

critical dance studies



Elizabeth Waterhouse

# Processing Choreography

Thinking with  
William Forsythe's *Duo*

[transcript]

Elizabeth Waterhouse  
Processing Choreography

The series is edited by Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein.

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## Preface

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This manuscript presents a revised version of my dissertation, defended in February 2020 at the University of Bern within the field of dance studies (*Tanzwissenschaft*). The choice to develop a dissertation about *one* choreographic piece within the small scholarly field of dance studies—even when focusing upon a well-known choreographer—makes this, like many dissertations, a niche publication. I am thus especially grateful for the financial support of the Swiss National Science Foundation, which enabled me to invest years of study in this research and, by funding open access publication, to bring this text to a sizable public. In the year following my thesis defense, I revised my dissertation into a shorter and gentler book, thinking of the broader audience potentially interested in a dancer's writing about Forsythe's oeuvre. The theoretical arguments and footnotes ideally make this both a lively and a critical ethnography, giving insight into dancers' labor and choreographic theory.

The piece *Duo*, made by William Forsythe in 1996 for the Ballett Frankfurt, is the subject of this manuscript. This short duet of 10–20 minutes is performed by either two women or two men. It features spellbinding passages of unison movement and captivating sections of rhythmical counterpoint, danced side-by-side. It is a “project” according to Forsythe, because of its longstanding development over two decades—transforming with new performers, stage elements and movement styles.<sup>1</sup> Reconstructing this project's history and finding out how and why the piece changed required years of careful scrutiny and interviews with the participants.

*Processing Choreography* is written from my unique position as a dancing-scholar and through my embodied knowledge as a former Forsythe dancer. In contrast to the kind of dance scholarship that analyzes the aesthetic style and form of the dance on stage and in performance or interprets ‘a’ choreography's unique meaning and affect (*Wirkung*) on the audience, my approach to examining the *Duo* project makes a number of noteworthy turns: I examine the project of *Duo* longitudinally; I foreground the perspectives and testimonies of the dancers; and I establish novel ways of analyzing digital traces, archival documents and memories of dancing in concert. Rather than narrating the history of this piece chronologically, my writing topically addresses different layers of the

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1 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

dancers' cooperation: considering the occupational culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, deciphering the dancers' movement practices and investigating the creativity that surged in making and adapting choreographic pieces.

While all description is an act of interpretation, in my writing this takes on particular significance. Having sweat and slithered for nearly a decade in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company, I write through a unique position and set of competences that influence how I access, understand and perceive my study 'object.' My status as a former dancer enabled me to receive copies of precious archival videos and spend long hours in discussion with the dancers. It made it possible for me to enter the dance studio and meet directly with the artists after performances. My research required negotiating my obligations as both a dancer and a scholar. Like Forsythe and the *Duo* dancers, I *love* dancing. The intellectual effort required for this book—necessitating distance from my emotional connection to the dancers and many uncomfortable hours sitting at the computer—was difficult for me to sustain. Yet it was a path that I chose because it enabled me to cultivate my voice and share with others the profound embodied knowledge that dancers develop. As the Covid-19 pandemic showed us, physical interaction and bodily presence are seminal to humanity, and it is distressing when they are disrupted. Throughout this manuscript, my reflection is always doubled: I reflect both upon the existing documents and traces enabling reconstruction of the case study of *Duo* and upon my ongoing relationships with these people, places and traces. The multiple narratives of the dancers and myself—all of us *thinking with, through* and *about Duo*—are interwoven by my choices as the author.

As a former Forsythe dancer who gradually ended my work with the ensemble between 2012 and 2015, I chose to write this text because I wished to continue the artistic work of *processing choreography* using the tools and methods of scholarly study. Academic research and writing were not unfamiliar to me. I had pursued my undergraduate and master's degrees before dancing professionally. While dancing in The Forsythe Company, I participated in dance studies conference networks as much as my busy schedule as a performer allowed. With my investment into my dissertation, I sought to contribute something still insufficiently grasped in the scholarly writing about Forsythe's oeuvre: to sensually transfer knowledge about the dancers' experience of dancing and to elucidate the multiple voices and narratives within a historiography of Forsythe's oeuvre. By learning from a dance studies perspective how to write about dance practice and by integrating approaches from the social sciences, I was motivated to document what we had practiced—the dancers' knowledge—in a carnal way that could move the reader.

This manuscript is part of the growing documentation and theoretical analysis of Forsythe's work, in dance studies and more recently in the context of visual art. My book contributes my insight, based on my perspective as a late-generation dancer from The Forsythe Company and through my attention to other dancers' testimonies. More generally for the field of dance studies, this exploration serves as an example of how production analysis can be undertaken to learn more about aesthetic practices and artifacts. My writing also demonstrates how ethnography can be employed to collectively remember and thereby to reconstruct the past, and to develop arguments relevant to dance historiography and dance practice. And hopefully it moves my readers, and moves a few more dancers to write about their experiences.

I would like to thank many people and institutions for making this book possible.

Foremost, I thank the *Duo* dancers for their investment and cooperation on this project. I could never have rich enough words to honor the brilliance of: Riley Watts, Brigel Gjoka, Allison Brown, Roberta Mosca, Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson, Cora Bos-Kroese, Francesca Harper, Parvaneh Scharafali, Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines and Natalie Thomas. I am also extremely grateful to William Forsythe and ensemble members Cyril Baldy, Dana Caspersen, Brock Labrenz, David Morrow, Thom Willems, Nicholas Champion, Irene Klein and Tony Rizzi for their investment and care during my interviews and questions. For help with countless questions relating to Forsythe's documents and history, I thank Alexandra Scott profusely. I also want to thank Bruni Marx for her correspondence and discussion of the history of Ballett Frankfurt.

My advisors, Christina Thurner and Priska Gisler, have provided prolonged support and modeled how thinking with *Duo* could become inscribed. Our exchange—trying to articulate ideas about dance in different academic languages—enriched this project and enabled dance practice to find a way onto the page. My editor Jules Bradbury partnered the transformation of this dissertation into a book. Through her subtle yet substantial intervention, she gave my voice new clarity and pressured my open-ended writing process to take a final form. I am also grateful to Graeme Currie for proofreading and Claudio Richard for double-checking. Mirjam Galley, my editor at transcript, supported me patiently throughout this process, and made important suggestions about how we could best layout my content on the page.

As in *Duo* itself, the authorship of this book is shared with a network of significant partners. I would in particular like to thank James Leach, Tilman O'Donnell, Claire Vionnet, Dana Caspersen and Lennart Dohms. All of you invested substantial time reading drafts of different chapters and discussing my ideas as works in progress. I am also grateful to Anne Schuh and Katarina Kleinschmidt, with whom my discussions of this practice-informed approach benefitted considerably.

The best possible way to start writing a dissertation is within a sea of communicative and supportive friends who inspire you to think differently. I had two such groups. First, the core team of artists and scholars of *Motion Together*: Timo Herbst, Mark Coniglio, Sophia New, Dan Belasco Rogers and Susanne Schmitt. In particular, Susanne Schmitt coached me on ethnographic methods, offering me personal mentorship that was vital to my scholarly vision and approach. Timo Herbst enabled my refined ability to look at *Duo* videos frame-by-frame and to see the codes that guided its invention and rehearsal. I am also grateful for the exchange during this project with Gabriele Brandstetter and her generous support to embed the project *Motion Together* within the infrastructure of the Free University of Berlin. The group HOOD, an experiment with eight ex-Forsythe dancers, was a second platform sustaining this research. We were generously supported as ensemble in residence at PACT Zollverein in Essen, Germany, between 2015 and 2018. As HOOD we were: Cyril Baldy, Katja Cheraneva, Frances Chiaverini, Josh Johnson, Fabrice Mazliah, Roberta Mosca, Tilman O'Donnell and myself. The interviews I initiated in this frame developed my understanding of the occupational culture of Forsythe's ensembles. While these artists are not cited often in this manuscript, many of the ideas were tested in conversations with them, for which I am thankful.

My research is marked by the extensive and creative effort of programming artists Florian Jenett, Monika Hagar and Mark Coniglio, whose vision went into the graphics of section 9.2. Without their persistence, I would never have been able to imagine *Duo* in such minute detail. I also thank Karin Minger for her collaboration on the graphic in Appendix C, which visualizes the pairs' history.

My approach to working with interviews, similar to methods used in oral history and ethnography, required accurate and extensive transcription. This is time consuming and difficult work. I am grateful to all those who produced these transcripts: Katja Cheraneva, Tilman O'Donnell, Selina Hauswirth, Anne-Marthe Kühne, Nadja Rothenburger and Regula Schelling.

Before becoming my doctoral research, this project was supported by two frames: Monica Gillette integrated a preliminary investigation of the topics addressed here within the project *Störung-Hafra'ah* in 2015 and has been an important conversation partner. Bettina Bläsing, with whom I began my *Duo* research in 2013, has buttressed this project since its inception; I value our collaboration more and more with each passing year.

The administrative personnel who have assisted this project are its golden angels: Rosemarie Backwinkel, Jacqueline Devinenti, Pia Zühlke, Ursula Fürst and Sabine Hausbrandt. Thank you especially for helping me across language barriers.

And without the support of my parents, my friend Angela Koerfer-Bürger, and movers Chris Lechner, Eliane Eicher and Susane Canonica, I would never have been able to sit well and happily to write these pages.

This book is dedicated to the *Duo* dancers.

In the small space just in front of the curtain, just at the edge of the stage, *Duo* is a clock composed of two women. The women register time in a spiraling way, making it visible, they think about how it fits into space, they pull time into an intricate, naked pattern in front of the curtain, close to the eyes of the audience. The pattern grows and unfolds as they tumble, shear, strike, reverse. Their bodies brilliant in a shimmer of black, the women fly with reckless accuracy, their breath sings of the spaces in time. Distant music appears and vanishes as the women follow each other through the whirling, etched quiet. A clock which regards the limitless by returning to where it began.

—*Dana Caspersen*<sup>1</sup>

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1 Program note from the Ballett Frankfurt tour to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, June 17–19, 2004.





