques



Notes and photo courtesy of Jeanette Kotowich

An artist host is dancing on the ground.
His movements shift the fallen leaves of cedar branches around the space.
I recognize and feel the pathways in his body from certain dance training techniques.
I feel pleasure as I watch him move skillfully, gracefully, and with sensation.

The host is dancing amongst the long lengths of bamboo.
As he moves, the strings and bamboo are pulled along with him until they reach their length, at which point they pull back at his body and change his movement and direction.
I feel lightness in the moment of tension between the two materialities of the body and machine, and link this feeling with the moment of suspension and release immediately after the pull.
The dancer is in conversation with the sculpture, responding to its liveliness,
following the pathway toward which his body is pulled.
Likewise, the bamboo bounces in response to the movement of the man.

Three audience bodies lie peacefully on the cedar branches in different directions and in close proximity. Each one has several lengths of bamboo resting on different parts of their bodies.
One lies still with a slight smile on his face;
another is slowly testing the weight of the wood through her foot moving it up and down.
I feel the muscles in my face and shoulders relax,
a kinesthetic response to what I perceive as their state in that moment.
It seems that they are measuring their bodies in relation to time, weight, and depth.
There is no urgency to move forward from this moment, and the sinking of the bamboo into the skin, along with the cradling of the body by the floor, seems to offer relief from the
gravitational
pull
of
verticality.

Transcription of some of the conversation between Daisy Thompson and Alexa Mardon

AM: Well…I was able to be with the Dance Machine in a few different places so I was at Impact Festival in Kitchener, I was at the Debajehmujig Creation Centre for the 6-foot festival, and then also the Anvil Centre and then …in Toronto, and so there's something about re-entering the project each time in a different place, that Su-Feh very much built in to the content of how we work which is where we meet with somebody who is representative of that land. And so everytime we started the project there was something about arriving to a place and relearning or unsettling what my role is as a visiting artist, so here where I live I'm a visitor so in all of those other places I am doubly a visitor. With the Dance Machine we build the environment we are in as a team of artists, we are literally building the container that we are going to inhabit for the next amount of time. So to go there and do it at each place, to know, for me, that the conversation underlying us is an acknowledgement or re-acknowledgment about the story of where we are. We also question …wow there are so many things that I can say. So in the way that the dance machine, like the structure, the rules for the Dance Machine or the guidelines, a lot of those phrases can be taken literally and metaphorically. As I'm talking about the Dance Machine, like building, structure, are also literal because the Dance Machine is a structural thing, but they are also metaphors for the way that we are working.

DT: You've hosted in the Dance Machine in several different places. When I think about my experience in the dance machine at the Anvil centre, it was such a profound experience listening to Brody talk about him and his ancestors and their connection to the land where we were, which is now called New Westminster, and thinking about us here now in a dance studio, sitting on this hard black marley dance floor, there was something about being in the Anvil centre and listening to Brody that emphasised the occupation, and the structure of the centre itself became interfering, more jarring to be there. So thinking about the different places that you visited, was there differences in feeling in relation to the buildings that you were in, or land that you were on?

AM: yes, as you were saying, some places had more interference then others, so in some places the obstacles to having those conversations where more embedded or less embedded in the space, for example when we were on Manitoulin island we were hosted by the Wikwemikong Nation, by an indigenous theatre company where they have created a way of making theatre that's based on the 4 directions that are based on traditional Anishinaabe teaching, and not only did we not have to seek out those conversations or push against things to have these conversations, we were like the new born babies in that space and just in complete all, I don't speak for everybody but for me, we were asked to show up for these conversations in such a real and day-to-day pick the tomatoes, gut the chicken, make the bread kind of way, like this is where you are and this is how we work so put on an apron and lets go. And then in Dance Makers Brian Soloman was with us and he spoke a lot about land acknowledgements in Toronto, and that how often they are…like the colonial history of Toronto is so complex that even today now the

standard land acknowledgment erase many of the complexities of how Toronto came to be what it is now. We talked a lot about how there were various levels of erasure, like there is the city of Toronto, the concrete the way that the concrete has overlaid the waterways, and then there is the distillery district which is this hyper gentrified kind of neighbourhood with boutique stores and high rise condos, which is where Dance Makers is, and here arts organisations where offered newer spaces and we are right on the edge of the lake, which is also very sacred place but there's a freeway running between us and the water, and then history of Dance Makers but things are shifting now, but the weighted history of that place and who is allowed to be in that building, who gets privilege there, and so the way that we were coming at that unsettling in different places was very different. I was thinking about the way that Su-Feh thinks about choreography as structure or systems that move bodies and so in that way the Dance Machine is like, just the act of getting Dance Machine in a room and getting a bunch of people to set it up and then setting those conversations in motion is like a choreography that will trickle out in to the world in some way, before even the public comes in.

DT: yes trickles out, and carries its history and so interconnected to the fabric of all matter - the building, the conversation, the different bodies, the land. So, is there a poignant moment that you can describe.

AM: This isn't really a moment but we talked about it a lot, so when is the need to perform, when is the need to dance in the Dance Machine, and I feel like we dug in to that in Toronto a little bit more, and Su-Feh was really interested in this question of why can't we perform with the Dance Machine? As long as we are not performing AT it. And so for many of the other people in the project along the way they hold in their bodies dances that have been silenced or erased by narrower definitions of dance, and what kinds of dance is the kind of dance that people come to see in terms of contemporary dance. And so Su-feh was interested for herself and other people in having a journey of what's the dance that you want to have in the Dance Machine, and go find that dance. For me it was a questions of what both my pleasures and my traumas stem from this lineage of dance, which is this dominant white Eurocentric dance form, like how do I hold the complexity of that and how do I find my dance when the thing that I am doing that might give me pleasure isn't necessarily pushing back against this dominant aesthetic that the Dance Machine is questioning…trying to work against how that dominant aesthetic constricts time, constricts space, constricts the gaze, constricts the bodies that are in it. And so I guess to say that poignant moments for me when there were both things happening in the Dane Machine, that were both and sometimes at the same time very perfunctory and very sacred, so like there was a time in the rehearsal period where Barak sat inside the edge of the outside bamboo and was reading passages from Claudia Rankins book "Citizen", as Brandy was doing this slow rolling through the cedar dance, and then Barak dropped the book and moved towards her and started singing to her.

Lee Su-Feh. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques

Transcription of some of the conversation between Daisy Thompson and Natalie TY Gan 18/09/2018

DT: When did you start with the Dance Machine?

NTYG: it's either, I guess it's probably either 2015/2016. Su-Feh was preparing it to be seen by Donna before the summer that it showed up for Dancing On The Edge, I suppose. Su-Feh and I had already done our yearlong mentorship, and she asked me to come in and play with the machine and help to set it up in the Hop Bop shop. I have this fantastic memory, we were there with Su-Feh's son and we were all very slowly trying to figure out how to tie these knots in a way that was going to make it work, it was super messy, we were like cutting and shaving stuff off and trying to do the math and everything, we were dealing with the bare bones. Jesse (Garlick) at that time was very involved because we needed him to be, he was the first one to design the map of it all. There was this one day were Su-Feh and Justine (Chambers) were in the studio playing around, and to my absolute terror Su-Feh asked me to join them, I remember how, yeah, we were practising these, we did this warm up together of these …. Blocks, that focused on spirals and circles and then we took that in to the space to inhabit the dance machine, I just remember that I was absolutely bodging it, I was so disembodied and one at a time we would go in to play with the Dance Machine, this was my first experience with it. You can't just sit there in front of Su-Feh and Justine watching you, you know taking centre, you are such a foreigner to the space to the machine, you've just watched Justine have these incredible transcendent moments in there, and you are trying to find your own curiosity while being fully aware that you are being watched. I have a distinct memory of how out of body that experience was

DT: so then after that Su-Feh invited you to participate in further presentations of the Dance Machine?

NTYG: yes

DT: because my experience hosting with you and observing you in the Dance Machine was the opposite to what you just described, you looked to me that you were so in tune and at ease with the Dance Machine, like you knew it intimately, and it's interesting hearing you talk about that out of body experience because I was struggling, and on reflection it was a good struggle, an intense feeling of being unsettled – a word often brought up during the preparation/rehearsals – it made me question my judgements, made me re-visit or should I say give space for my intuition to resurface which I realised whilst in the Dance Machine how suppressed it had been., I was constantly questioning my role and mostly in this state of not knowing and uncertainty, and when observing you and Su-Feh I was thinking "oh they have such ease and what do they know, what is it?". So I'm curious, can you describe the journey from your first experience of Dance Machine to the last that we participated together in at the Anvil Centre?

NTYG: that reminds me that what I think is scary about the Dance Machine is that it is a mirror to yourself. It is a mirror to where you and your impulses are, and how it shows you what

you are doing, it makes very transparent how grounded you are or not, so it's beautiful you ask that because in many ways this letter, I have it broken down by city, and it was a steep learning curve and Su-Feh and I have been talking about that, like is it that you gotta date the Dance Machine three times minimum? There is something about the getting to know you process, when you are battling your ego it really inhibits your ability to both take centre and relinquish centre, and that's something that I write about in the letter is that yeay…in Montreal I was so conflicted about my right to be there what I could offer the machine, when was it going to stop feeling so foreign and intimidating, and then surrounded by eight other artists who all looked like they really knew what was up, and they really knew both in a concrete way both intellectually and physically what they were bringing, and I was just looking in to my pockets and I had nothing. I was well aware of the fact that being the youngest and the most un-senior one there, I knew that it was problematic that I had the desire to please Su-Feh. So I was grappling with how can I let go of that, when can I let go of that because that's a real trump card in terms of my dancing with the machine. So getting those pieces out, having a lot of relationships and moments within the Dance Machine that were really provocative and poignant and moving, and being able to weave and quilt those experiences, allowed that to come to the surface more than all of the static judgements of: who am I; what am I doing here; does Su-Feh like it; is she unhappy with me; am I not doing enough and all of that. I would say that by the time I got to Ottawa, more and more I was able to trust myself, more and more I was able to stand on my own two feet, and feel powerful and generous.

NTYG: I think that it is very very hard, I would say that I had one moment in the Dance Machine, from all the times that I have been in, all four times in all four cities, I have had one moment where I had unabashed free embodiment, and it was only when I was off shift, and it was when I was parting with the Dance Machine at the Anvil Centre for the last time, and when you say that I think about how it really felt practically impossible to be hosting on seven different levels and then have a moment where you bring all the embodied knowledge that you feel that you have and all the listening and have a full dance with the machine when the public are there, yeah that is such a tall order. And we had so many conversations about this in terms of…and this will go on the record although I haven't fully fleshed it out, but we talked a lot about gender, and you know when you asked me about how did I come to be there in the machine feeling so available and competent and capable of listening and speaking and hearing and sounding, it was I think….it was just from a…practising doing it all you know in a very lip service way, where I could make eye contact with everyone walking in to the room, I could see and feel everyone who was sitting in the machine, I knew what the DJ was doing, I could feel how the lights were changing, I could smell the theatre, I knew where Alexa was, I knew where Su-Feh was, I knew where Sujit was and I could feel my impulse to take centre now, and I could tell that in the last two hours that this hasn't happened but this has happened, this image stood still but we've also done this and this and this, and being able to grasp all of these things in this kind of wide fish lens, I was like this is a nice time for me to go now. Or, this is a nice time for me to try taking this risk. For me it came from practising doing all of the impossible at the same time.