## Introduction

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Figures 1–4. Dancers Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson in *Duo*.



Photo © Agnès Noltenius.

When I look at photographs of *Duo*, I feel kinesthetic memories of moving together. These photos, taken by Forsythe dancer Agnès Noltenius in 1996 (see Figs. 1–4), are shot right up close to the dancers, so that their bodies extend beyond the frame. Their limbs shift from sharp focus—capturing elbows folding, forearms aligning—to borders that blur with action—as ribs twist and legs fold. The eye of the camera is held at the level

of the dancers' eyes. Thus, as when dancing with someone in one of Forsythe's works, you rarely meet your partner's eyes. When dancing together, your glance captures only a touch of her facial signatures: such as her mouth, her profile or the back of her head. Rather than prolonged eye contact, you *sense* your partner through co-movement—with different senses than the eyes. I can almost hear the camera shutter snapping moments, while Noltenius—as a dancer—reaches around her colleagues' bodies and follows their rhythm. The dance studio is in the background with its smooth, featureless floor. In Figure 4 we can make out the line of the ballet barre, used daily for warming up.

Dozens of similarly stunning photographs of dancers fill the pages of Noltenius's book tribute to the Ballett Frankfurt, combined with her own words and citations from choreographer William Forsythe.<sup>1</sup> The images I've included here, with her kind permission, show the dancers enacting the duet *Duo*. This piece is the subject of this manuscript: a duet made in 1996 by Forsythe for the Ballett Frankfurt. The dancers are Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson, both of whom are cisgender women. In these photos, we see them in their black *Duo* costumes, the long sleeve leotards, as well as wearing their practice clothes. They are in the Ballett Frankfurt studio on the seventh floor of the Opera House, with natural rather than stage lighting. To my eye, they are enacting *Duo*'s movements a bit differently than in performance—as they are closer, brought together for the camera lens, on the verge of touching. This staging of *Duo*, with Noltenius, brings out what the dancers feel as they dance this duet: a particular art of *togethering*. In this moving together, micro-movements and subtle timings are substantial. Noltenius's camera cuts through time into these transient experiences, showing them intimately in passing.

Figure 5 presents us with another picture of *Duo*—made by digital collage. Dancer Riley Watts's image of *his Duo* was made over twenty years after Noltenius's photos, in 2019 when Watts was at home between tours. The image shows Watts's body fused together with the body of his partner, Brigel Gjoka. Both dancers are cisgender men. They are wearing their *Duo* costumes: tank tops and sweatpants. Watts produced this picture by manipulating video stills. The pixilation was caused by Watts zooming in extensively—coming close to his body and overlaying his torso upon that of his partner. Watts describes this picture as corresponding to the essence and feeling of *Duo*, based on many years of practice together.<sup>2</sup> As with Noltenius's *Duo* photographs, the figuration of the face is absent. The image frames the common torso, core and arms. The dancers' bodies are different yet amalgamated: *together*.

Compared to the stage photography of *Duo* in performance—in which the dancers appear distant, two-dimensional and crisp in geometric positions—I have chosen these dancers' own images of their practice as an invitation to “step inside” my reconstructive ethnography of the *Duo* project.<sup>3</sup> As a former Forsythe dancer, I bring to this narrative my insight of the dancers' corporeal practice, foregrounding the dancers' understand-

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1 Noltenius, *Detail*.

2 Riley Watts, phone conversation with the author, February 27, 2019.

3 This invitation cites spoken text in Forsythe's *Artifact* (1984). See Sulcas, “William Forsythe Pushing at the Boundaries of Ballet,” p. 5.

Figure 5. DUO2015 partners Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka superimposed.



Photo © Riley Watts.

ing of *their* bodies, work and partnerships. These photos give initial glimpses into the practice that I will be considering.

*Duo* has been performed in various iterations since its premiere in the Ballett Frankfurt in 1996. My research commenced in parallel to Forsythe's resurgence of interest in the duet in the last years of The Forsythe Company, which led to a revival of the work for performers Watts and Gjoka in 2015. *Duo* was retitled *DUO2015* for this occasion to distinguish a version developed for and with these specific dancers. Let us examine this duet more closely.

### Watching *DUO2015*

*DUO2015* begins as overhead and front stage lights are slowly brought up, revealing two dancers—red-bearded Watts and brown-bearded Gjoka—moving together at the front of the stage (see Fig. 6).<sup>4</sup> The theater is dark around them. They are standing side-by-side, less than an arm's length apart. Shifting the angle of their bodies while

4 Here I describe the archival video of Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka performing *DUO2015* in the touring program *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*. The video recording was undated. The performers remember it was a performance in London circa summer 2015. See Appendix F, section 2.

Figure 6. Dancers Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) performing DUO2015.



Photo © Bill Cooper.

remaining frontal to the audience, they participate with concentration in performing similar movements, primarily with their arms. The joints of their bodies supplely fold in response—hips shifting, necks turning, knees flexing, ankles adjusting. As they move, the performers shift their eyes between the positions of their outreached arms and the space around them. They turn their heads to see directions within the space above, behind and beside their measured gestures. Both dancers wear informal practice clothes that are individually chosen to fit Gjoka's muscular and Watt's lithe bodies: grey and maroon sweatpants, black and pine green tank tops, dark colored socks. There is no music. The audience is expectantly quiet.

The dancers articulate movement positions while audibly breathing and occasionally murmuring undertones. Using gentle force, they carry on with unhurried precision. The pairing of their movements proposes relations between forms: for instance, one dancer with his left shoulder elevated, the arm falling away like a foreign limb as he plays with extending and refolding his left hand; the other dancer simultaneously grasps and pivots his left elbow into various shapes, as he adroitly transfers his weight, shifting the angles of his feet. The dancers appear to be observing their bodies morph, while at the same time voluntarily and inquisitively manipulating them. They produce similar forms and cooperatively shape motion dynamics. The men appear deeply connected as they intimately share this dance practice together, and they tell me that they really are deeply in tune with one another. *Duo* is, according to Gjoka, “a dialogue supported by attention and listening.”<sup>5</sup> It is not, in the dancers' view, a gendered dialogue but rather a human one.

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5 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

Interchanging movement and breath, the dancers performing the opening passage of *DUO2015* remind me of the detached yet ebullient cool of jazz players feeling their own groove. I see surprising variations of simple moves of their arms: lift, place, fold, flop, rotate, unfold and pivot. These little gestures spill out with a sense of ease. Sometimes their arms quote ballet positions. Though the dancers do not touch, lock eyes or exchange words, the performers do swap sideways glances to reference one another. These suggest that they are composing relations between them—such as one dancer's outstretched forearm and the other's inclined shoulder, or one dancer's lifted hip and the other's slanted leg. The dancers' casual movements appear to be a common idiolect sharing a joint grammar, apparently improvised on a foundation of experience and movement forms: a dance exploring the realm of a dyad's commonality. I find out later in my research that what I am watching—the beginning of the piece—is an improvisation, which allows each night's performance of *DUO2015* to find its singular reiteration of practiced moves in concert.

Rhythm and time are a shared framework for this dialogue. The dancers quietly punctuate accents, accelerate, decelerate, take turns, insert short pauses and occasionally add a longer fermata. They 'tick' together in this rhythmical way—as the audience, politely hushed, attunes. Watching the dancers, I feel time suspending. I sense moments extending, becoming subtle and nuanced with the micro-possibilities of movement relationally unfolding. The performers seem held in the particular logic of their practice: invested in the rigor of their working relationship, encompassed by the electric atmosphere generated by the audience. Then they suddenly latch into identical movements, in synchrony, and a new phase of the dance unfolds. What comes to mind is author David Foster Wallace's description of critical moments in a game of tennis: "the world's whole air hung there as if lifted and left to swing."<sup>6</sup>

## Researching the *Duo* Project

This manuscript presents an investigation taking flight from close study of the piece *Duo* by choreographer William Forsythe, introduced in the short description above. As the title *Duo* suggests, the work is a duet performed by a pair of dancers, either two women or two men; the dancers imagine that, in the future, the dance could unfold to encompass new expressions of gender, in response to changing times. The partners' way of dancing together, without touch or explicit narrative, is a contemporary example of partnering, one that emphasizes cooperation and dialogue rather than the storytelling and gendered role differentiation typical of the balletic form of the *pas de deux* (dance for two). *Duo* is a long-term "project," according to Forsythe.<sup>7</sup> Since its creation in 1996 for the Ballett Frankfurt, *Duo* has been performed over 148 times in over 19 different countries.<sup>8</sup> Under Forsythe's direction, it has been danced by eleven artists, with various costumes and sound scores, under the titles of *Duo*, *DUO2015* and *Dialogue (DUO2015)*.

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6 Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, p. 166.

7 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

8 This counts performances between 1996–2018.

These vicissitudes—constitutive of one project—are the focus of this book, in which I examine the dancers' role and perspectives.

Figure 7 (left). Dancers Allison Brown (left) and Jill Johnson (right) in *Duo* in 2003.

Figure 8 (right). Dancers Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) in *DUO*2015.



Photo © Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos (fig. 7) and Bill Cooper (fig. 8).

The *Duo* project is a small but important thread in Forsythe's now four-decades of choreographic activity, which has brought him international status as one of this century's leading choreographers—recognized in the fields of ballet, contemporary dance and, in the last decade, also in visual art. His reputation as a “willful provocateur, ‘pretentious as hell’, even ballet’s Antichrist” is part of this acclaim.<sup>9</sup> Though *Duo* is comparatively unprovocative in comparison to works such as *Kammer/Kammer* (2000)—which I remember performing with The Forsythe Company as the French audience protested loudly with claps, boos and by walking out dramatically—aspects of *Duo* have also been reported as challenging.<sup>10</sup> For one, the female dancers in the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo*, who dance close to the audience at the front of the stage, wear black long sleeve leotards that are sheer at the top in which their breasts are visible (see Figs. 7, 9–10). On occasion these costumes have incited catcalls from the audience and concern from theaters about how to advertise the performance.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the spare and dissonant usage of composed music by Thom Willems, or of no music at all, may also disorient spectators accustomed to stage dances that traditionally exhibit harmony with the music chosen.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, the sparse structure of the choreography, focusing on the interrelation of the dancers' actions can seem “formal” and “academic” as opposed to culturally resonant or entertaining.<sup>13</sup> All of these are related to cultural norms and conventions of dance performance, which vary in the contexts that *Duo* has toured.