JP Longboat. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques

Dance Machine has a history reaching back to 2009 and carries the dances of:

2009
Alexandra Bertaut
Paris, France
Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Territory

2012
Justine A. Chambers
Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Territory

2014
Jesse Garlick
Justine A. Chambers
Josh Martin
Tiffany Tregarthen
David Raymond
Bracken Hanuse Corlett
Dancing on the Edge Festival
The Dance Centre
Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Territory

2015
Adam Kinner
Marie-Claire Forté
Peter Trosztmer
Zab Maboungou
Winnie Superhova
Agora de la Danse
Mohawk Territory

2017
Justine A. Chambers
Natalie Tin Yin Gan
Adam Kinner
Peter Trosztmer
Zab Maboungou
Alessandro Sciarroni
Brian Solomon
JP Longboat
Nasim Lootij
George Wahiakeron Gilbert
Festival Trans-Amériques
Mohawk Territory

Christine Friday
Crazy Smooth Marie-Claire Forté
Claudette Commanda Canada Scene
Canada Dance Festival
Algonquin, Anishnaabe, Mohawk, Huron-Wendat Territory

Charles Koroneho
Bruce Naokwegijig
MT Space/Impact Festival Debajehmujig Storytellers
Anishnaabeg Territory

2018
Natalie Tin Yin Gan
Jeanette Kotowich
Sujit Vajda
Tada Hozumi
Ray Hsu
Aryo Khakpour
Daisy Thompson
Alexa Mardon
Brodie Halfe
Anvil Centre
Qayqayt Territory
Brandy Leary
Supriya Nayak
Brian Solomon
Barak Adé-Soleil
Dancemakers Centre for Creation
The Mississauga of the New Credit, Anishnaabe, Huron-Wendat Territory

(compiled by Lee Su-Feh)

Nasim Lootij. Photo: Trung Dung Nguyen, courtesy of Festival Trans-Amériques

Translations – A Dance for the Nonvisual Senses

Carolina Bergonzoni and Naomi Brand

A plain, bright dance studio with one mirrored wall. A large group of about seventeen people sit casually in a circle. Some people are using manual or motorized chairs, some have canes; others sit on the floor or in seats; there are three service dogs lying on the floor. Photo: Cathy Browne.

Translations is a collaboration between Vancouver's All Bodies Dance Project and VocalEye with support from the Canada Council for the Arts – New Chapter Initiative. The project, researched in numerous phases throughout 2017 and 2018, explores how live description can be applied to the abstract movement of contemporary dance. *Translations* investigates the act of "audiencing" by asking questions about the senses we use to take in movement. How can dance be described through language, touch, or sound in a meaningful way? The project aims to create a dance performance event to be experienced by the nonvisual senses. *Translations* culminated in a series of performances for small audiences in December 2018.

Carolina Bergonzoni is a dance artist and a PhD student in arts education at Simon Fraser University. She holds an MA in comparative media arts from Simon Fraser University and a BA and an MA in philosophy from the University of Bologna. Since 2011, she has been working toward building communities of movers and thinkers. Originally from Toronto, **Naomi Brand** spent ten years dancing in Calgary before relocating to Vancouver in 2013. She holds both a BA and an MFA from the University of Calgary and is a recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award. Naomi is the co-founder of All Bodies Dance Project and is a contributing writer with *The Dance Current*.

During the creation of *Translations*, a diverse team of collaborators—including artists with and without disabilities who worked alongside artistic consultants from the blind community—explored different tools that might be used to shift dance away from the dominant visual sense toward other ways of sensing and perceiving. The project was driven by the question: What if sight wasn't the intended way to experience movement?

A plain dance studio with white walls, light grey floor, dance bars, and a wall of mirrors. A large and varied group of dancers sits in a semicircle (some using manual or motorized wheelchairs), and an audience is seated in chairs, watching. There is a conversation happening. Photo: Martin Borden.

Audiences were mixed groups of blind, partially sighted, and sighted people. Everyone was invited to experience the dance from a nonvisual perspective, not as a replication of the experience of blindness, but rather as an opportunity to focus on information about the moving body that was delivered through other senses. Some of these alternative sensory experiences included the sound of the dance, the feeling of the air moving, and the images drawn in one's imagination from the dancers' descriptions. In this way, the project asked audiences to consider their own perception and the ways they typically access art and the world around them. As disabled artists and scholars Lindsay Eales and Danielle Peers write: "Arts-Based Research offers us exciting opportunities to think through our moving bodies, and through the emotions that move us. It offers us opportunities to think, feel, and mobilize our knowledges differently" (2016, 56).

This collection of photos, descriptions, and videos document the creative process of *Translations*. In presenting our research in written/documentation format, we kept in mind Sarah Pink's notion of the hand as "an important focus on sensory ethnography research, particularly for understanding touch and tactile ways of knowing" (2015, 168). Sensory ethnographers have argued against the idea of vision as "a dominant and objectifying sense" (Ingold, quoted in Pink 2015, 10). During *Translations* we investigate the nonvisual aspects of live dance. With this contribution, we aim to prove that "the senses have come to the fore in the work of many contemporary academics" (Pink 2015, 24).

A plain, bright dance studio with one wall of windows that looks out over the city. A large group of people is arranged in a circle. Some people are using canes or motorized chairs, some are standing paired with another person, and there are three service dogs lying on the floor. One person in a mobility scooter is in the far corner of the room taking notes. Everyone seems focused on the centre of the circle. Photo: Cathy Browne.

Tools and Content: **Nonvisual "Audiencing"**

Live description, as VocalEye provides, is most typically used to describe the visual elements of a theatrical performance or event. The work of art being described is investigated, and language is carefully chosen to evoke images that are captivating for the listener and not simply a dry, forensic list of the actions. Most often, when it is applied to theatre, the description fits in between lines of dialogue and serves the work by complementing the narrative of the play. When working with the abstract language of contemporary dance, there is no narrative structure on which to hang a description.

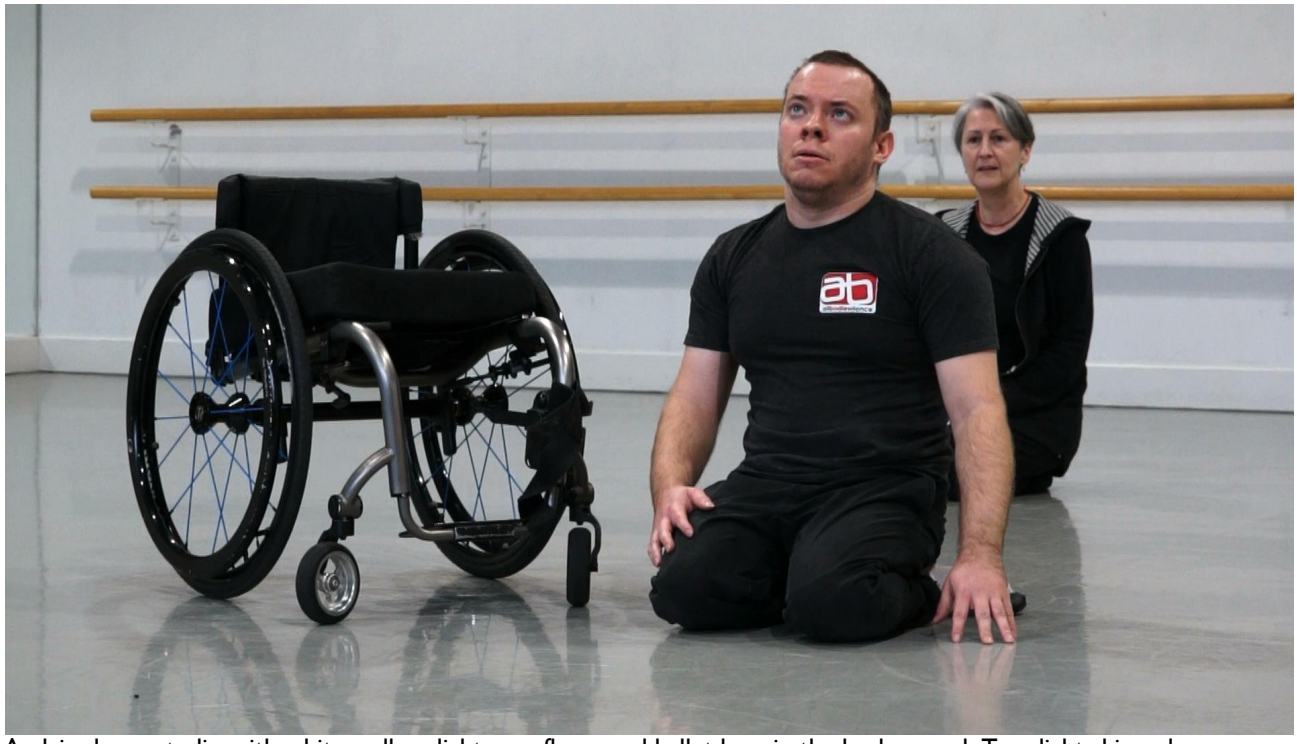
A plain and bright dance studio with a view of the city in the background. Some people are sitting in chairs in a semi-circle. Seven dancers in colourful clothes face different directions, with one arm outstretched. Some of the dancers are using manual and motorized chairs, and some are standing. The dancers are inwardly focused. There's a sense of them working as a group, though they are not in unison. Photo: Cathy Browne.

Furthermore, in the case of *Translations* there is no existing dance ready to be described. The project began from the idea that the description and the dance itself would be created together, one serving the other. In this way, the line between what is the dance and what is the description is blurred beyond recognition. In this process, "the boundaries between perceiver and perceived" (Bredlau 2017, 81) were constantly redrawn: the perspective of the "translator" (our term for the sighted dancer in charge of describing the dance via touch) inevitably affected the audience member's perception of it.

Four spiral-bound notebooks sit open and clustered together on a wooden dance floor. The open pages feature colourful writing and drawings. In the background is a wall of mirrors that reflects the city as well as the figure of one of the dancers. Photo: Naomi Brand.

We researched ways to translate movement into verbal descriptions using both metaphorical and objective language or as Steph Kirkland VocalEye's Executive Director calls it "Bjork and Sherlock." We experimented with whose voice and the perspective represented by the description, and we ask: What is communicated when the descriptive voice is embedded in the dancing body as opposed to coming from an outside observer?

We also explored description through physical touch by creating choreographed sequences of hand actions on audience members' backs. Each "translator" performed a choreographed hand sequence in relation to a soloist's movement. The soloist amplified the sonic experience of a dance phrase by emphasizing breath and using their voice with different qualities.



A plain dance studio with white walls, a light grey floor, and ballet bars in the background. Two light skinned people wearing black, casual clothes sit on the floor; one is positioned in front of the other, on their knees. The person in the background seems to be observing or perhaps instructing the other mover. The person in the foreground has one hand on lap and the other hand touching the floor, and is looking up. There is an empty manual wheelchair close by. Photo: Martin Borden.

A bright dance studio with light beaming in. There are six people: one uses a manual wheelchair, one uses a motorized chair, and the others are standing or kneeling. People are grouped in twos. A person has placed their hands on the back of someone sitting in a manual wheelchair. The left hand is placed palm-flat on the upper left of the back, and their right hand is slightly curled and forming a fist, with their forearm pushing softly into the seated person's mid-back. In the second group are a standing dancer and a dancer who is sitting on the floor. They are not touching each other; both look out the window. In the background is the third pairing. One person sits in a motorized wheelchair, eyes closed, half-facing the camera; the other person sits beside them and has placed their hands on the seated person's arm. There is motion of some kind, but we can't see what it is. Photo: Cathy Browne.

During this exploration of tactile description, we focused on Laban's Eight Efforts (wring, press, flick, dab, glide, float, punch, slash), and we studied how to translate these from the dancing body to translating hands. Additionally, we investigated the sound of the dance unaccompanied by music. Instead, we used costumes that made noise when travelling through space or when in contact with the floor: standing dancers used shoes to accentuate and amplify the sound of their steps, while wheelchair users purposefully moved in ways that created a distinct sound palette.

A plain and bright dance studio with a view of the city in the background. There is a tight cluster of dancers—some using manual or motorized wheelchairs, some standing—who are connected by the palms of their hands. The people in the cluster are bent over, leaning into one another. One person is sitting in a chair facing the dancers, eyes closed, taking in the experience. Photo: Cathy Browne.

The audience received information in layers; for example, a phrase of movement might be repeated but described through different modalities (verbal description, tactile description, sound and breath only) each time in order to create a "full" picture of the dance that has multiple sensorial entry points. Through these different tools, *Translations* aims to promote a kind of "sensory mobility" (a term we learned from one of our consultants, Carmen Papalia) in audience members and invite many different ways to enter into the dance.