9 Byrne, “Ballet’s Antichrist.”

10 Performance of The Forsythe Company, Montpellier Dance Festival, June 29, 2005.

11 For example, on the public billboards advertising the Ballett Frankfurt tour to Orange County near Los Angeles in 2004, one *Duo* photo was reproduced with the women’s nipples airbrushed away.

12 Compare to André Lepecki’s citation of a civil case against the International Dance Festival of Ireland for the choreography of Jérôme Bel, in Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 4.

13 Kisselgoff, “Dance Review; Loud Tables, but Not a Restaurant,” p. 1.

Figures 9–10. Regina van Berkel (left) and Jill Johnson (right) performing *Duo* in 1996.



Photo © Dominik Mentzos.

Anne Kisselgoff's review for the *New York Times* in 2004 directs attention to the unusual power of *Duo* in performance: the peculiar force of this composition of movement, breath and music. She describes:

Allison Brown and Ms. Johnson wear black shorts and are bare breasted under see-through black tops in *Duo*, an intimate formal exercise. They are more than admirable in their concentration as they move in and out of classical alignment and into ballet's classroom positions.

Despite its bare-bones academic air, *Duo* has a subliminal power. A phrase on the piano rises up into an electronic swell as the increasingly breathy dancers isolate parts of their bodies into extreme postures. Unison alternates with counterpoint, collapsible limbs contrast with light skips.<sup>14</sup>

Kisselgoff's review attests that *Duo's* dynamism is contingent upon the dancers' concentration—an awareness cultivated through precise practice of timing movement. The Ballett Frankfurt program text for *Duo*, written by dancer Dana Caspersen and reproduced in the opening epigraph, also poignantly describes the duet's intimate timing. Caspersen writes: "The women register time in a spiraling way, making it visible, they think about how it fits into space, they pull time into an intricate, naked pattern in front of the curtain, close to the eyes of the audience."<sup>15</sup> Sharing time together, the dancers' interaction is an aesthetically motivated composite of sound, space, movement and relation. Because the piece involves sections with little music, the quiet invites the audience to prick their ears and attune to this sensitive dancing. *Duo* is thus an important example of *sensitive* interaction and spectatorship, where subtle gestures take on meaning as the dancers and the audience sustain coming closer and become interested in nuances of partnership.

14 Ibid.

15 Program note by Dana Caspersen from the Ballett Frankfurt tour to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., June 17–19, 2004.



The dancers' memories of enacting *Duo* and their reflection upon their close relationships will be brought into focus in the writing that follows. By turning to the dancers' testimonies and studying traces of *Duo* in rehearsal and performance, I will explore more general questions about the emergence of aesthetic events and their realities for the artists who take part in them. As a dancer myself, one who did not perform this work during my time with The Forsythe Company, I was most interested to discover: What was it like to dance *Duo*? How did the dancers contribute to this piece? What did they become, through dancing *Duo*, and also what did *Duo* become, through and with them?

*Duo* is a telling microcosm within Forsythe's choreographic oeuvre, chosen as the keystone of my study because of its processual, historical and relational properties. Forsythe is well known for working on and transforming performances over years, even decades, and revising pieces right up to the night of performance.<sup>16</sup> *Duo* is a significant example illustrating this process-oriented activity. Moreover, the short dance has pertinent historical properties: Created in 1996 in the context of the Ballett Frankfurt (1984–2004), reconstructed in The Forsythe Company (2005–2015) and resurfacing thereafter in Forsythe's tours as a freelance choreographer (2015 to 2019), it is the only short piece interweaving these three periods of Forsythe's history as a choreographer. This permits important reflection upon the chronology and epochs of Forsythe's labor, illuminating significant facets of the artists' changing modes and contexts of work. Lastly, the project foregrounds partnering—danced interaction—with notable force upon spectators and the dancers themselves. This invites close investigation of *how* dancers cultivate co-movement. These aspects—processual, historical and relational—are my framework for revising how we think about choreographies and dancers' labor.

Throughout this book, ample depictions of doing *Duo*—before, after and in performance—are presented to the reader, in writing that is descriptive, analytic and creative. My observations are supplemented by photographs and screenshots of archival videos. While performance is crucial to the nature of *Duo*, the activities taking place around the performance are also important—in training, rehearsal and touring. My sensual inscription of this bundle of practices aims to assist the reader in understanding these bodily preparations. I reconstruct *Duo* by considering diverse traces: archival records of rehearsals and performance, performances live at the time of writing, the dancers' reflection upon their practices and my own memories of being a Forsythe dancer. This suite of sources is interpreted with the motivation to enable the reader to approach *Duo* closely, to sense it more like the dancers do—as a work in process.

One of the challenges I faced in writing this manuscript was to sustain the reader's critical capacity towards a dance piece that never fully translates itself into words upon paper. Compounding this was my interest in analyzing the choreography of *Duo* longitudinally—in looking at how the piece and the labor changed over time. On the one hand,

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16 The most noted series is Forsythe's "Robert Scott Complex." See Siegmund, "Of Monsters and Puppets," pp. 20–22. See also the opening of Chapter 11.

the dancing in *Duo* is difficult to remember, inscribe and pin down: it is ephemeral.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, this shifting choreography is also enduring; the artists consider it *one* project that is perpetuating and changing over time. My work as a scholar was to examine these nuances in detail—deciphering a lingering yet pliant activity and its shifting manifestations.

The detailed consideration given here to *Duo* will be surprising to readers accustomed to more cursory readings of performances—scholarship that often gives equal if not greater space to the theoretical concepts being interrogated.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, this book prioritizes grounded theory: developing theoretical arguments inductively from longitudinal study of practice. By considering the interrelation of the performers' labor and the specific performances of the *Duo* project, my strategy will be to slowly unpack and decipher the layers important to choreographic processes.

The notion of the 'work' of art articulated by this text is a processual one. The aesthetics examined are assessed *as* and *in* socio-cultural contexts. It is not my intent to oppose the 'artists' and that 'work' but to show them to be formatively complicit. They emerge together. As an "open work" *Duo* calls for interpretation.<sup>19</sup> The practice of choreography, for Forsythe and collaborators, is a pluralistic creative process that is epistemologically and ontologically open. In Forsythe's words: "Each epoch, each instance of choreography, is ideally at odds with its previous defining incarnations as it strives to testify to the plasticity and wealth of our ability to re-conceive and detach ourselves from positions of certainty."<sup>20</sup> To be consistent with this, I chose a sort of writing that moves: not locking down how *Duo* worked or what knowledge of *Duo* is, but rather speculating and creating. Ideally my writing continues the creative spirit of *Duo*, with support from a systematic dance studies analysis. The predominant allegiance it follows is writing *with* the dancers.

## With the Dancers

William Forsythe's choreographic works are well known for the demands that they place on performers: the physical demands of moving their bodies with virtuosity, the cognitive demands of thinking while in motion and remembering interactions, and the social demands of creating new choreographies in only a few weeks. Members of Forsythe's ensemble invest years, even decades, of their lives in the artistic pursuit of working *with* Forsythe, undertaking a specific labor that fuses them into an ensemble. The dancers

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17 On the impact of this ephemerality on dance discourses, see Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung*, pp. 99–109.

18 On these challenges of cross-disciplinarity, see Bales and Eliot, *Dance on Its Own Terms*; Franco and Nordera, *Dance Discourses*.

19 Umberto Eco describes the open work as both the multiplicity of meanings that may occur when the finished and authored work is interpreted by an audience or readership, and in terms of the changeable character of many works of art themselves: "an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations," including structures that may be "unplanned or physically incomplete" and which therefore require interpretation. See Eco, *The Open Work*, p. 4, p. 12.

20 Forsythe, "Choreographic Objects," p. 90.

yield their bodies as tools for the construction of choreographic works. They take pleasure and, on occasion, experience pain through what they become during this process.

For professional dancers, the boundaries between work and life, performer and self, constructed and authentic are blurred. In *Duo* there are no characters to play. One's partner is usually a very close friend. As I have shown in the description at the start of this chapter, the pair's nonverbal communication is essential to the performance of the piece. The sociality shaped through the practice of a pair dancing *Duo* impacts the dancers' lives personally, and conversely, sociality outside of the dance microcosm frames the manner in which *Duo* is performed. Thus, from a scholarly point of view, *Duo* is a fascinating case study for considering how human agency and subjectivity are enmeshed within professional organization. Dance anthropologist Helena Wulff substantiates: "What is happening on stage is anchored backstage socially, and can therefore be explored anthropologically."<sup>21</sup> Why and how the organizing happens, how the social and choreographic planes merge, are some of the opening inquiries of this book. It is my hypothesis that just as *Duo* is a work in process, *Duo* dancers are also people in process, relationally sharing stakes in their common project of dancing and *Duo*-ing. The choreography of *Duo* is not just an arrangement of steps to be performed on stage: it is an institutionalized set of practices and an ethics of interaction, shaping choreography and subjectivity simultaneously.

During the last two decades, dance scholars have established the study of subjectivity and choreography as interdependent terms. "Rethinking the subject in terms of the body is precisely the task of choreography," writes dance scholar André Lepecki, an effort "that is always already in dialogue with critical theory and philosophy."<sup>22</sup> Choreography, initially a term naming the inscription of ballets on paper, akin to the composition of musical scores, has expanded since the 17<sup>th</sup> century to describe varied aesthetic processes of 'setting' dance for performances.<sup>23</sup> The term choreography now refers—both colloquially and within the dance field—to diverse formations of movement, media, objects and discourses—not only to authored dance works. Dance scholar Susan Foster begins her book *Choreographing Empathy* (2011) by noting the widespread usage of the idea of choreography, as "referent for a structuring of movement," which may be dancers' movement or more broadly the movement of birds, web interfaces, proteins, etc.<sup>24</sup> The *Duo* project is situated among these shifting and expanded ideas about what choreography and choreographers can be and do—with dancing and dancers.

My interest in writing about choreographic practice in the context of Forsythe's authorship and ensembles has been influenced by the last decade's exploration of choreographic potential in European contemporary dance.<sup>25</sup> Performance makers Mårten Spångberg, Bojana Cvejić and Xavier Le Roy propagated critical reflection on

21 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 17.

22 Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 5.

23 See Foster's extensive genealogical inquiry in Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, pp. 15–75.

24 Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 2. Reviewing the dance studies discourse on this concept, see *ibid.*, pp. 2–6.

25 Cf. Brandstetter, *Choreographie als Grab-Mal*; Cvejić, "From Odd Encounters to a Perspective Confluence"; Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, pp. 17–22; Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*; Klein, "The (Micro-)Politics of Social Choreography"; Laermans, *Moving Together*; Ruhsam, *Kollab-*

the practices and discourses of choreography through the conference *Choreography as Expanded Practice: Situation, Movement, Object* (2012). Like Foster, they pronounced:

In the last few years the term 'choreography' has been used in an ever-expanding sense, becoming synonymous with specific structures and strategies disconnected from subjectivist bodily expression, style and representation. Accordingly, the meaning of choreography has transformed from referring to a set of protocols or tools used in order to produce something predetermined, i.e. a dance, to an open cluster of tools that can be used as a generic capacity both for analysis and production.<sup>26</sup>

Forsythe in this period also began refining his public statements about choreography. In his essay "Choreographic Objects" (2008), he acknowledged the seminal quality of choreography to transform, highlighting the processual components that are central to my investigation. He explained: "Choreography is a curious and deceptive term. The word itself, like the processes it describes, is elusive, agile, and maddeningly unmanageable. To reduce choreography to a single definition is not to understand the most crucial of its mechanisms: to resist and reform previous conceptions of its definition."<sup>27</sup>

My research begins from the premise that the constitutive power of choreographic labor is a seminal zone for researching the creative power of subjectivity. This builds upon a foundation of research within the field of dance studies, exploring how corporeality and identity are constituted by choreographic and social dance activities. Dance studies scholarship expresses a generally poststructuralist perspective: opposing theories that propose a "self-enclosed, autonomous individual bound to a fixed identity, and with the identification of a full presence at the center of discourse."<sup>28</sup> In contrast to this vision of a fixed, solipsistic and natural subject, within the majority of dance scholarship today the subject is understood to be dynamic and socially constituted—a process of forming, deforming, iterating, interpolating, interacting, transgressing, subverting, resisting.<sup>29</sup> Dance scholars view training, rehearsal and choreographic practices as pro-

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*orative Praxis: Choreographie*; Sabisch, *Choreographing Relations*; Schellow, *Diskurs-Choreographien*; Wehren, *Körper als Archive in Bewegung*.

26 Citation of Spångberg, Cvejić and Le Roy, in Sabisch, "For a Topology of Practices," p. 73.

27 Forsythe, "Choreographic Objects," p. 90. This essay was originally published in the exhibition catalogue *Suspense* in 2008; see Weisbeck, *Suspense*.

28 Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 8.

29 Dance scholars rely on various theories (from phenomenology to Bourdieu, via Butler, Lacan, Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari) in their investigation of subjectivity. For a review of dance scholarship drawing upon phenomenology, see Pakes, "Phenomenology and Dance." For a counterexample drawing from process philosophy that is critical of phenomenology, see Manning, "Three Propositions for a Movement of Thought." On Forsythe's work, emphasizing the role of space and the visual, see Briginshaw, *Dance, Space, Subjectivity*, pp. 183–206. Also, on Forsythe's work examining the relationship of choreography, subjectivity and law, see Siegmund, "Negotiating Choreography, Letter, and Law in William Forsythe." On contemporary dance labor and the entwinement of subjectivity and capitalism, see, in particular, Kunst, *Artist at Work*, pp. 19–49. Studying the interplay of technology and performance from a phenomenological perspective, see Kozel, *Closer*. Examining the role of collective subject formation through the lens of practice theories, see Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 94–97. Regarding the relation of the self to processes of aging, see the interesting discussion by Schwaiger, *Aging, Gender, Embodiment in Dance*.

cesses that significantly shape subjectivity, impacting corporeality at the individual and social registers. Making and performing choreography are thus understood both as aesthetic projects *and* as politically meaningful experiments that challenge normative identities. As a duet, *Duo's* prime consideration is relationality, and what is produced by the dancers working *together*. This intersubjective focus adds dimensions to understanding the performers' labor, which still remains opaque in dance studies. Concepts for this 'togethering,' drawing from different discourses, will be developed in the chapters that follow.

## The Dancer's Perspective

This study aims to contribute something of what has been unspoken, disregarded and overlooked in dancing together, bringing Forsythe dancers' perspectives into the historiography of this genre. The role of the dancer has been shown to vary extensively in different dance genres and epochs in western dance, corresponding to different practices of authorship and notions of the performable dance work.<sup>30</sup> How to research this role is also under question. Dance scholar Tamara Tomic-Vajagic rightly differentiates between texts *about* the dancers—written from an 'outsider' perspective as a spectator, critic or scholar—and sources written *by* the dancers themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Christina Thurner has illustrated how the memoirs and autobiographies written by practitioners are rich and complex narratives for the dance historian to interpret, as they may fold into the myths and complex careers of performers, influencing how and what they tell about dance.<sup>32</sup> In ballet scholarship, Tomic-Vajagic points to the relative dearth of sources that reveal the practitioner's viewpoint and the dominance of studies that explore the performer's contribution from the perspective of the spectators, often as readings of agency and style.<sup>33</sup> However, the opposite is the case in the field of European contemporary dance. As discussed by dance scholars Julia Wehren and Rudi Laermans, this wealth of discourse parallels the rise of self-reflexivity in European contemporary dance in the 1990s—a phenomenon that has also been labeled 'conceptual dance,' 'non-dance' and 'performance.'<sup>34</sup> Frequently these publications have been dis-

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For a recent review of subjectivity studies outside the field of dance, see Blackman et al., "Creating Subjectivities."

30 Cf. Butterworth, "Too Many Cooks?"; Laermans, *Moving Together*; McFee, *The Philosophical Aesthetics of Dance*, pp. 170–84; McFee, "Admirable Legs' or the Dancer's Importance for the Dance," pp. 29–32.

31 Tomic-Vajagic recounts how, in the middle of the last century, dance scholarship exploring the first-person perspective of inscription initially took a phenomenological approach, which in her view was troubled by being highly individual and not bridging the gap between the 'insider' role of the dancer and the 'outsider' role of the spectator. In contrast, more recent writing on the dancer's contribution has involved "integrated" or "blended" approaches, triangulating first and third-person perspectives, and even involving practice-based methodology. See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 36–60.

32 See Thurner, *Beredete Körper – bewegte Seelen*, pp. 182–92.

33 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 51–52.

34 See Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung*, pp. 53–56; Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 19–21. Cf. Schellow, *Diskurs-Choreographien*; Sabisch, "For a Topology of Practices," pp. 73–75. These artists have engaged with critical self-reflection on their role, authorship, modes of production, prac-

seminated in ways that involve the democratic medium of the internet.<sup>35</sup> It is in this more self-reflexive field that I would situate *Duo* discursively, due to the published writing of many Forsythe dancers<sup>36</sup>—although *Duo*'s aesthetics and labor are distinct from those of conceptual dance works, as shall be made clear in my analysis to follow.

The challenge of gaining scholarly access to the backstage activities of dancers means that examples of writing that bridge 'outsider' and 'insider' perspectives are sparse.<sup>37</sup> The contemporary use of video within dance projects, as a tool for the development and documentation of dance works, provides exciting new sources for dance scholars. Video archives make it possible to examine interpretive practice and choreographic variation over the history of a piece, as well as to understand how a work was made and rehearsed. The downside is that these coveted materials may be, like Forsythe's archival footage, accessible only to insiders. Fortunately, dance artists—such as the *Duo* dancers—often have an interest to take part in research.<sup>38</sup> Some dance scholars take the approach of considering dancers not as objects of research but rather as "analytical" partners.<sup>39</sup> Building upon prior work of dance studies scholars who have integrated their dance practice within their scholarly research for this reason, I bring to bear my embodied expertise of the Forsythe lineage and my capacity to access exceptional source material, seeing myself as the scholarly partner of the *Duo* dancers I engage with.

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tices, performance canon and efforts of reconstruction and reenactment. While a footnote can only touch upon the many performances substantiating this claim, consider: *Product of Circumstances* by Xavier Le Roy (1999); Jérôme Bel's portraits of various performers: *Véronique Doisneau* (2004), *Pichet Klunchun and myself* (2005), *Lutz Förster* (2009), *Cédric Andrieux* (2009); the last work of The Forsythe Company, *In Act and Thought* (2015) by Fabrice Mazliah; and the six-hour interaction *A Dancer's Day* (2017) by Boris Charmatz.

- 35 I would like to highlight three examples of European projects with internet platforms. First, since 2000 the platform *Sarma* in the Netherlands has acted as a "laboratory for discursive practices and expanded publication in field of dance, performance and beyond" with a website offering materials publicly. Second, the internet platform *Everybody's* aimed to expand the discourse in the performing arts and to make that accessible to everybody. Compiled primarily between 2009–2011, the website provides games, scores, description, artist statements, interviews, performance documentation, publications and a calendar. Third, the *Motion Bank* project researched choreographic practice from 2010–2013. The website currently features online scores for the artists Deborah Hay, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert. For links to these websites, please see the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography.
- 36 See writing by Dana Caspersen, Anthony Rizzi, Thomas McManus and Prue Lang in Siegmund, *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung*. See also Caspersen's extensive writings: "It Starts From Any Point"; "The Company at Work, How They Train, Rehearse, and Invent"; "Methodologies" and "De-creation."
- 37 On Balanchine's choreographic process, see Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*. On Forsythe's work, see Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*; Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*; Vass-Rhee *Audio-Visual Stress*; "Dancing Music"; "Distributed Dramaturgies"; "Schooling an Ensemble." On the dancers' work within Pina Bausch's ensemble, see Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, in particular pp. 145–62.
- 38 Cf. Leach, "Choreographic Objects."
- 39 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, p. 6.