Videos by Martin Borden

Translations phase one: https://youtu.be/v-j7TaRLhlw
Translations phase two: https://youtu.be/SuYbFrmUK1Q

Collaborators

- Bryna Andressen
- Robert Azevedo
- Carolina Bergonzoni
- Naomi Brand
- Romham Gallacher
- Steph Kirkland
- Sarah Lapp
- Peggy Leung
- Cheyenne Seary
- Rianne Svelnis
- Christine Taylor
- Harmanie Taylor
- Danielle Wensley
- Adam Grant Warren

Artistic Consultants

- Amy Amantea
- Cathy Browne
- Carmen Papalia
- Collin van Uchelin

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Personal Notation Styles in Breaking: Performance, Identity, and Perspective

Joshua Swamy and Mary Fogarty Woehrel

The notation of Western theatrical dance has been a concern of academic scholarship for quite some time. This discussion takes on the task of combating the ephemerality of dance (McFee 2012) and the impact of this intangible nature for dance aesthetics and recorded histories of dance (Sparshott 1998, 129–32). Many of the concerns regarding the ephemerality of dance have come from philosophers with a vested interest in positioning dance alongside other art forms, and in particular ways to support their analyses. Dance practitioners and theorists have also been concerned with dance notation in terms of its impact on dance copyright (Van Camp 1994), dance history (Pierce 1998, 287–99) and reconstruction (Kendal 1990, 3–27). Victoria Watts argues that to understand notations for Western theatrical dance you have to create the dance notations in the studio with your body, thus disrupting various dualisms in Western thought and the valuing of the written word over physical practice (2010, 7–18). Although we remain unconvinced by the radical impulse of this claim, we would like to explore how dance notation has been thought about in popular dance practices. Namely, we are interested in personal notation practices in Breaking and its impact on performance, identity, and perspective.

In our exploration of personal notation in Breaking, we consider personal notation practices of local b-boys in Toronto, Canada. This project is uniquely a conversation between a dance sociologist and a dance philosopher who both engaged in ethnographic research with b-boys to discuss each dancer's notation system and, importantly, to collect the notations. In this sense, we wish to engage with our materials through a dialogue that we hope will raise more questions than it answers as we pursue this new area of enquiry. Why have b-boys developed personal notation, yet the community has no interest in a shared notation system? What strategies do dancers employ through the use of personal notation? What does a personal notation system afford dancers? We interviewed eight different dancers, primarily from the Toronto area. These dancers were selected because they have been vocal about the importance of notation within their practice. We were aware of this through our involvement in the dance community as practitioners ourselves; however, we were able to analyze and study notation only through the dancers' already in-depth understanding of how notation fits into their dance.

Notation and Its Uses

Just as each dancer's style is unique, so is their notation. While notation within Breaking has no formal structure or taught strategy, most breakers recognize its importance. Each of the dancers we spoke with focused on notating their creations as a means to memorize and organize their moves. However, each explained how the act of notating is also design oriented and strategic.

Joshua Swamy is an MA student in Dance at York University, and a self-taught breaker from Pickering, Ontario. While completing an undergraduate degree in Philosophy, he continued dancing as a pastime. His studies focus on oppressed identities and the space they have within academic dance. **Mary Fogarty Woehrel** is the Graduate Program Director in Dance Studies (MA/PhD) and an associate professor of Dance at York University. She has written about music, film and dance and is most well-known for her ethnographic research about international breaking scenes that appears under the name Mary Fogarty.

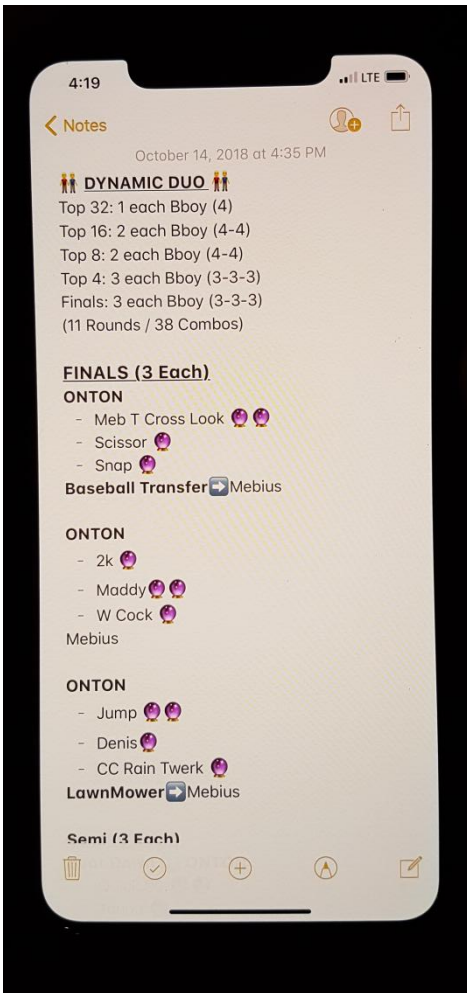
All of the dancers that we spoke to seemed to agree that writing down moves was an important part of memorization. The creation and editing processes are fluid, internal, and physical, whereas notation is a space for reflection. The dancers explained that moves existed as ideas in their heads that were then physically executed before being translated into notation. Putting their physical ideas into words allowed them to be personally codified.

Some of the terms artists used for naming were either part of the shared lexicon of existing Breaking terms, or else something more personal that allowed them to remember more easily. Two of the b-boys, James Wilkinson and Anthony "Illz" Put, described reducing a move to its core symbolism or idea (Wilkinson 2018; Put 2018) which could then be contained in only one word. This word would refer to a unique element of the move so that it would not be confused for another. Each move thus had its own identity and name. Taking a different approach, Onton See and James Wilkinson preferred to use longer names for their moves (See 2018; Wilkinson 2018), and Ryan Porter skipped the naming process altogether and simply filmed all his moves and catalogued them in a private Instagram account for easy access (Porter 2018). The B-boys organized their moves into larger categories, but individual memorization was based on movement and visual aesthetic.

Notably, both Wilkinson and Put used their phones in their notating, thus emoticons became a helpful strategy alongside text (Wilkinson 2018; Put 2018). As Lucy Venable has noted, advancing technology changes the way that notation has happened in Labanotation as well (1991, 76–88). Images have long been a part of shared notation systems. Although our interviewees are not engaged with these more formalized notation traditions, they likewise turned to images and changing technologies for the ease of memorizing and recalling their personal notation systems.

Karl "Dyzee" Alba's journals and personal notation style take on a creative life of their own with illustrations that express a dynamic relationship between the visual arts and movement in hip hop culture (graffiti and Breaking expanded to visual arts and illustrations more broadly here). Alba was meticulous in planning his sets, and during the larger research project of top performing b-boys and b-girls internationally, it seemed that those who won battles the most frequently based on strategic planning usually had a thorough archive and collection of their moves recorded and documented (see Fogarty 2011, 2018).

While each dancer took a unique approach to notation, the differences across systems were even more clear in the range of approaches to strategy and organization of the notated moves. The b-boys mentioned how listing their moves in various ways allowed for strategic structuring. For example, Onton See explained that he ranked his moves in order of difficulty or energy their performance required (2018). See's hierarchy of difficulty was expressed visually. He placed an orb emoticon next to moves that he could execute mindlessly. Four orbs meant that the move would require all his energy and should not be used if he was exhausted. After ranking the moves, See organized them into performance, beginning with tougher moves and working down towards easier moves so that he would always have the energy to execute them during a multiple-round battle. In doing so, he would organize and plan an entire competition layout, from prelims (short form for preliminary rounds of a competition) to finals (See 2018). Every single round was laid out, including potential tiebreakers, specific responses to types of moves, and more spontaneous moments based on the energy of the crowd and event.



A page from the digital notes of Onton See.

Similarly, Put (2018) explained that he could plan out one round by putting together three of his personal words (recall that each word stands in for a specific move). If he remembered the three-word phrase he developed before competition, he could easily remember an entire round. However, both Put (2018) and See (2018) explained that drilling and repeating moves during practice was a key part of how they thought about the notation process (always in conjunction with drills and repetition). If you could not remember what a move looked like upon reading it, none of the planning and strategy would matter. The strength of the link between the notated word and its movement was imperative.

It is common for dancers to make lists of their moves either in preparation for a specific battle or to guide their training sessions. Ryan Porter explained that he had a list of moves but did not plan them. Instead, they were all "loaded" in his mind, and when the moment came around to perform, he would decide then and there which move to perform (Porter 2018). Most dancers agreed that they favoured this strategy.

However, not all of the dancers we spoke to found notation helpful. Bridge Qiao explained that he did not write down his moves, nor could he plan any of his rounds in advance (Qiao 2018). Qiao stated that his rounds were always spontaneous and reflected the music being played. His philosophy

was that his Breaking would always be linked completely to the music and the energy of the moment. DJs select the music for battles (competitions) and dancers do not know what music will be played in advance of the battle although they may recognize the track. Thus, Qiao could not plan his moves around the music or the energy of the moment because those were factors he could not predict. He explained that he had a list of moves in his head, a combination of personal signature moves and basic foundational moves. This basic vocabulary was performed differently based on the energy and music, thus removing the need to prepare something unique for each moment. His strategy was not to plan, but rather to be spontaneous. He explained that he felt this strategy reflected a more authentic relationship between movement and music.

In Joseph Schloss' monograph about Breaking, he addresses the "foundations" of the dance form, such as the six-step. Arguably a foundation move that only emerged in teaching in the 1990s, the six-step became a point of concern for Schloss because the moves did not seem to line up with the music (2009). Most advanced b-boys do not perform a "six-step" in a battle because that would be "textbook" rather than original enough to win the battle. Their modifications would add the accents and more subtle layers of the music that Schloss was searching for as he learned the basics of the dance for his research.

In our accounts, Qiao has a clear system to distinguish his own "signature" moves from "foundation" moves, a distinction that helps him organize his moves (2018). Foundation moves form a vocabulary of movements that can be combined in different orders. These foundational moves are shared and often thought of as pillars of the dance form. However, "signature" moves require additional preparation for performance, as there is both a creative process involved and a need to recall the movements. These "signature" moves are either extensions of existing foundation moves or are original. They are recognized as a part of that dancer's identity: coming up with "signature" moves that become known in the dance scene is the foundation for a good reputation.

What we began to discover was that performance was determined along a sliding scale between preparation and spontaneity, and that this scale often had to do with how the dancer navigated their performance anxiety. How one responded to spontaneity and thus what preparations would be necessary to achieve the best results in the moment informed whether their "best practice" involved notations or not.

Personal Notation and Transmission

There has been little drive in Breaking communities to develop a shared notation style. This is partly because Breaking is a practice centred on individual signature moves and so personal notation is more important than any sort of group notation. As such, personal notation rarely has the purpose of instruction—notation is rarely designed to teach moves to another dancer. Certainly for the dancers we interviewed, this was unnecessary. In those instances when groups come together to form routines, they use foundational moves for simple routines as mulch, a groundwork on which more advanced or creative routines are built or arranged. Learning or copying someone else's movement combinations is most accurately accomplished through the use of online or video footage; this would be nearly impossible to accomplish through examining their personal notation lists.

Pages from a notebook of Karl "Dyzee" Alba.

While Breaking culture is concerned with history, it does not focus on recording its history through a shared notation system, unlike the scholarship on Western theatrical dance with its emphasis on notation systems. Instead, it appears that the stories of events passed on by dancers and the invention of signature moves are the central focus of Breaking histories, which are circulated most often through conversations. Unlike conventional Western traditions, the invention of moves dominates over the focus on combinations of movements in questions of copyright and notation. While personal notation systems are sometimes shared with crew members, this usually happens only in preparation for a battle so that the crew member can help the dancer recall their moves both in training and during the competition. Although "black books" (and now "phones") are kept

concealed from the spectator, there have been instances in which dancers cue a crewmate during a battle to call for the performance of a particular set of moves.

To prevent people from taking moves, b-boys have historically attempted to prevent cameras from filming them at practice or even at events. During the 1990s and early 2000s, this effort to conceal one's moves was easily practised, as any captured footage was private, not widely accessible. Even if a dancer was recorded through personal cameras or published on VHS by the event organizers, footage was not easily shared. As the Internet grew and sharing dance footage of events became simpler, it became more difficult to hide signature moves. Nowhere was this more evident than in the historical case when international competitions were on the rise and videos of dance footage began to circulate instantaneously through online forums. This became a problem for competitors who relied on the surprise of the audience seeing moves they had never seen before. Like comedians on a circuit where the audience cannot know the jokes in advance, b-boys had relied on the ability to surprise opponents and audiences. Anthony Put stated that he did not want to share photographs of his personal notation (2018). When the audience is able to see and understand the notation, they can dissect it before it is performed.