## The Performer's Labor

The special issue of the journal *Performance Research* "On Labour and Performance" (2012) signifies the growing interest of performance scholars in forms of aesthetic labor, reflecting that: "Artistic performance practice has always been tightly intertwined with the exploration of and experimentation with modes of working, collaborating and producing artistic work."<sup>40</sup> The editors of this issue observe that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, European contemporary dance has fostered a significant enlargement of the modes of artistic production and its visibility—in performative products, discourse production, modes of exchange and new formats for sharing process-based approaches. Scholars Gabriele Klein and Bojana Kunst understand this phenomenon to be twofold: First, as the aesthetic motivation of artists to define new sensorial and experiential modes of art making, and secondly, as developments situated in society. These transformations, they argue, correspond to "broader changes of labour in contemporary society, especially with the immaterial aspect of labour, the production of subjectivity and the performative turn in contemporary culture and society."<sup>41</sup> Such new perspectives have enabled choreography to expand beyond the performance of existing dance techniques and aesthetic genres, with reverberations in the art market and educational field.<sup>42</sup>

*Duo* is a project situated within this transformation, giving an interesting perspective on these forces. To recover and understand the dancers' labor, the interdisciplinary lens that I bring to this dance studies analysis draws upon methods and discourses from the social sciences, focusing on the key concepts of collaboration, institutionalization and practice. The project of *Duo*, as I shall show, is influenced by the dance field's shifting approaches to educating and employing dancers, as well as new attitudes to marketing and crediting the choreographic commodity. These reflect changing ideas about what choreography is and how it is made. Such factors are addressed in the substance of this book.

As pointed out by Petra Sabisch, sociologically inflected dance research focusing on the market and labor of dancing is still far rarer than analysis of aesthetic factors.<sup>43</sup> Beginning to enable comparison between the experimentation spearheaded by the free scene of performance makers vs. institutionalized (*Stadttheater*) ensembles in Germany, Gabriele Klein has written extensively on choreographer Pina Bausch's legacy, which I address further below. While articles about the production conditions of the Ballett Frankfurt period and the closure of the ensemble are an important part of scholarship on Forsythe's work, there has not yet been a detailed examination of the changing labor of Forsythe dancers across the different epochs of his process.<sup>44</sup> To illuminate these

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40 Klein and Kunst, "Introduction: Labour and Performance," p. 1. Cf. Kunst, *Artist at Work*; Laermans, *Moving Together*; Cvejić and Vujanović, "Exhausting Immaterial Labour," in particular pp. 4–5. Concentrating on the discourse of work in German theater, see Matzke, *Arbeit am Theater*.

41 Klein and Kunst, "Introduction: Labour and Performance," p. 1.

42 Illustrating examples, see Sabisch, "For a Topology of Practices," pp. 102–55.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

44 For example, the longstanding observations by Roslyn Sulcas, Gerald Siegmund and Steven Spier focus predominantly on the Ballett Frankfurt period and early work of The Forsythe Company. See section 1.1.3 The Current State of Research on Forsythe's Work.

conditions, the institutional frames of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company are foregrounded in Part I of this book.

I have chosen a topical rather than a chronological narrative for thinking with *Duo*. The perspective from which I reconstruct the *Duo* project as well as multiple vantage points within the history of *Duo*—and the gaps between these—will be made transparent within my arguments. In this way, I aim to inscribe a project history that escapes a simple chronological narrative of a single product evolving through a process: *Duo* as a vector. One alternative, according to dance scholar Christina Thurner, would be to define a complex “spatialized” historiography. This might take “as its starting point the enmeshed model of a network, or a choreographic contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous, rather than a straight light emerging from one starting point.”<sup>45</sup> Process, in this way, is shown to be an unfolding spread of relations, producing time, rather than a line of development.

These complex aspects of performance labor are richly considered in Gabriele Klein’s research on Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. In the same vein as Klein, my study of Forsythe’s companies likewise does not foreground one specific staging of a piece or the audience’s perspective, but rather deciphers “the relationality of work process, piece, performance and reception.”<sup>46</sup> In this book I place greater focus on the interplay of *performers*, processes, piece and performance—backgrounding reception for the sake of fuller analysis of these intricate cooperative layers. I also place lesser attention on the statements and intention of choreographer, to polemically open up further review of the dancers’ involvement and the generational factors of longstanding companies. In addition to these, my standpoint as a former Forsythe dancer foregrounds analysis of movement and embodiment. Despite these noteworthy differences, Klein’s praxeological production analysis has much in common methodically with my own approach.<sup>47</sup> I leave it to future scholars to make comparative readings of these important contemporaries: Bausch and Forsythe.

To round out my arguments and bring this section to a close, I return to the theme opened at the beginning: to produce scholarship not only *of* but also *with* the dancers. This section has examined how dance scholarship considers the many perspectives and forces at work in the construction of choreographic aesthetics, demonstrating that choreography and subjectivity are shifting and entwined. My research adds new dimensions to understanding the performers’ labor in Forsythe’s work, through production analysis linking reconstruction of the artists’ practices and self-reflection upon my own history as a Forsythe dancer. In this manner, I augment the discourse that thinks of choreography expansively, as more than an explicit, planned arrangement of human bodies put into motion by the decisional will of a choreographer-author and operating through repetition.

I believe that *choreography* is a powerful concept, allowing us to understand complex, moving formations. I am critical of the view of choreography as transpiring purely and

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45 Thurner, “Time Layers, Time Leaps, Time Lost. Methodologies of Dance Historiography,” p. 530.

46 See Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 14.

47 See Klein, “Die Logik der Praxis”; Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, pp. 361–80.



ephemerally in dance performance, nor do I agree that choreography is an explicit organizational order defined solely by rules and discipline. I dispute that dancers are mediators, interpreting a 'text' that the choreographer produced and the audience decodes, in a process of nonverbal communication. Rather, the view taken in this study is that the *Duo* project is framed by longstanding practice between the participants and the materialization of dancing together in chosen artistic contexts. I propose that choreography is an action of togetherness—through forces that modulate organizational potential and create structure over time—intertwining humans, materials, contexts and symbolic structures. Thus, rather than looking predominantly at the intention of the choreographer and the reception of the work, my research deciphers the flush of perspectives and distributed cooperative activities through which a choreography emerges.

### Processing Choreography

To process the choreography of *Duo*, as I endeavor here, is to define a mode of research that moves reflexively *from* and *with* my experience of *Duo's* practice as a dancer-researcher. While describing and contextualizing the changing manifestation of *Duo* in performance, my way of *processing choreography* devises a theoretical and methodological framework for improved study of dancers' perspectives and experiences—with the hope of further establishing in dance studies a "practice turn."<sup>48</sup> The fundamental research questions giving structure to my study are: How is the choreography of *Duo* enacted and understood by the dancers, *in practice*? And how does this change over time? Also, how do I enact and understand *Duo* as a dancer-researcher?

Rather than titling my book *Practicing Choreography*, by highlighting the term *process* in the title of this book I wish to bring to attention facets of practice that are especially foregrounded in process philosophy—aspects of temporality—described through becoming, emerging, changing, as well as through wholeness, openness, force and potentiality.<sup>49</sup> It was necessary not only to recover the dancers' activities, but to study *how* these changed over time within the project's two-decade history. It was also important for me to contextualize my research activities within a strongly self-reflexive stance by exploring how I was producing and inscribing this knowledge of dance practice.

Dance scholar Katarina Kleinschmidt rightly advocates that practice theory has to be "adapted" for dance studies, especially to make fruitful use of existing disciplinary knowledge of movement analysis, rehearsal and performance.<sup>50</sup> I pursue this in two ways: first, by contextualizing the dancers' testimonies within existing frameworks of movement analysis, and second by critically interrogating the terms performance and rehearsal. I also build upon scholar Gabriele Klein's previous writing defining the productive merging of praxeology and dance studies. Like myself, Klein defines dance practices not as "the movements of individual actors" but rather as "interdependent activ-

48 See Schatzki et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*.

49 See Helin et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Process Philosophy and Organizational Science*; also Rescher, *Process Philosophy*.

50 Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 36–37.

ities, organized by collectively shared, practical forms of knowledge.”<sup>51</sup> Turning away from choreography as a fixed organization, Klein considers creative and processual aspects in her writing. She explores, “how choreography can be created as an arrangement of bodies in time and space, not as rules, as law, as representation but as structure, produced performatively in a practice of rule-finding.”<sup>52</sup> My longitudinal analysis of *Duo* offers pragmatic comprehension of these complex issues.

The thesis that I will develop over the course of this manuscript is that *Duo* is a richly structured and evolving multiplicity. *Duo* is not only a product—that is, an artwork existing only in the act of performance—rather, it is a process of interwoven *creative* practices, both enduring and open to change. My emphasis on the term *creativity*, the subject of the last part of this manuscript, gives new insights into the generative ability of practices that are so critical to *Duo*.

## Sources & Methodology

According to dance scholar André Lepecki, dance studies hones the ability to analyze the “invisible forces” producing and produced via dance, requiring the scholar’s “close attention to the event.”<sup>53</sup> Like anthropologists, dance scholars pay critical attention to the different positions from which dance may be studied—writing as “insiders” or dance practitioners, versus “outsiders” or dance scholars, or even positions “beside” dance, such as those of a dramaturg.<sup>54</sup> Reflection upon the linkage of practice and theory is characteristic of different programs of study internationally, with regional differences that benefit the field as a whole.<sup>55</sup>

How is the choreography of *Duo* enacted, in practice? Blending methodology from dance studies and the social sciences, my investigation takes the form of a *reconstructive ethnography* of *Duo*’s world. This strongly empirical approach interweaves ethnography, interviews, practice-based methods, movement analysis and study of archival sources from Forsythe’s private document and video archive. In naming my approach a reconstructive ethnography, I point to the manner in which I intentionally link study of the recent past and encounters with the live presence of *Duo*. My manner of performing ethnography specifically and self-reflexively for this project is defined according to the research stance outlined in this section.