In fact, some dancers stopped entering filmed competitions—however, as Qiao admits, this becomes difficult as it works against efforts to build a name in the global marketplace (2018). Onton See takes the widespread circulation of his moves online as a challenge, forcing himself to create new moves or update old moves in order to keep surprising the audience (2018). Another strategy has been to perform combinations of footwork with such escalated speed that it is hard for viewers to figure out how to replicate the moves: if you can't recognize the "moves," you can't remember them. The personal notation systems are not meant to be seen, nor are they created to share movements or recall choreographies; rather, Breaking notations are used to cue and remember movements for training and performance purposes.

Personal Notations

What is at stake for the sociologist and philosopher in thinking about personal notation systems? First, there are questions about the defining characteristics of the form. In Breaking, what makes a "set" and what constitutes Breaking's aesthetic more broadly? The way moves are identified, classified, and notated is important because it relates to the identity of the dancer. The more creative, forward-thinking, and innovative a dancer is in their peers' estimation, the more valued their contribution to the ever-evolving aesthetic. The identity of a move is bound to the dancer who created it—both in terms of crediting and the felt ownership of the movement. However, because foundational moves are used and modified to create new movements, signature moves contain an element of the foundation within them. Identifying where the foundation ends and the signature move begins is vital in efforts to distinguish what is shared and what is owned. In a form that valorizes signature moves, the question of ownership becomes important. Thus, thinking about how personal shared notation systems work tells us about the underpinning values of the dance form and the dancers who practise it.

Personal notation styles also raise questions of privacy. Private notation gives us insights into the internal processes involved in creating, recalling, and performing the form, and underscores the strategy that characterizes battle performances. Because Breaking hinges on an element of surprise and an unpredictability of moves performed, the changing nature of private records of movements

honed in secret exposes a link between the form and its surrounding technological advancements. Personal notation also reveals the nature of the relationship between dancer and audience. For example, the care involved in crafting moves for optimal audience experience is evident in Karl Alba's personal notation system, which is sketched from the perspective of the audience. The sketches depict what the audience sees. A lot of the "magic" of Breaking relies on the audience not being able to figure out how the dancer achieved a move—and, by way of personal notation, this attention to audience perspective and experience is built into the documented history of the form.

There are also questions that are raised by these personal notation systems about the inner/outer experiences of the body. From what vantage point does one see oneself, and what prompts does the dancer need in order to recall the combinations? We have mentioned that Alba's illustrations are sketched from the perspective of the onlooker indicating a major feature of Breaking: it is fundamentally concerned with a performance for the spectator. While the process of creation and notation is important, it is clear that the product (the performance) and the reception of that product are key. Like a magician creating a new trick, dancers are always considering how the audience will view the moves. In this vein, none of the b-boys used internal cues about the somatic organization of the body in their notation (though perhaps Qiao comes closest with his emphasis on how music drives his performance); rather, they focused on shapes and movement direction—elements that would be part of the audience's experience of the dance.

Throughout the shared personal notations we examined, moves were tied to other dancers and the broader environment. Many dancers' personal notations involve the names of the dancers who taught them or who influenced a particular movement. Unlikely to be shared (unless a crew member and credit is due), these notes don't necessarily reference the person who "invented" a movement; instead, they indicate an interpreted link between a dancer and a movement that serves as a memorization aid. In other words, signature moves sometimes reference their social and physical environments: moves are sometimes tied to objects (as in the "chair" freeze) or to actual people and memories (consider iconic K. Swift moves, etc.). A dancer might be able to remember a move that was influenced or shared with them by another dancer by recalling the original dancer's aesthetic. Even seemingly private movement creation and notation is actually situated in a social meaning. Creativity is a social fact (Frith 2011). This is relevant for both the dance sociologist and the philosopher. Creativity in Breaking isn't defined as an activity that happens in isolation in an individual's mind and body; rather, the creation and maintenance of the form is socially constructed and historically determined.

Dancers want to make meaning in the form of a composition—a series of movements that can be understood, that is aesthetically pleasing, and that has its own logic. This is intimately bound to everyday life and physical practices. In Breaking, the purpose of remembering, of notating, is to perform the movements. The setting for the performance is not always known in advance for Breaking, so the form is adaptable: moves can be rehearsed, modified, and expanded for particular moments. Strategy and expression are key in Breaking. Battles are like a chess game. You have to bring out moves at the right time against the right opponent. Performing well requires premeditation to avoid repetition and keep things fresh; for a lot of b-boys, notation helps with this.

This analysis of personal notation provides some insight into how creative processes function socially: what they are, and who uses them. An examination of personal notation also reveals the intersection of the dance sociologist's analysis of the creative process as social fact and the dance philosopher's investigations into the philosophy of mind. In this sense, sketches become a sort of

"extended mind" (Clark and Chalmers 2010, 26–42) that allows the dancer to remember what has been rehearsed in the body.

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The Boy with the Dancified Body: An "Automythnography"

Sebastian Oreamuno

Photograph by N. Ryan. Edited by the author.

Long, long ago, in a land far, far away—halfway across the world, in fact—a boy was born into a kingdom that loved to dance. The boy had been born in the middle of spring, shortly after the kingdom's yearly celebration during which the people ate sweet and savoury foods, drank bitter and sour drinks, and, of course, danced the colourful dances from across the land. The boy was an ordinary boy, born into an ordinary family that was neither rich nor poor. However, the timing of his birth was special: he had been born on his grandmother's birthday, and for this reason, she considered him a gift. His grandmother cradled the baby boy, rocking and swaying, bouncing and swinging him in her arms.

Nobody knew, not even his grandmother, that in that moment she had given him a gift as well: a love for dance. The boy grew up in this kingdom, loving dance and performing at every family festivity—and there were many in the boy's large and expressive family. During these occasions, he would have a great time as he wiggled his hips and shuffled his legs, waved his arms, and shook his

Sebastian Oreamuno is a PhD student in the Department of Dance at York University. His current project resides in the interstices of movement, memory, and migration.

head. In these moments, the boy's heart would burst into rhythm, and his love of dance grew stronger. His need for dance grew stronger. Nobody knew—not even his family—that with every rock and sway, bounce and swing, the boy's body was becoming dancified. Dance became part of his body. That is, his body didn't simply desire dance; his body needed it. His dancified body required dance as nourishment to grow agile and flexible, healthy and strong.

One mid-summer day, the boy and his family had to leave the kingdom that loved to dance. He did not know when—or *if*—he would return, and this made the boy's heart bow low and curl inward. The boy had to say goodbye to all his friends and cousins, to all his uncles and aunts, and to his grandmother. What helped the boy and his heavy heart leave the rest of the dancing land behind were the fond memories of twists and twirls, rhythms and beats that he had shared, as well as his parents' promise of the wonders and marvels that awaited them in the new land. And so on a stunning, sunny day the boy and his family were taken by a giant bird with a sapphire beak and pearly-white wings to their new home. The giant bird soared over golden deserts and silver oceans, soft clouds and shaded plains until it arrived at the new land.

When the boy and his family finally arrived at the new kingdom, they were greeted with a spectacular sight: the new kingdom was full of emerald green trees dusted with sparkling snow. The air had a chill that ran right into the boy's lungs and invigorated his soul. The new land had majestic mountains covered in crisp capes that changed colour as the sun set. The boy soon realized that they had arrived during the wonderful winter season of the kingdom. Because he had never experienced such sights before, it seemed to the boy that the land was touched by magic. The boy was dizzy with amazement, and his heart raced with excitement. Yet his body swiftly harmonized and his senses opened to soak up the wonders of the land.

During the next few days, the boy learned many things about the new kingdom—things that were fascinating, like how the seasons in this new land were opposite to those of his homeland; and things that were unusual, like how the people here did not hug or kiss each other when meeting for the first time, but shook hands instead. What shocked the boy the most was that this land seemed to lack the thing he loved best—dance. Well, this was not entirely true. The new kingdom did, of course, have dance. In fact, as the boy would come to learn, there were many forms of dance in this new land: controlled dances and explosive dances, rhythmic dances and patterned dances. But, you see, the boy and his family had come to live on an island that was very secluded from the rest of the kingdom. On this island, the people spoke the same falling and rising language as those on the mainland, and they found joy in the sweet taste of vanilla and chocolate ice cream swirls, but they had some backward notions about dance. Here, dancing was for girls; boys who danced were teased. And so, not wanting to attract negative attention, the boy stopped dancing. He followed the rules of his new home and told his body to be still. But nobody fathomed—not even the boy—that his body would find other ways to dance.

The boy soon learned that it was acceptable for him to dance during exceptional occasions at school. The boy delighted in these moments, and his body relished the rare dances. Remember, the boy's body had become dancified from all the dancing he had done in the kingdom that loved to dance. Being moved and shimmied, curved and spun was necessary nourishment for his dancified body. But still, his body was not getting the required amount of dance to nourish its growth. That is why one day, on the boy's tenth birthday, his body came up with a solution. Without his approval, the boy's body started to shudder and shiver, kink and contort—and the boy could do nothing to stop it. He stood powerless and afraid, not knowing what was happening. After a little while, his body

was satisfied; it eased and slowed, settled and stopped, and the boy carried on with his day. This uninvited dance shook the boy, but once his body returned to his control, he did not give it a second thought.

However, the uninvited dance took over his body again the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that too. The boy became concerned, for he didn't know why his body was insisting on these aggressive and wild, intense and gnarled movements. But because these sporadic movement flashes were so quick and fleeting, the boy learned to live with them. As time went on, he even learned to ignore this strangeness. The boy did not know that his body needed to dance the same way that it needed food and water, and the more the boy ignored this need, the more acute it became. In fact, the movement flashes started happening two, then three, then four, then five times a day. His body needed to dance; it couldn't not dance. But the boy did not understand. He was afraid of the teasing and sharp looks, the whispers and loneliness that his dancing body might provoke in this new land. And so, as the boy grew older, the warping and writhing, spasming and twitching got bigger and louder, wilder and more insistent.

It was only when the boy became a young man and finished with school that he finally submitted to his body's hunger for dance. He had heard whispers of a strong and graceful, precise and kind dancing giantess that he could learn from. So, he searched around the island: walking across boggy marshlands, through sleepy forests, and up windy mountains until the young man found her behind a sparkling waterfall that always became as hard as diamonds in the winter. In her granite cave, the giantess fostered the boy's love of dance by teaching him many forms: dances that were controlled and linear; dances that were explosive and grounded; dances that were rhythmic and loose; and dances that were patterned and playful. But the squirming and bending, snaking and thrashing did not stop. It had been too long since the young man had freely wiggled his hips and shuffled his legs, waved his arms and shaken his head. Nothing seemed to appease the body and quell the movement flashes that his body had created in a time of need. His body had gotten used to dancing on its own.

And still, his body wanted more. You see, the dances he learned in the new land contained rules that had to be followed. Controlled dances, for example, demanded that he continuously extend himself diagonally; while explosive dances insisted that he traverse space at lightning speed. He did not mind some of these rules since they challenged him to learn and move in different ways. But one particular rule puzzled the young man. It seemed more riddle than rule. Over and over again, the young man was told that he had to "dance like a man."

"What does it mean to dance like a man?" he would ask, and the answer was never clear, but always direct: "Not like a woman!" However, the more important question was, "Why not dance like a woman?" *That* had many answers, none of which satisfied the young man. One day, the young man realized why no one could answer this riddle to his satisfaction. You see, everybody knew, even the young man, that it was unconventional and unheard of, unwanted and unacceptable for men to dance like women. However, nobody had realized, except for the young man, that there was no one way to dance like a woman, just as there was no one way to dance like a man. In chasing and learning different forms of dance, the young man had been pushed to change and shift, mould and shape himself in various ways—his body moved as if from the outside, another version of the uninvited dance. The answers he found to the dance-like-a-man riddle were unsatisfactory because they were not answers at all: they were restrictions and rules designed to keep his dance at bay. When the young man realized this, his body quaked and snaked, coiled and winced: the young man solved the riddle through movement—the only possible way. He finally understood the secret in his

body's movement flashes, the uninvited dances: his love of dance required movement in all of its manifestations and iterations.

Shortly after this revelation, the young man decided to go on a journey. On a splendid summer day, he said goodbye to the island where he had lived most of his life and left the lovely giantess on a quest to chase after dance in all its forms, learning everything he could. He travelled across the kingdom in search for more dancing giants so that he could learn to give into and harness the movement flashes. He gave his body over to dance in yet another new land, surrounded by giants of every strut and sway. A human in a giant's world, his small body danced big. The young man was stretched and strengthened, inverted and invigorated by every shudder and shiver, kink and contortion becoming more adept and articulate at dancing. With each articulation, the young man found new ways to weave and wade, flow and fade into and out of dance forms. With each articulation, his dancified body created a new reality as it endlessly looped together dances of all colours and sizes, rhythms and romps. With each articulation, the young man learned to dance with his danficied body.

The End

On Automythnography

Inspired by the Centre for Imaginative Ethnography and the Interstitial Arts Foundation, this automythnography combines auto-ethnographic writing with hyperbolized narrative as a way to textually choreograph and communicate a personal experience.

No Context—A Dance Catalogue and Performance

Victoria Mohr-Blakeney

No Context or *Studio Place* or *Decentralize* or *We Actually Maybe Right Now Have Everything We Need* was a curated performance featuring dance artist Amelia Ehrhardt and a catalogue by the same title. *No Context* took place at the George Brown School of Design on March 25, 2015, in partial fulfilment of the Masters of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice program at OCAD University. *No Context* was co-curated by the Nomadic Curatorial Collective: me, Erin McCurdy, and Cara Spooner. One of the aims of *No Context* was to offer a response to the following questions: How does curatorial writing function in the context of contemporary dance? How might curatorial writing and the dance catalogue support contemporary dance?

Cara Spooner, Erin McCurdy and I met at "Envisioning the Practice," a conference on curating performance held at the University of Quebec (Montreal, 2014) and organized by Canadian dance curators and scholars Dena Davida and Jane Gabriels. At the conference, McCurdy, Spooner and I began to discuss the shortage of examples of curatorial practice in the field of dance in Toronto, as well as a lack of critical writing on dance curation in Canada and more broadly. Shortly afterward, we founded the Nomadic Curatorial Collective.

We approached dance artist Amelia Ehrhardt to invite her to create a new choreographic work in response to archival documents from 15 Dance Laboratorium, Toronto's first dance artist-run centre, which ran from 1974 to 1980. Ehrhardt was a clear choice for the collaboration due to the conceptual, postmodern aspect of her practice in both the form and the themes that her work undertook. The idea to commission a young Toronto dance artist came from a desire on the part of the Nomadic Curatorial Collective to open up a conversation between the formal, political, and aesthetic trends of 15 Dance Lab and the present (rather than remount a specific work or series of works). The *No Context* performances took place in March 2015 at the George Brown School of Design, which is located directly across the street from the original site of 15 Dance Lab.

Our decision to produce a catalogue alongside the performance enacted a central tenet of the Nomadic Curatorial Collective: to produce curatorial writing in the field of dance. The design and printing of the catalogue was a complex process that involved a series of important collaborations.

In our research, we engaged with library and archival research practices including an investigation of dance catalogues as primary sources at the Art Gallery of Ontario archives, Dance Collection Danse, UQAM special collections, Vincent Warren Dance Library, Ecole de Danse Contemporain Library, Artexte, and general university collections. Throughout this research, we examined local, national, and international dance catalogues to familiarize ourselves with current and historical trends in dance catalogue production. Our research methods included investigating scholarly publications in the field of dance history, dance theory, archival theory, and poststructural theory. In addition, we conducted

Victoria Mohr-Blakeney is a curator, writer, and choreographer with a focus on curating contemporary dance and performance. She has curated/co-curated performance work in gallery, theatre, and site-specific settings, including Harbourfront Centre, CB Gallery, Edward Day Gallery, Artspace, The Citadel, George Brown School of Design, Scotiabank Studio Theatre, Artsweek Peterborough, and Xpace Cultural Centre. Victoria is currently Performance Curator & Associate Director at Public Energy Performing Arts in Peterborough, Ontario.

interviews with Miriam Adams (co-founder of 15 Dance Lab and Dance Collection Danse), Amelia Ehrhardt, and Selma Odom (editor of the first dance catalogue published in Toronto). Throughout the curatorial and research process, the Nomadic Curatorial Collective engaged in regular meetings, documentation practices (meeting minutes and tape recordings), and conferences to openly share research in progress. McCurdy, Spooner and I also engaged in a three-way roundtable reflecting on the process of curating *No Context*, which was included in the final *No Context* catalogue.

We wanted the form of the catalogue to align aesthetically, formally, and theoretically with Ehrhardt's work, and with the central ideas behind *No Context*. We felt that in order to pose our questions about the relationship between text and performance effectively, the catalogue and the live performance had to interact in the same space, and audiences had to have the ability to hold the catalogue in their hands and refer to it instantly, even as the performance was unfolding. This created an interesting paradox: for the catalogue go to print on time and to work with a designer to perfect the layout, all the writing and catalogue content had to be completed and edited six weeks before the live performance occurred. Since it was a commissioned work that Ehrhardt was still developing, the writing would have to be completed while the live performance was still in the rehearsal process. This ended up becoming essential to the theoretical underpinnings of the project: it meant that it was a logistical impossibility for the catalogue to provide a definitive interpretive analysis of the work, which gave us a chance to revisit one of our central questions: how can curatorial writing provide context and supportive frameworks for embodied practice rather than an analysis of the work? In this case, the logistic practicalities of catalogue publication and the publication timeline actually clarified our theoretical approach to the form and content of the catalogue. This approach also exposed the limits of the catalogue.

The structure and content of the *No Context* catalogue are devised to point to the instability of writing, and the instability of interpretation (in this case, both the artist's interpretations of archival documents and the curators' interpretations of Ehrhardt's work). In the catalogue, subjectivity and positionality are accentuated in a variety of ways in an effort to communicate these interpretive instabilities over an authentic or "true" interpretation of either the archival documents or the live work itself. There are a number of writing forms represented in the *No Context* catalogue: descriptive prose, written and oral interview excerpts, excerpts of archival reproductions, and excerpts of a transcribed three-way conversation. All written documents (single authored or co-authored) are written in the first person singular or first person plural. The aim of this choice was to indicate both the subjectivity and a multiplicity of subjectivities of all contributors. Similarly, the full title of the live performance and catalogue, *No Context* or *Studio Place* or *Decentralize* or *We Actually Maybe Right Now Have Everything We Need*, does not label the work in a definitive way, but rather points to multiple and simultaneous significations.

Employing specific terminology characteristic of curatorial practice and the catalogue genre alongside trends and vocabulary in dance writing, the *No Context* catalogue contains a heterogeneous mix of terms that originate from both curatorial practice and the field of dance—an intentional movement between modes.

These are some of the strategies I, along with my collaborators, incorporated into the structure of the *No Context* catalogue in the hopes of inciting complex interpretive strategies on the part of readers. The catalogue serves as an opportunity to examine how the unenhanced weight, mass, physicality, and anti-illusionist qualities of postmodern dance could be reflected in the writing. In addition, we questioned whether or not it would be possible to de-emphasize the structures that

enable powerful illusionist narratives in catalogue writing. Some examples of this approach include the strategies previously mentioned: incorporating multiple authors and perspectives, destabilizing traditional narrative structures by way of excerpts and interrupted texts, including multiple narrative voices, and featuring a variety of written forms to emphasize the subjectivities present in multiple perspectives. Another important trend in postmodern dance that serves as a key theme in the *No Context* exhibition is intertextual referencing.

One of our attempts to renegotiate the function of writing in the context of dance was to reconsider the effect of textual narratives in relationship to embodied practice. It is worthwhile to examine how narrative functions in curatorial writing and whether or not nonnarrative structures impact the relationship between text and dance in new and interesting ways. The *No Context* catalogue presents an opportunity to juxtapose narrative voices in a fragmented, interwoven, nonhierarchical manner, as well as to combine these textual narratives and fragments alongside archival documents and photographs. These components work together to create complex and nonlinear narratives and interpretive experiences on the part of the reader, allowing readers to draw connections across narrative voices and textual, photographic, and archival media.

The dance exhibition catalogue offers a unique space in which to influence, manipulate, and potentially subvert how dance and writing interact. This intervention is achieved by creating gaps, fissures, and instability within the text, by destabilizing narrative and objectivity, and by using writing to gesture toward embodied practice as a primary site of knowledge. Conscientious approaches to dance catalogue production provide an opportunity for readers and viewers to create complex and nonlinear narratives and interpretive experiences, and to make new connections across media. This offers an opportunity for practical and theoretical expansion in both the fields of contemporary dance and curatorial practice.

Credits

Catalogue Title: *No Context* or *Studio Place* or *Decentralize* or *We Actually Maybe Right Now Have Everything We Need*

Photo Credits (all): Erin McCurdy
Artist in Photos: Amelia Ehrhardt
Catalogue Concept: Nomadic Curatorial Collective
Catalogue Editor: Victoria Mohr-Blakeney
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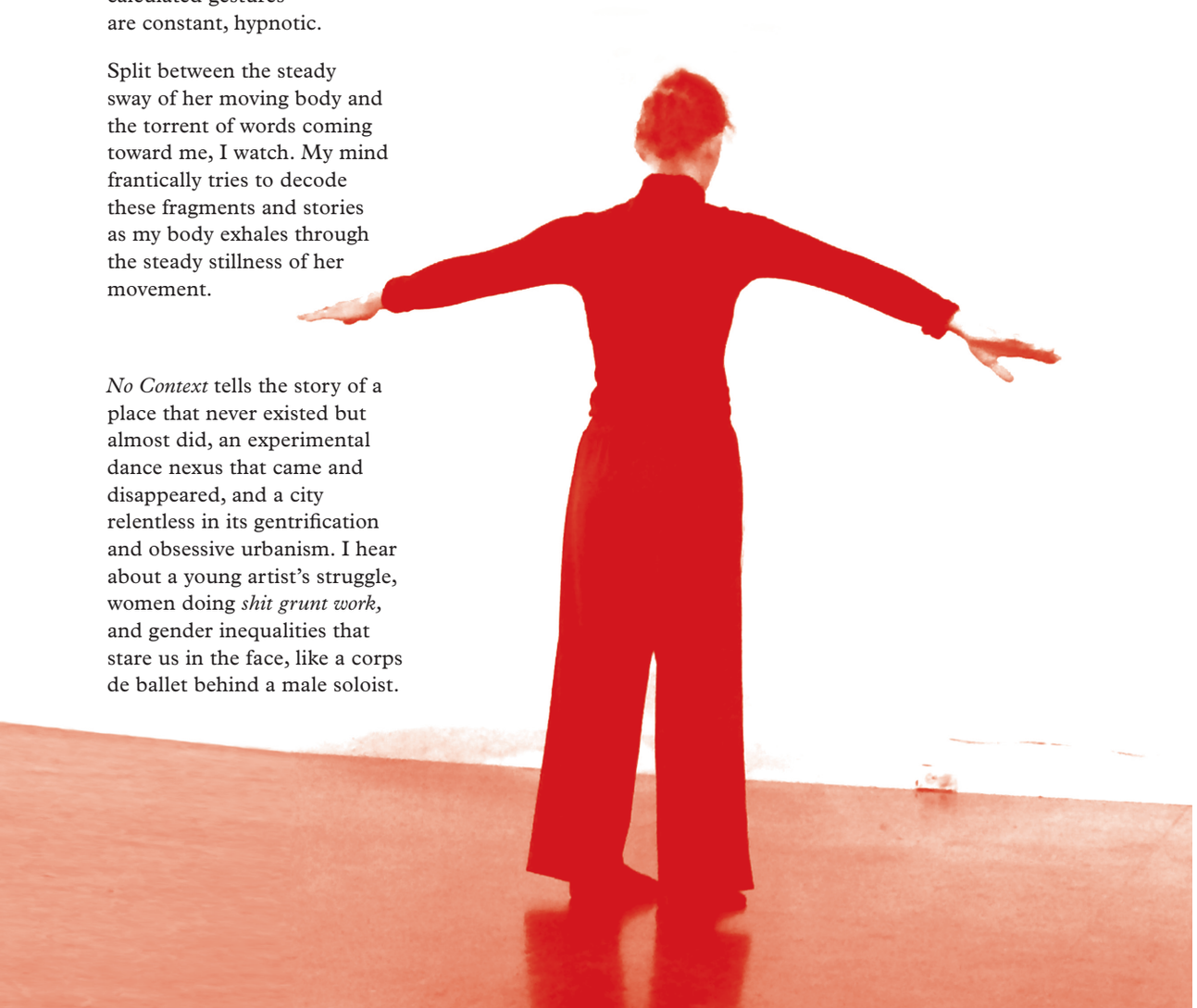
Context for *No Context*

By Victoria Mohr-Blakeney

She almost never stops moving.