Ethnography is a well-established method within dance studies for learning of the “cultural knowledge” embodied in dance.<sup>56</sup> Combining the Greek *ethnos* (folk, people, race) and *graphy* (to write, to describe), ethnography is a technique used across the social sciences for documenting the knowledge and culture of social groups. Tim Ingold describes anthropology, one way of working with ethnographic methods, as going to

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51 See Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 359; more generally on the interface of practice theory and dance studies, see *ibid.*, pp. 350–80. See also Klein and Göbel, *Performance und Praxis*; Klein, “Die Logik der Praxis,” in particular pp. 134–39.

52 Klein, “The (Micro-)Politics of Social Choreography,” p. 199.

53 Lepecki cited in Clayton et al., “Inside/Beside Dance Studies,” p. 25.

54 See Clayton et al., “Inside/Beside Dance Studies.”

55 Cf. Giersdorf, “Dance Studies in the International Academy.”

56 See Sklar, “On Dance Ethnography,” p. 6. Cf. Buckland, *Dance in the Field*; Davida, *Fields in Motion*.

“study *with* people” and thereby to develop a close relation to one’s knowledge—a way of “knowing *from the inside*.”<sup>57</sup>

Anthropologists make close contact with their research subjects through the practice of ethnographic fieldwork—insisting this is fundamental to their knowledge production. They immerse themselves to gain access to and understand the meaning of cultural activities. According to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern: “The tradition of fieldwork meant that anthropologists learnt about systems by entering into relations with those whose social life they were studying.”<sup>58</sup> By entering into a relationship with the material being studied, the ethnographer uses her body as her instrument of learning as she develops social ties. Erving Goffman describes this work as “subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation.”<sup>59</sup> Anthropologists label this approach *participant observation*. This emphasizes their active role.<sup>60</sup>

While ethnography has historically involved cross-cultural encounters—typically of a white scholar researching a foreign folk—native, indigenous and insider accounts of ethnographers writing about their own communities have reappeared since the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> This genre of autoethnographic writing—interweaving autobiographical writing, personal narratives and ethnographic reflection on one’s own group—has productively challenged the insider/outsider dichotomy and questioned the interrelation of self and other.<sup>62</sup> As a dancer from the Forsythe lineage, my research into *Duo* is an example of autoethnography. While my writing foregrounds my fieldwork investigating *Duo*, I also draw from personal narratives and memories of my experience as a dancer, to reflexively develop knowledge of the group I danced with. Though I was not an active Forsythe dancer at the time of research, I had the social ties and sensorimotor skills to deeply investigate *Duo* dancers’ work. Even observing the shift and decline of my dancer expertise was helpful for my study, to clarify what changed by becoming a dance scholar and ethnographer.

Many dance anthropologists cite the advantage of having some form of dance training for their research.<sup>63</sup> They explain that this enables them to make faster contact with

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57 Ingold, *Making*, p. 2, p. 5 (italics in the original).

58 Strathern, *The Relation*, p. 13.

59 Goffman cited in Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, p. 3.

60 Tim Ingold stipulates that participant observation is an anthropological rather than an ethnographic method. He thereby distinguishes ethnography, as a documentary practice of learning ‘from’ people, from anthropology in which methods “open up a space for generous, open-ended, comparative yet critical inquiry into the conditions and potentials of human life.” See Ingold, *Making*, p. 4.

61 See McAuley, “Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal,” pp. 80–81; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, pp. 1–26; Reed-Danahay, *Auto/ethnography*, pp. 1–3.

62 See Reed-Danahay, *Auto/ethnography*.

63 Anthropologist Helena Wulff describes the benefits of her childhood experience in ballet for her study of ballet careers and culture. She foregrounds the already established lens for physical competences, the effect of possessing social capital during her fieldwork and her ability to gain access to material that might otherwise be excluded to the likely detriment of her scholarly writing; see

their community as well as to perceive movement acutely. How one senses, perceives and derives meaning from movement is known to change with expertise. Loïc Wacquant has demonstrated in his sociological investigation of boxing, *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (2006), that undergoing an apprenticeship can be advantageous for sociological study. Turning “participant observation” into “observant participation,” Wacquant’s apprenticeship enables him to penetrate the carnal experiences and relationships of the boxing gym in order to learn the “sweet science.”<sup>64</sup> He argues that observation alone could never discern the meticulous build-up of skill, the fast reflexes during the match, nor the glaring pain after a fight. Still he cautions:

My position [...] is to say, “go native” but “*go native armed*,” that is, equipped with your theoretical and methodological tools, with the full store of problematics inherited from your discipline, with your capacity for reflexivity and analysis, and guided by a constant effort, once you have passed the ordeal of initiation, *to objectivize this experience and construct the object*, instead of allowing yourself to be naively embraced and constructed by it. Go ahead, go native, but come back a sociologist!<sup>65</sup>

While a *Duo* apprenticeship was not possible for me, such dilation between experience and reflection, between my biography and the practices encountered in *Duo*, are critically assessed and interwoven in chapters that follow.<sup>66</sup>

My transformation into a dance ethnographer involved reading ethnographies and private consultation.<sup>67</sup> I learned the process of making interviews and maintaining a field diary of notes, in which “thick description” is used to inscribe the events of each day and reflect critically about what was observed and done.<sup>68</sup> Ethnographers have written

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Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 5–11. In anthropologist Caroline Potter’s work, her study of dancers’ sensation requires more than a distant view. Potter embeds herself as an anthropologist studying dance training that she actively participates in, relying on her previous experience as a dancer, including passing an audition to attend the school. See Potter, “Sense of Motion, Senses of Self.” Anthropologist Cynthia Novack learns and practices contact improvisation to write her ethnographic history of the form. She writes in particular about how her prior experience in other dance forms was constructive. See Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, in particular pp. 17–21.

Cf. Giersdorf, “Dance Studies in the International Academy.”

64 Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 6, p. 66.

65 Wacquant, “Habit as Topic and Tool,” pp. 87–88 (italics in the original). Wacquant’s approach to sociology, like Pierre Bourdieu’s, advocated and relied upon ethnographic contact, yet still valued reflexive objectivity, achieved through critical reflection upon experience and the construction of one’s object of knowledge.

66 An apprenticeship was not possible because The Forsythe Company had closed and there was no possibility for me to tour internationally with the *DUO2015* dancers.

67 I am grateful to Susanne Schmitt for her coaching.

68 Anthropologist Sharon Traweek defines thick description as “detailed attention” to factors such as “settings, language, tone of voice, posture, gestures, clothing, distance, arrangement of movable objects, and how this changes from one interaction to another.” Traweek, *Beamtimes and Lifetimes*, p. 9. Clifford Geertz, who expanded upon this term borrowed from Gilbert Ryle, writes: “The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts.” Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 28. Though the process of writing thick description is integral to Geertz’s view of culture as a meaningful realm of actions that is decoded via hermeneutics, it has served as a style of thinking that is useful to ethnographers in a broader sense. Writing thick description has been

extensively about the challenges of turning fieldwork experiences into written scholarly work, highlighting the ethical as well as the literary problems.<sup>69</sup> To generate sources for further reflection, I routinely made field notes to document *Duo* performances visited, rehearsals observed, workshops attended and interviews.

Participant observation and reflection therefore make ethnography different from other methods that prioritize data viewed with the “gaze from afar.”<sup>70</sup> Deciphering how the researcher’s perspective is formed and how this influences scholarly inscription is the substance of reflexive ethnography. Theater anthropologist Gay McAuley writes: “The fact that there is no such person as a neutral or transparent observer, and that any analysis and even any description will bear the imprint of its own cultural moment, does not, however, invalidate the record.”<sup>71</sup> Describing this negotiation, Margaret Mead referred to ethnography as “the balance between empathic involvement and disciplined detachment.”<sup>72</sup> The phases of ethnographic practice support this: coming into contact; then taking distance and reflecting; then returning to the field to observe again. Similar to what I have experienced, anthropologist Sharon Traweek describes her research as follows: “Whatever our subjects make of us and how they make use of us is continuously negotiated with what we make of them and how we make use of them [...]. It is in these highly situated encounters that we all are producing knowledges; we are both subject and object to each other, neither subjective nor objective.”<sup>73</sup>

Contemporary ethnography recognizes the many layers of what it means to observe and to find an event meaningful.<sup>74</sup> Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has described fieldwork as the “intersection” of the “multiple identities” of the social researcher, which themselves change through contact.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, as Rosaldo forecast, in my research my identities were multiple: as a dance scholar, Forsythe dancer, ex-dancer, ethnographer, as well as other identities I held that were important outside my research. By conceiving my research process as an embrace of switching modes and blending identities, I chose to strategically move between styles of participant observation, charting a multi-perspectival practice exploring the multiple realities of *Duo*’s site and enactment.

The name I prefer for my position as an ethnographer in this research is that of an *outsider-insider*: an insider as a former Forsythe dancer, yet an outsider because I also bear the motives of a scholar. Moreover, I have not performed *Duo* in the context of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. Thus, I am outside the microcosm of the

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adapted by ethnographers who highlight the sensory or affective dimensions of their research fields, taking issue with the predominance of the linguistic. I did not use thick description in the manner of a symbolic framework to systematically decode the conceptual structures of Forsythe dancers or *Duo* spectators—thinking that dance movement is a form of symbolic action. Rather my approach sought to explore different registers of sense and meaning-making, across signs and non-sign bases.

69 Cf. Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.

70 Wacquant, “Habitus as Topic and Tool,” p. 84.

71 McAuley, “Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal,” p. 80.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

73 Traweek, “Bodies of Evidence,” p. 211.

74 Gold, “Roles in Sociological Field Observations.”

75 Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth*, p. 194.

duet, always positioned as a third party or interloper. My status could also be described as a “buddy-researcher” blending the role of a researcher and friend.<sup>76</sup> In this regard, I used my familiarity to gain access to sources and people, and my status as researcher to ask for assistance in translating the dancers’ experiences and concepts into terms understandable to a wider public.