Watching Amelia Ehrhardt's *No Context* or *Studio Place* or *Decentralize* or *We Actually Maybe Right Now Have Everything We Need* is like following words across a page as her body tirelessly enacts a series of unending tasks. Twist, pull, reach, place, never repeating, always slightly different, her gentle yet calculated gestures are constant, hypnotic.

Split between the steady sway of her moving body and the torrent of words coming toward me, I watch. My mind frantically tries to decode these fragments and stories as my body exhales through the steady stillness of her movement.



No Context tells the story of a place that never existed but almost did, an experimental dance nexus that came and disappeared, and a city relentless in its gentrification and obsessive urbanism. I hear about a young artist's struggle, women doing *shit grunt work*, and gender inequalities that stare us in the face, like a corps de ballet behind a male soloist.

15 Dance Laboratorium Leaflet, 1974, Lawrence and Miriam Adams Portfolio, Dance Collection Danse

I learn about the utopic impracticalities of Studio Place. A proposed dance centre, whose most striking feature is that it never happened. Lawrence and Miriam Adams, co-founders of 15 Dance Lab, lost the bid to Toronto's Young Place Theatre.

Studio Place. A vision that exists now only as an 8 page typed document, hugged in a laminate folder in a cardboard box. The trace of an idea that never lived. Archives are complicated things. They house our pasts. They are idiosyncratic and incomplete. They are simultaneously precious and mundane. They are irrelevant until they are essential, always waiting to fulfill the desperate, spontaneous needs of the present. Out of the mountains of archival documents professionally stored at Dance Collection Danse, the majority of 15 Dance Lab's ephemera sits in three uncategorized cardboard boxes.

Studio Place Proposal Cover Page, 1976, Lawrence and Miriam Adams Portfolio, Dance Collection Danse

But time is not a straight line.
A spiral more like. Because
there are moments, such as
these, when we loop back so
close that we feel like we can
reach out and grasp the past.
From across the street, we peer,
we squint, we wait.

Forty years have passed.

But it is only a gesture. Worse.
An idea. We cannot go back.
The temptation to re-create is
misleading. If I were to walk
up to the old door to 15,
what would I find?

Decades of accumulation, a
stockpile, a storage locker of
material memories.

"Can we take a look?"
McCurdy and Spooner and
I asked on a reconnaissance
mission to retrace the old
15 Dance Lab. The landlord
shook her head. It was too full
of her husband's things to even
open the door.

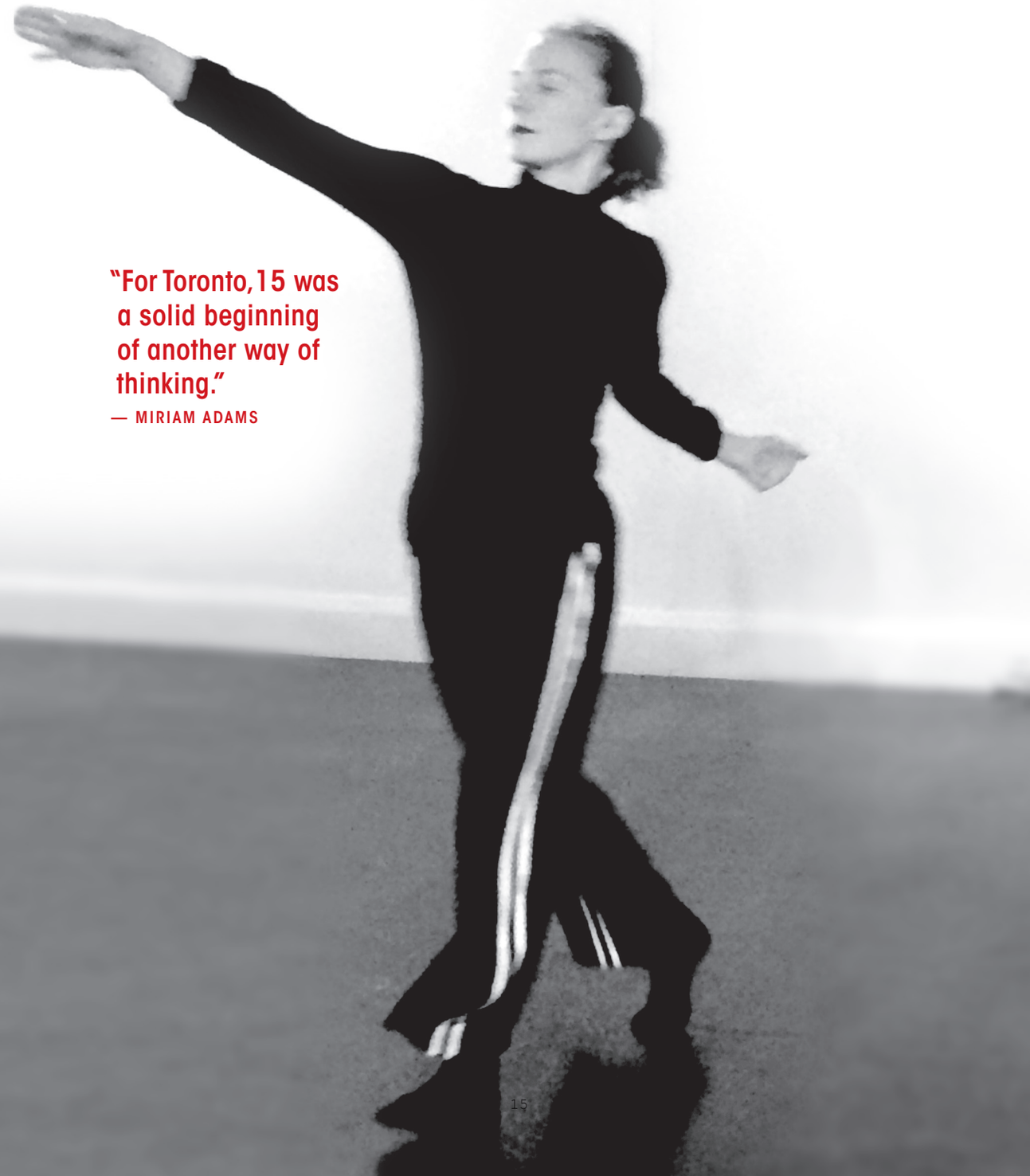
It looks like we are all hanging
on to the past.
What is remembered and what
is forgotten and the faintly
drawn line between the two.

Photograph of Stanley, Lawrence Adams, Miriam Adams, Mr. Dog, and Jackie Malden Outside 15 Dance Laboratorium, 1975, Lawrence and Miriam Adams Portfolio, Dance Collection Danse

Excerpts from an Interview with Amelia Ehrhardt

It's a funny legacy, postmodern dance in Toronto, because it is unquestionably there but has an invisible history. My good friend Niomi Cherney talks about wanting to teach a history of experimental dance in Canada as a Forgotten History—this whole realm of work that was quite well-documented and subsequently archived, and yet somehow doesn't really get taught. In school, I learned about the history of the term Dance Artist, and a bit about how Lawrence and Miriam Adams had left the Ballet, that they had done this thing called 15, but not so much about the actual work that came out of it. So I feel like one delight about this project has been revisiting this legacy and re-learning it via the actual ephemera it produced. I've of course been very influenced by postmodernism in dance, Judson Dance Theatre, the turn to pedestrian movement and all of that, so it is nice to look more closely at what was happening here, in this field.

-Amelia Ehrhardt



"For Toronto, 15 was a solid beginning of another way of thinking."

— MIRIAM ADAMS

But just as I drift into the speculative futures of the past, Ehrhardt pulls me back into the present with the liveness of her own struggle. A female artist trying to make work and live in this city. And I wonder—who failed whom? Did the present fail the past, or vice versa?

Still Ehrhardt dances. Her motion is careful yet irreverent, a sort of sloppy precision that seems impossible to get to the bottom of, or to clutch with the fastidiousness of language.

Still she makes work in Toronto. Still she moves. Until of course eventually she, like everything else, including 15 Dance Lab—stops.

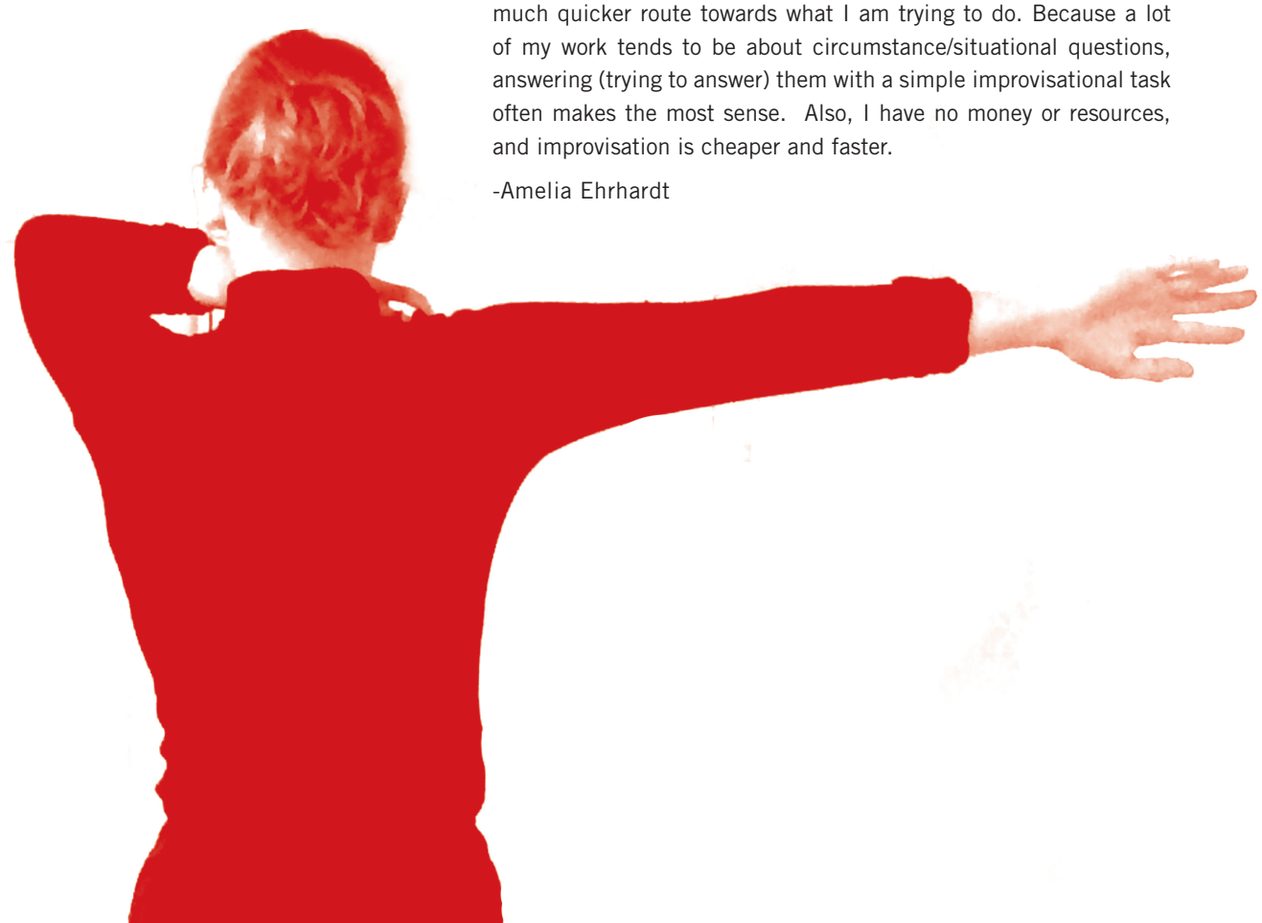
But until then Ehrhardt moves in the face of stillness.
A moving landscape, my words forever searching before, beside, and beyond her, trying to calculate, to conclude, to catch a glimpse. To keep.
To hold.

Or is this all about letting go?

As I write, *No Context* is still evolving, shifting, and coming into being. In many ways this is a blessing in disguise because it makes it impossible to write Ehrhardt down, to pin her between my wrist, thumb and index finger, to compulsively proofread her again and again. *No Context* is alive. This writing is by necessity incomplete, a fragment, a sketch, a frantic yet measured gesture towards liveness.

"We ran it until 1980, so six years. And some of the work was god-awful and some of it was fantastic."

— MIRIAM ADAMS



I've been describing my approach to working for a while now as psychedelic minimalism. At what point is minimalism almost disorienting, almost hard to see? It's less about extreme clarity and more about so little that it's invisible, or so much that it's all the same thing. It's like fighting to find layers to peel back and being left with something devoid of content. Or maybe it's like listening to twenty people speak at the same time. It's important to me that my work is unclear.

I tend towards improvising in everything, but lately this has started to feel like a crutch, and I am trying to challenge myself to do more set choreography—this is what I've been doing with this other work of mine, *Traditional Dance*—but improvisation often feels like a much quicker route towards what I am trying to do. Because a lot of my work tends to be about circumstance/situational questions, answering (trying to answer) them with a simple improvisational task often makes the most sense. Also, I have no money or resources, and improvisation is cheaper and faster.

-Amelia Ehrhardt

I think a lot about the role of women in dance in Toronto 40 years ago and today. It looks like in the 70's in Toronto there were actually more women in positions of creative power in dance (and performance in general) here, whereas now there are so few women at the creative head of institutions and organizations.

Quick stats: the Dance Transition Resource Centre reported in 2005 that 71% of professional dancers in Canada were female, yet at the time of the report, 66% of the organization's member companies were under male artistic directorship. Dance Theatre Workshop in the States has a good one: "In 2000, of the 18 modern dance choreographers who received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, 13 were men"—The men received a total of two hundred thousand dollars with a typical grant of 10 grand, and the women received a total of 45 grand with a typical grant of five thousand dollars.

(Statistics can be misleading and manipulative but still so powerful. Yvonne Rainer says something good about this in *MURDER and murder* but I can't remember what).

And then Toronto - well, we barely have positions of creative power in dance here anymore (not many Artistic Directors left eh), but I would argue that they are still male-dominated (certainly the, you know, paid ones).

Ugh. In general, on lots of levels, I am sick of the way that we deal with gender in this form and think a big conversation about it needs to happen. There is a serious glass ceiling. We continue to promote the idea that because it is harder for young boys to get involved in dance as kids, because of social norms, they are disadvantaged in the professional context. This is baloney. In professional dance, men are typically more valued (paid higher), and work more often than women because there are fewer of them. However in professional sport, for example, women are typically less valued and work less often, because there are fewer of them. Women represent the vast majority of this field and represent a minority of Artistic Directors, presented choreographers, and generally, female independent dancers have fewer contracts than their male counterparts. We still live and work in a world in which men can be loud, opinionated, disagree a lot, and do things their own way, and women have to fight to do this or pay for it, or have this be one of their "personality quirks."

-Amelia Ehrhardt

Choreographers at
15 Dance Laboratorium

Kyra Lober
Mimi Beck
Louise Garfield
Judy Jarvis
Ingrid Remkins
Jennifer Mascall
Joan Phillips
Paula Ross
Carolyn Shaffer
Janice Hladki
Johanna Householder
Elizabeth Chitty
Margie Gillis
Steve Paxton
Nancy Stark Smith
Mitchell Rose
Marie Chouinard
Cynthia Mantel
Barbara Zacconi
Lawrence Adams
Margaret Dragu
Miriam Adams
Susan Aaron
Jill Bellos
Irene Grainger
John Faichney
Lily Eng
Peter Dudar
Charlotte Hildebrand
Nancy Scheiber
Bettle Liotta
Roberta Mohler
Brenda Neilson
Nikki Cole
Patrick O'Hara
Muna Tseng
Joe Starr
Alice Rosenberg
Holly Small
Gordon Dowton
Kay Purdy
Kilina Cremona
Grindl Kuchirka
Bryan Hayes
Belina Weitzel
Dena Davida
Theresa Kowall
Luba Dobal
Keith Urban

Sallie Lyons
Melodie Benger
Maxine Heppner
Slade Lander
Margaret Atkinson
Anita Shack
Susan Cash
Savanah Walling
Leslie Manning
Martha Lovell
Patricia White
Ernst Eder
Carol Eder
Anna Blewchamp
Paul Dwyer
Ricardo Abreut
Terrill Maguire
Susan McNaughton
Jean-Pierre Perreault
Judy Marcuse
Jo Leslie
Andrew Harwood
Alice Frost
Sarah Shelton Mann
Martha Bell
Susan Daniels
Simmie Airst
Joann Anderson
Menaka Thakkar
Kathryn Brown
Douglas Hambourg
Cornelius Fischer-Credo
Rina Singha
Linda Moncur
Alan Risdill
Paula Ravitz
Stephanie?
Grant Stitt
Joe Bietola
Barbara Stowe
Christopher House
John Miller
Robyn Simpson
Peter Boneham
Sylvie St. Laurent
Gabby Miceli
Alexandra Langham
Lu Levine

My process really started in the archives at Dance Collection Danse and has remained oddly text-based. My initial archive-dig sessions at DCD were so rich, and I got so excited and had so many responses to what I was looking at but my reactions were all very text-based. I felt I had a lot to say about what I was looking at but that most of it was in words, and for a while going into performance felt disingenuous. I tend to work beginning to end (come up with a title first, and create work from start to finish) and it has certainly been the same for this. One day, while at Dance Collection Danse, I suddenly went sort of, aha, and opened my shitty computer and started writing. I've been working on that same document since. Because the bulk of the work of this work has been creating the text to be read alongside it, the act of writing has felt very choreographic. Sitting on my couch banging out words has been how I've shaped the movement: although it is improvised, I feel like the phrasing and shaping of how I'm flopping around is very much in response to the speed, tenor, and cadence of the text. But, I am trying very hard not to um, you know, be literal with my movement. It's actually quite difficult!

It's been nice to work on something where I get to openly have a really direct dialogue with dance history. My work is always like this and I have always, always been a huge dance history nerd, and there are so few living representations of historical dance work that are not ballet or other culturally specific historical forms. Creating this has been a nice way of feeling like I can, in some way, activate historical work, although I am not personally performing or even directly citing any of the work performed at 15. Maybe someday I'll really regret having had all my opinions printed in a risograph catalogue.

— Amelia Ehrhardt

NO CONTEXT: AN INCOMPLETE RECOLLECTION BY NOMADIC CURATORIAL COLLECTIVE

Victoria Mohr-Blakeney (VMB): When did we decide to commission a contemporary artist - as opposed to an original artist - from 15 Dance Lab? Does anyone remember?

[laughter]

VMB: We really sort of rolled around the idea of what it would mean to approach an original member of 15, or someone who was creating at that time, to ask them to recreate work, to really get us into this complex challenge of how do you re-visit the archive in that way? And how do you re-mount and how do you re-enact? And I think we realized that we were less interested in the authenticity of an original and revisiting an original, and more interested in what a dialogue with the present would look like.

EM: We're still in the middle of it…

CS: We're still figuring out…

VMB: Wait - so this is an incomplete recollection? That goes very nicely with what we're trying to highlight here.

EM: Especially since we can't really remember what happened last June and July, when we first started working on this project.

VMB: It's shocking how little we remember.

EM: Because things change and you go with them, and then this path you were on just erodes, and you can't even recall what it was in the first place.

VMB: And that's where all of a sudden Derrida—not to bring him into this—starts to make sense.

CS: Don't bring Derrida into this!

[laughter]

VMB: This idea of the archive co-determining the event. After this, the catalogue will become our memories, in so many ways.

[…]

EM: Our catalogue is going to determine how we remember the history of this project. It influences how the public sees our process, but also how we'll remember it. Using the analogy of the family photo album—the pictures in the album are the moments that you remember from your childhood.

"You often don't know what you're doing, you just know you're doing it."
— MIRIAM ADAMS

CS: Well there's a sequence also—you read page one before you read page 50—

VMB: —yes, exactly. It's how we read. How can you destabilize a convention that is so ingrained and what does that look like? And can we achieve that in our catalogue? Can we destabilize that certain way of reading?

EM: Even thinking that maybe it was the blessing, dealing with un-catalogued boxes at Dance Collection Danse. That they weren't framed for us…

VMB: That's true.

EM: They're just boxes filled with paper that has not yet been organized in the archive. Organized loosely in that they relate to 15 Dance Lab, but aside from that we were kind of free to wander through the pages.

VMB: That's true!

EM: But with Miriam there to consult with us—someone who has a lived memory of what happened, and can tell you the story behind the documents, instead of the title of them. *Her* story behind the documents.

[…]

VMB: In a way the miracle is that it was archived, and that it was all kept. And that's where we have Miriam to thank. Because—for one thing—without that we have no show.

[laughter]

FORUM

Turning Around Dance Research

Karyn Recollet, Seika Boye, VK Preston, Angélique Willkie, Freya Björg Olafson, Lindsay Eales, Patrick Alcedo, MJ Thompson, and Michèle Moss

With Alana Gerecke and Mary Fogarty Woehrel

Here, we offer a Forum that features nine dance studies specialists we find inspiring. We approached these moving thinkers with a set of five questions, each geared to connect with the theme of the special edition: backspace. We think of this as a written expression of turning around: rather than looking at the research or researcher head-on, we consider what we can learn by twisting to take in the multiple and peripheral entities that surround each of us. Our questions attempt to draw out an expanded notion of background: previous and future scholarly and artistic pathways, directions, and communities; kinaesthetic experiences and memories; personal commitments; and backgrounded labour. We seek to explore how these various backgrounds fold together to constitute any given, seemingly singular frontal presentation. For us, this is another way of getting at issues of citational politics in scholarly research, embodied influence in artistic work, and labour standards or so-called "work/life balance" in both realms.

We have asked Karyn Recollet, Seika Boye, VK Preston, Angélique Willkie, Freya Björg Olafson, Lindsay Eales, Patrick Alcedo, MJ Thompson, and Michèle Moss to respond to our prompts by gesturing toward the artists and scholars who inform their work, as well as the background activities and moves that situate it. We also asked them explicitly about their lived, kinaesthetic experiences of their backs in everyday life. We hope that this Forum fosters an embodied and grounded account of some of the networks of dance scholarship that stretch across the country. Further, we hope that this contribution will prompt consideration of how we are introduced to fresh ideas in Canada: which sites, performers, scholars, venues, and commitments shape the conversations we animate.

Karyn Recollet is an urban Cree assistant professor in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. **Seika Boye** is a lecturer in the Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies and director of the research-focused Institute for Dance Studies at the University of Toronto. **VK Preston** is an assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies. **Angélique Willkie** is an assistant professor in the Department of Contemporary Dance at Concordia University and a Concordia Research Fellow. **Freya Björg Olafson** is an assistant professor in the Department of Dance at York University. **Lindsay Eales** is co-artistic director of CRIPSIE (The Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society) in Edmonton and a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. **Patrick Alcedo** is an associate professor in the Department of Dance at York University. **MJ Thompson** is associate professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and Practices at Concordia University. **Michèle Moss** is associate professor of Dance in the School of Creative and Performing Arts, University of Calgary. **Alana Gerecke** is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Theatre at York University. **Mary Fogarty Woehrel** is an associate professor in the Department of Dance at York University.