As an outsider-insider, I faced the challenges that ethnographers commonly face in writing up their studies: What points of view or content should I include and exclude? Whose knowledge is this, and which audience should it address? How do my choices in constructing a narrative do justice to my fieldwork accounts and render them intelligible to outsiders? How do I remain critical and show the limitations of these accounts, and not only serve to legitimize my informants’ agency and intelligence? I attempt to follow the advice of Clarke and Vionnet, who, when discussing knowledge production in anthropology, recommend “prolonging” their informants’ questions rather than writing about the ‘other.’<sup>77</sup> In the manuscript that follows, I pay tribute to the dancers’ experiences by *processing choreography* with them.

## Sources

Currently, Forsythe has no public archive, rendering access to materials difficult for scholars.<sup>78</sup> In June 2015, I was granted access to Forsythe’s private archive of materials from Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company—boxes of sorted materials within his office. I was permitted to make copies of relevant programs, company calendars (*Spielpläne*) and archival videos of *Duo*. The video sources discovered included 37 archival videos of *Duo* performances.<sup>79</sup> Archival videos were found of rehearsals filmed when creating *Duo* in 1996 and reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company in 2012. I used these exceptional materials as aids to reconstruct the dancers’ practice. I additionally attended live performances, workshops and rehearsals (2015–2018), obtaining video recordings, press materials, photographs and programs that I added to my collection.

The archival videos of *Duo* performances enabled a diachronic or longitudinal reading, supporting comparison across time spans and between different interpretations. Yet these sources have important limitations. Dance scholars Tamara Tomic-Vajagic and Christina Thurner have presented balanced analyses noting the benefits of video analysis while also critically reviewing how traces represent or *misrepresent* performance—through the quality of the recording, the camera’s specific gaze upon the event and the absence of live and contextual cues.<sup>80</sup> One benefit of video performance analysis

76 See Snow et al., “Fieldwork Roles and Informational Yield.” Cf. Corte, “A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory.”

77 Translation by the author. See Vionnet and Clarke, “Prolonger plutôt que restituer.”

78 Forsythe’s documents are currently in storage, with the intent to make them available to the public in the future. I reference the current titles of the archival recordings in Appendix F, section 1 to aid future reference.

79 These are unedited videos made by Forsythe’s team for the purpose of internal documentation and use.

80 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer’s Contribution*, pp. 73–76 and Thurner, “Prekäre physische Zone.”

for my purposes was triangulation: that is, in the comparison of the changing appearance of the choreography, shifting over time, with the dancers' accounts and memories of their embodied experience.<sup>81</sup>

A praxeological production analysis similar to the one engaged in here has previously been sketched by dance scholar Gabriele Klein, for *Das Frühlingsopfer (The Rite of Spring)* from Pina Bausch. One challenge Klein notes within her analysis is the sheer expanse of data, performances and participants involved in a large group piece for 16 pairs (32 dancers) with over 300 performances.<sup>82</sup> One benefit of choosing *Duo* is that the smaller scale of a duet enabled the whole network of dancers to be considered—spanning the perspectives of all eleven dancers who have learned this work in the contexts of Forsythe's ensembles. Yet the extensive video record of *Duo* nonetheless proved too large to study rigorously, when considered in addition to the rehearsals and my interviews with the dancers.

## Key Performances

In order to reduce the complete set of 37 performance videos of *Duo* to a smaller yet representative subset to enable closer study, a cross section was used.<sup>83</sup> This limited the study to a set of seven *key performances*, which spanned the history of the piece in a representative manner (from 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2013, 2015, 2016, see Appendix F). These key performances were not necessarily the best or most ideal performances of *Duo*—which would in any case be difficult to assess. Rather they were selected to explore the diversity of the piece. *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts assisted with the selection process.<sup>84</sup> According to a “mixed methods” research approach, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are valued on equal terms, my approach to video analysis blended ethnographic and quantitative methodology of information visualization.<sup>85</sup> The details of this approach are provided in section 9.2.

## Fieldwork & Interviews

It is difficult to talk about what we experimented with [in *Duo*]. Because you need to live it. Someone who has lived it will see the difference. This [performance] is the product. It is hard to say that “this is what it is.” Because if we will do it tomorrow, then we will

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81 Further elaboration on my methodology is provided in Chapter 9.

82 See Klein, “Die Logik der Praxis,” p. 131.

83 A cross section is a term used in the natural sciences and mathematics, medicine, as well as architecture and design. It refers to a cut of the material or body. When a cross section is well chosen, it can be a pragmatic way to make inferences about the whole.

84 The criteria for selection were: (i) to foreground the artists who have danced *Duo* most frequently, (ii) to reflect these performers' entry into the piece, maturation and their shifting partnerships, in order to study their interpretation, (iii) to capture the variation of the choreographic structure and the range of *Duo* performances within different theatrical settings, and (iv) to select recordings with the highest quality audio and video. The later varied extensively between the two decades, marking the shift of documentation practice from film to HD.

85 Johnson et al., “Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research.”

go even further. Or this is not that anymore. It is *this*, because it is traveling ... being in constant change and listening.<sup>86</sup>

Early on in my work, this conversation with dancer Brigel Gjoka laid out many of the problems that I would face as a researcher. It was my task to contemplate what was ineffable and difficult to observe from outside of *Duo*—a shifting and live logic of emotional and fleshy process. My fieldwork, using a choreography as a location or site, was unconventional, as was my focus on the dancers' practice in both the present and the past. To learn intimately about the dancers' work, I defined frames in which I could take part in the dancers' reconstruction of *Duo*. This required experimentation with ethnographic and interview methodology.

The activities of my fieldwork are listed in Appendix E. For one year (2016–2017), I cooperated with three primary dancers: *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts, and Forsythe dancer Cyril Baldy, who had served as a ballet master for *Duo* in the staging for the CCN – Ballet de Lorraine in 2015.<sup>87</sup> I also travelled to meet in person with four further dancers who have danced *Duo*, and reached another two dancers by phone/video-conference. Most of my interviews were duets between a dancer and myself, mirroring the primary constellation of *Duo*. When possible, I engaged with pairs of *Duo* dancers in joint interviews. Additionally, with each dancer I conducted a semi-structured interview, focusing on their biographies, the circumstances surrounding their joining Forsythe's companies, their experience with *Duo* and the occupational culture of Ballet Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.<sup>88</sup>

There were obvious limitations to the format of a sit-down interview for learning about doing *Duo*—some dancers also wanted to think *through* their bodies. To further understand these corporeal and relational aspects, four methods were developed that relied on interview elicitation and prompts.<sup>89</sup> These were named *studio sessions*, *teaching sessions*, *talk-through sessions* and *data-review sessions*. Given the impossibility to talk with any dancer directly while performing (or to interview them officially before or after) and the tendency for the dancers to describe *Duo* in terms of the ideals of what one should do, as opposed to the concrete difficulties, these elicitations enriched my understanding of *Duo's* practice. Further information on these approaches is provided below:

*Studio sessions* took place in a dance studio, using the artistic context as a form of emplacement and memory prompt. I asked the dancers to physically teach me aspects of *Duo* and to 'show-tell-include' me in what was important in dancing *Duo*. These activities gave me sensory, kinesthetic and affective access to doing *Duo*, putting me in relation to the dancers and letting me learn with and from my body. Here I discovered the terms that the dancers had for their tacit know-how, while sensing their logic with my body. The sessions allowed me to perceive something that I could not know from spectatorship or oral testimony alone.

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86 Brigel Gjoka, interview in Dresden, March 6, 2016.

87 The dancers were paid for these full days of investment.

88 The structure of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix E, section 9.

89 On elicitation see Harper, "Talking About Pictures."



*Teaching sessions:* To come closer to the practice between experienced *Duo* pairs, I observed a workshop in which a pair of dancers passed on aspects of the choreography to novices.<sup>90</sup> This permitted me to watch the pairs move together from a much closer vantage point than when I observed them dance on stage. Another advantage of such a context is that the young adults learning *Duo* were apprentices going through the process of skill development. This revealed implicit aspects that expert Forsythe dancers were not aware that the duet relied on—such as sensorimotor skills pertaining to Forsythe’s repertoire at large, and their extensive shared history as partners.

*Talk-through sessions* made use of the extensive video archive and my selection of key performances. I asked the dancers to watch a key video of a *Duo* performance and to talk freely in real time; often we dialogued about what we observed and found important, or surprising. By this means, I absorbed the words and concepts that the dancers had for their tacit know-how and their abilities to read the performance based upon their practice. Building up trust with the dancers, I was also able to discern what can go wrong in performance.

*Data-review sessions* were used to explore further questions emerging in my research. Inviting the dancers to review specific archival video sources, I asked targeted questions about moments in a performance video, for example: How did you coordinate the synchrony shown at this moment? Did you give a cue here? How did you coordinate this alignment? This enabled detailed study of the dancers’ interaction and cross-comparison of dancers’ answers.

Two further techniques I used for gathering information in my fieldwork were strategic usage of quotations and statements. I used these techniques to learn if the dancers had the same terminology for their physical experiences and whether pairs or dancers with the same role shared a common understanding. In undertaking this technique, I would cite information that another dancer had told me, or explain my own perspective, and then ask what my informant thought, or simply wait to hear how they would respond.<sup>91</sup> So as not to unduly bias my study, this approach was used only after semi-structured interviews in which I listened and did not dialogue with the artists. Through discerning use of these techniques, my fieldwork started to show a web of perspectives on the same moments and events.

Additional interviews helped to grasp a wider sense of the team’s practice: with the composer Thom Willems, pianist David Morrow, dancer Dana Caspersen and long-standing employee of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main*, Bruni Marx. I chose to interview Forsythe last, to ensure that my work with the dancers would take precedence—not to give him the final word.<sup>92</sup>

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90 These workshops took place with advanced dance students in a pre-professional training program at *Arts Factory International* in Bologna, Italy, with dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka.