Karyn Recollet

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   The artist/writer I most cite at the moment is Pauline M. Gumbs' gorgeous thought experiments within the *M Archive: After the End of the World* (2018). I creatively imagine Gumbs' generative and sustaining genealogy of relation with future landing practices of Indigenous futurist thinkers and activators. This genealogy reflects a citational practice that respects those who continue to spatialize us lovingly into the future, such as M. Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing* (2005). Adapting the shape of an archive, Gumbs has forged "a series of poetic artifacts that speculatively documents the persistence of Black life following a worldwide cataclysm." *M Archive* "is written in collaboration with the survivors, the far-into-the-future witnesses to the realities we are making possible or impossible with our present apocalypse" (Gumbs 2018, xi).

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Ashon T. Crawley's *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (2017);
   Alexis Pauline Gumbs' *M Archive: After the End of the World* (2018);
   Billy-Ray Belcourt's *The Wound is a World* (2017);
   Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013);
   Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Waawaate Fobister (Anishinaabe).

4. **Describe the ways you move your back, or your back moves you, in your everyday life.**
   I learned from an incredible Dine body Somatic practitioner Nazbah Tom so many insights into the past present and present futures of my body as an extension of my future ancestors. They taught me to think of my back in ways that can hold space for future ancestors and I will always remember this teaching. I hold my futures, pasts and presents in this space of my back and I think about my spine as a time travelling device.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project?**
   The needs of my daughter Gracie will always be the most important to me as we collectively hold space for this star being. She is my reason for everything.

Seika Boye

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   Hmmm, that's tough. I'm in [the] early stages of a new research project so it feels like I don't know . . . but I'll say that Thomas F. DeFrantz comes up a lot when I am working and thinking. I read him not only for content but because he is an excellent writer craft-wise. He

uses form and his voice with such clear and clever intention. His writing performs, and for all of its sharpness, it is kind.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Zadie Smith's *Feel Free* (2018)
   Gabriella Giannachi's *Archive Everything: Mapping the Everyday* (2016);
   Bill Bissell and Linda Caruso Haviland's co-edited *The Sentient Archive: Bodies, Performance, and Memory* (2018);
   Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019);
   Monica Gattinger's *The Roots of Culture, the Power of Art: The First Sixty Years of the Canada Council for the Arts* (2017)
   Also, Michelle Obama's *Becoming* (2018), obviously.

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Nina Simone.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   My back, my back, where to begin. It was a hypermobile back for many, many years. Now that I am in my mid-40s it is less mobile, much less mobile. Two pregnancies are hard on a hypermobile person because hormones make loose joints even looser which is painful and I "suddenly" went from being a very confidently moving person to a tentatively moving person. I had to get to know my back again. I have an unreliable tailbone and SI joints, which also affects the top of my spine—the bottom pulls one way and the top pulls in the other. An MRI once had my doctor at the time asking if perhaps I had an extra vertebra.

   So, in short, I move my back carefully. Very, very carefully and with a lot of subtlety, for comfort, throughout the day. I shift around a lot and ultimately I get up and walk. I walk a lot; that is when my back feels great. Walking is all of the parts moving—which is so profound.

   My back helps me express love. For all of its supposed unsteadiness, it allows me to pick up my seventy-two-pound seven-year-old. I do it daily so that I keep having the strength. I can no longer pick up my eleven-year-old so I know that it ends. . . . It is so intense when your kids are young and you are carrying them ALL OF THE TIME. But then it ends . . . and that is intense in a different way . . . so I'm hanging on to it for as long as I can!

   I also teach movement to actors which involves a constant and ongoing discussion of the spine—backs are so beautiful, every one. What a gift in life to get to know people through their spines. When I think about a skeleton and how magical it is I get goosebumps, every time. So backs move me emotionally and intellectually.

   When my back is really sore it tells me that I have stopped being attentive to my body and so to myself in the many things I do in a day. Usually it hurts when I get very busy, too busy. So it that respect, it is my back that brings me back to myself as a grounded, attentive, efficiently aligned, mobile and ready to go human again and again and again.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   Reason to miss class: I have to be careful here and not give students ideas! Ha. I really like going to class, true story. Any time I have not gone it's because I was too tired. Like deep tired. Not that exciting but true. Now the reasons for being tired, that's another set of stories!

   Saying "no" to projects, that's changed over the years. I just wrote to someone that "I just literally do not have the minutes in the day to do it." Come to think of it, my back will also often signal if I should say no. It literally twinges in the places that will suffer if I take on too much, or even think about it.

VK Preston

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   I have many favourite writers who shape my excitement about the field. I read them, and I also do my best to practice an ethics and politics of citation, building on Sara Ahmed's "Making Feminist Points" (2013). Making citation conscious is something I've learned from, and it reorganizes how I work. My aim is to complicate lists and challenge pre-existing pathways, especially my own. This means taking up authors at multiple career stages, LGBTQ+, POC, and trans colleagues' writing—and also working from periods that haven't been read as rigorously as they might. Reading activist critical theory from the 1980s was a revelation earlier a few years ago—really formidable work that isn't read now. I aim to imagine each new project as another constellation of voices. The result shakes out what isn't evident on the surface. Reading and writing together is key—keeping these choices dynamic keeps processes in motion.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Ralph Lemon and Triple Canopy's co-edited *On Value* (2015);
   Randy Martin's *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (1998);
   Julietta Singh's *No Archive Will Restore You* (2018);
   Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno's *Kazuo Ohno's World: From without & within* (2004);
   Kate Elswit's *Theatre & Dance* (2018).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   "Marais" was a seventeenth-century, gender-crossing performer I can't figure out. I'd love to know what was going on with that work—so time travel would definitely help. As with Marjorie Garber in *Vested Interests* (1992), I can't often tell when satire is really slippery whether past dances are defiant or deeply reactionary—or both. It would probably be a total surprise to see such work.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   We had a wonderful workshop this term with Christine Wright—who is just a brilliant somatics practitioner and educator. She engages language as beautifully as she does movement, and she used an expression that haunts me, describing movement research

observation as "achingly specific." For me, activating the back body was about committing to greater choice and specificity as a mover—as well as acknowledging the unseen. Like many who have performance training and experience, who then become writers, I'm still grappling with how movement and writing work in relationship. These proportions and practices keep changing—so that's interesting. I don't think there's a "single solution"; it's a dynamic relationship. I'm standing as I write this—and reflecting on my back while writing is making me move.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   Committing to work that needs love and attention.

Angélique Willkie

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   Choreographer Ligia Lewis.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Carrie Noland's *Agency and Embodiment* (2009);
   Imayna Caceres, Sunanda Mesquita, and Sophie Utikal's co-edited *Anti*Colonial Fantasies/ Decolonial Strategies* (2017);
   Françoise Vergès, Gerty Dambury, and Leïla Cukierman's co-edited *Décolonisons les arts!* (2018);
   Toni Morrison's *The Origin of Others* (2017);
   N. J. Enfield and Paul Kockelman's *Distributed Agency* (2017).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Josephine Baker in the 1920s–30s.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   With increasing difficulty! Listening to my back means I stay away from talking about dance and keep doing dance!

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   My kids!

Freya Björg Olafson

1. **Who is the most cited author (artist) in your work?**
   Laurie Anderson.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   André Lepecki's edited collection *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance*

Theory (2004);
N. Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999);
Frédéric Pouillaude's *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance* (2017);
Stephanie Rosenthal's edited collection *Move. Choreographing You: Art & Dance Since the 1960s* (2011);
Ryan Eyford's *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West* (2016).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
Jacolby Satterwhite.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
Daily my back is conditioned/choreographed by manufactured objects, computers, cellphones, and chairs. I counteract this conditioning with massage balls, a foam roller, and Pilates according to internal cues of pain and discomfort.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
This fall it will be necessary for me to miss a number of my classes in order to premiere my new work "MÆ – Motion Aftereffect" at Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg October 31 to November 2, 2019. Since January 2017 I have been practising saying "no" as an ongoing New Year's resolution necessitated when my artistic and community practice was leading to burnout.

Lindsay Eales

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
So many more than one. . . . Aside from two of my co-collaborators and in(ter)dependent scholars—Dales Lange and Nathan Fawaz—my work draws a lot off of Margaret Price, Rachel Gorman, and Sara Ahmed.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (2018);
Adrienne Maree Brown's *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017);
Eli Clare's *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (2017);
Anna Harpin and Juliet Foster's co-edited *Performance, Madness and Psychiatry: Isolated Acts* (2014);
Petra Kuppers' *Studying Disability Politics and Culture: An Introduction* (2014).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
Sins Invalid or Alice Sheppard (again).

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   Crunchy, knotty, spiralling, big winged, with the occasional full body roll.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   I used to just say I had raging diarrhoea (which was sometimes just easier and sometimes true). Now, in my crip and Mad communities, I can actually say that I can't get out of bed, or that I am fallow, which I have come to know is a vital time of Mad stillness and decomposition that nurtures the generativity of spring.

Patrick Alcedo

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   Benedict Anderson.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Felicia Hughes-Freeland's *Embodied Communities: Dance Traditions and Change in Java* (2008);
   Catherine Hernandez's *Scarborough: A Novel* (2017);
   Glenda Tibe Bonifacio's *Pinay on the Prairies: Filipino Women & Transnational Identities* (2014);
   Kristin Norget, Valentina Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin's co-edited *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader* (2017);
   Mark A. Wrathall's edited collection *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time* (2013).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Alice Reyes (the Philippines' National Artist in Dance and modern dance pioneer in that part of the world).

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   I arch my back when ideas spring forth as critical, original, and poised to be interventionist. My back succumbs to the softness of my bed and to the gravity that governs it when I filled my day with productivity, lightness, and perseverance to be better for tomorrow.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   Aside from being physically unwell, the best reason would be the need to attend to a project that is more pressing and urgent.

MJ Thompson

1. **Who is the most cited author in your work?**
   Historical: Freud, Marcel Mauss, Marx, Henri Lefebvre, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall.

Contemporary: Jonathan Crary, Peggy Phelan, Thomas F. DeFrantz, Fred Moten, Michael Taussig.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   John Durham Peters' *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (2016);
   Mark Fisher's *The Resistible Demise of Michael Jackson* (2009);
   Ursula K. Le Guin's *Searoad* (1991/2004);
   Judith Hamera's *Unfinished Business: Michael Jackson, Detroit and the Figural Economy of American Deindustrialization* (2017);
   Christine Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Historical: Eleo Pomare, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown.
   Contemporary: Savion Glover, David Neumann, Louise Lecavalier, Malik Nashad Sharpe, and Ellen Furey.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   Back moves in everyday life: slowly, carefully, with lots of bodywork to keep it from turning into a steel rod.

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   July.

Michèle Moss

1. **Who is the most cited author/artist in your work?**
   Tommy DeFrantz.

2. **List up to five books (titles and authors) that you ordered or purchased in 2018 (or 2019 so far).**
   Lindsay Guarino and Wendy Oliver's *Jazz Dance: A History of Roots and Branches* (2014);
   Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018);
   Danielle Robinson's *Modern Moves: Dancing Race during the Ragtime and Jazz Eras* (2015);
   Vic Satzewich and Nikolaos Liodakis's *"Race" and Ethnicity in Canada: A Critical Introduction* (2017);
   Halifu Osumare's *Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir* (2018).

3. **Name an artist you would like to see perform if effortless, obstacle-free travel (and time travel) was an option.**
   Rennie Harris.

4. **Describe the ways you move your back or your back moves you in your everyday life.**
   Ha ha ha ah ah ah, what a crazy question but don't even get me going regarding my back! Never had back pain in my youth—I think!? Seems like I should've but don't think I did. Now, humpf, it's all assess everyday. Lower back pain has me spending my fortune. The good news getting stronger and stronger but you can't dial it in. I need my back strong to do the bare minimum of my work never mind rocking it out or dreaming of hitting it out of the park!

5. **What's the best reason you have given to miss a class, rehearsal, or deadline—or to say "no" to a project.**
   Hmmmm, I do try to meet my deadlines—am I a nerd/geek or just forgetful and delusional?