91 From this, I agree with scholar Ute Corte that strategic use of quotations and statements is valuable: “to trigger longer accounts and reactions to what it [sic] is described in the excerpt; second, to triangulate the validity of their contents; and third, to learn about sensitive matters by giving a pretext to approach the topic and ultimately providing a way of inducing extensive and sincere answers.” Corte, “A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory,” p. 31.

92 Ethnographer Georgiana Born describes similar decision making in her ethnography of IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music), which was then directed by the founder

Citations of these interviews and my fieldwork notes are included in the final manuscript, as is common in ethnographic writing. To give the dancers' testimony prominence, in addition to short citations of evidence, long citations are indented and formatted with a special font, to highlight them for the reader.<sup>93</sup> The decision not to anonymize the informants' stories was made with their consent—or in most cases, the dancers' explicit wish to be acknowledged. Sensitive material has been anonymized and is identified as such.

## Overview

The study is organized in three parts. Each part opens with a short review of the existing research.

Part I (chapters 1–5), titled *Art World*, develops an ethnographic portrait of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, interwoven with a close consideration of Howard Becker's concept of "art worlds," as cited in the title. The inflection of this writing is sociological. Chapter 1 begins with an overview of William Forsythe's biography, positioning this study within the current Forsythe scholarship, and providing a short review of his teamwork with the dancers. Chapter 2 describes the infrastructural and material conditions of labor in these institutions, concluding with an interpretation of the spatial acoustics of *Duo's* music. Chapter 3 outlines the dancers' transnational career paths and dance backgrounds, highlighting their diversity. Chapter 4 zooms in upon the dancers' practices, showing the tension between creative work and routines of rehearsing, training and touring. I conclude in chapter 5 with a chronology of *Duo's* performance history, substantiating *Duo's* art world.

Part II (chapters 6–9), titled *Movement*, considers the dancers' movement practices. Chapter 6 begins with investigation of one movement, the curious example of *showerhead*, following how this movement is mastered, conceptualized and passed down through time—individually and collectively. In chapter 7, I turn to some of the material and relational aspects of *Duo's* movement, drawing upon Erin Manning's philosophy of *relational movement*. In chapter 8, I analyze the dancers' rhythmical *entrainment*, exploring how this practice reconfigures the modes of synchronization enacted in ballet. I conclude in chapter 9 with an overview of the movement principles of *Duo*, which gives further concepts for relational components. I also chart the movement of *Duo* longitudinally, visualizing the piece's structure and change over time.

Part III (chapters 10–11) discusses the concept of *Creation* and specifies the creative forces within the dancers' labor. In chapter 10, I investigate the creation process during the making of *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt in 1996, providing a vivid, chronological account. My reconstructive ethnography emphasizes how the artists work contingently

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and distinguished composer Pierre Boulez. She writes, "it has seemed to me far more to the point to report the representation of Boulez, and the sense of his impact, through informants' testimony and my own observations rather than to invite being overwhelmed by his own authoritative, and better-known, account of things." Born, *Rationalizing Culture*, p. 9.

93 To highlight the difference between omitted phrases and the speaker's incomplete sentences, the former is designed by bracketed ellipses and the latter by unbracketed ellipses.

and relationally, investing in both the potentiality of the emerging piece as well as one another. Chapter 11 concludes the study with a longitudinal analysis of the dancers' re-enactment of *Duo*, from 1996 to 2016, highlighting the interrelated activities of learning, reconstructing, rehearsing and performing. This final chapter offers extensive analysis of the dancers' own perspectives on *Duo's* emergence as a project. I conclude the manuscript with a chapter synthesizing the findings of *Processing Choreography*.

## **PART I - ART WORLD**



## Introduction to Part I: Art World

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To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.

—Arthur Danto (1964)<sup>1</sup>

Danto's well-known article, published in the *Journal of Philosophy* in 1964, coins the term the “artworld” and develops a philosophical approach to the sociology of arts. Danto showed that artworks were not solely artefacts given meaning by the labor of the artist, but were rather contextually embedded processes involving many people (such as curators, critics and collectors) who also contribute to a work's meaning in significant ways. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, first in philosophy and then in sociology, the factors of artistic distribution and valuation were added to the study of aesthetics and production, shifting the focus to looking at how these assemblages—or art worlds—function dynamically in society. Art worlds have been considered as institutions (Danto), interactions (Becker), fields (Bourdieu), networks (Latour), systems and communications (Luhmann).<sup>2</sup>

Within dance studies, the influence of institutions, critics, discourse and production conditions upon dance works is well established.<sup>3</sup> Gerald Siegmund's scholarship has, in particular, looked at how Forsythe's work was tied to the resources and politics of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main* (municipal theater of Frankfurt) and the ideology of ballet. Siegmund writes: “Forsythe's development as an artist has always been related to questions of the institution, which he in turn questioned.”<sup>4</sup> *Duo*, as a work made in the context of the Ballett Frankfurt, reconstructed in The Forsythe Company and touring since 2015 with the performances arranged by the Sadler's Wells Theatre of London, has been shaped by contact with all these different institutions, in a dynamic process that has lasted over two decades. The focus of this section is *Duo's* art world: a

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1 Danto, “The Artworld,” p. 580.

2 Van Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds*, pp. 7–10.

3 Hardt and Stern, *Choreographie und Institution*; Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*; Sabisch, “For a Topology of Practices”; Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*.

4 In Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” p. 23.

web of institutions, artists and contexts of production and performance. Rather than a singular work shaped only by the intentions of the choreographer and the original dancers with whom he made the piece, I wish to show how the choreography of *Duo* emerges through a network of people's activities, in cooperation shaped by the contexts in which they work. Borrowing from Howard Becker's study of art worlds and focusing upon the activities involved in production and distribution, I show how the choreography of *Duo* is interlaced with organization happening on many levels—supported by the resources and routines of institutionalized practice.

My motivation is to chronicle and analyze the history of *Duo*'s institutional enmeshment. To arrive there by chapter 5, I slowly conduct an intricate institutional autopsy: gently unpacking the organization in which this project was embedded, layer-by-layer. Like the systems of a human body, these strata are also overlapping, integrated and best observed living. Yet the ensembles of Ballett Frankfurt (1984–2004) and The Forsythe Company (2005–2015) can now only be reconstructed at a distance, as they are now institutions of the past—organizations living as memories within the people who constituted and shaped them. For readers seeking information beyond the case study of *Duo*, this section provides a historiography of the ensembles of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company—a history (re)written from my perspective—shaped through my interviews, review of the literature and my history as a Forsythe dancer. My writing is also marked by the emphasis I lay upon the art world concept, warranting the slow approach necessary to unpack the elaborate cooperative framework. The next chapters will bring into focus: the central figure of choreographer William Forsythe; the ensembles' infrastructural and financial conditions; the dancers' transnational and professional histories and finally the dancers' artistic practices. Through this, we learn how the production of choreographic works—including *Duo*—dynamically constitutes an occupational culture, engendering an entwinement of dancer, institution, context and choreography.

## Chapter 1: Ensemble: William Forsythe & Team

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I wanted to get it [DUO2015] out there because it is an unusual use of ballet. All the movements are based on the classical vocabulary, although it offers an alternative structuring of academic material. It creates a place where ballet can thrive, without set, costumes, orchestra. It relies on the proportioned organization of ballet. It is a work to be listened to as well as watched. You can hear it ticking.

—William Forsythe<sup>1</sup>

William Forsythe (b. 1949) is arguably one of the most significant and controversial choreographers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—someone who has taken the tradition of ballet in unexpected directions, bringing it into contact with other mediums and exploring its limits and ability for aesthetic renewal. Forsythe's pieces have become a coveted part of the artistic canon, performed by ballet and contemporary dance companies internationally. This circulating and visible repertoire is, however, only a fraction of his entire corpus of work—missing many pieces made with his ensembles Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company between 1984 and 2015.

During this period Forsythe's works operated at the margins of ballet, where they reinvented and subverted many aspects of the dance art form. Dance critic Roslyn Sulcas writes “the word ‘ballet’ doesn't instantly come to mind when looking at the work of William Forsythe.” Rather, she observes, the dancers “move in undefinable ways, their bodies arcing and convulsing around invisible forms, their limbs swerving in contrary directions and their movements apparently refracted from one part of the body to another with no implicit reference to any predetermined dance vocabulary.”<sup>2</sup> Already within Forsythe's first piece for the Ballett Frankfurt, *Gänge* (1983), dance scholar Gerald Siegmund observes the trajectory that Forsythe will follow for the subsequent decades:

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1 Interview of William Forsythe with Sarah Crompton, published in the program text for *A Quiet Evening of Dance*. See Crompton, “A Different Focus.”

2 Sulcas, “Using Forms Ingrained in Ballet to Help the Body Move Beyond It,” p. 11.



“The examination of one’s own profession, i.e. the classical ballet, its laws and production conditions, as well as the cooperation with the dancers, who with their own ideas, their own creativity, personality and movement intelligence in the pieces become partners of the choreographer.”<sup>3</sup> Forsythe’s choreographies have questioned each layer of the theatrical apparatus: from movement design, to musicality, narrative, scenic elements (setting, light, costumes), the dancers’ role and the principles of organizing all of these in space and time.

Perhaps because of the way that these pieces prompt an immediate visceral response and evade intellectual synthesis, dance and theater scholars have written avidly about them. They have interpreted and theorized Forsythe’s intellectually sophisticated assemblies of movement, signs and multimedia. Describing how these works overturn the conventions of ballet and theater performance, scholars have grappled with Forsythe’s references to deconstruction, postmodernism and post-structuralism. Studying the American reception of Forsythe’s choreographies, dance scholar Mark Franko has examined the varied reactions of critics and spectators to Forsythe’s ballets: ranging from jubilation to hostility.<sup>4</sup> Forsythe’s pieces have, overall, been loudly received—garnering both laudatory praise and livid denunciation.

In this chapter, I will introduce the genre of dance that William Forsythe has fostered by interpreting his biographical statements, summarizing the existing discourse on this work and considering *Duo* dancers’ testimonials about their teamwork *with* Forsythe. As an ensemble, Forsythe and his team were able to create challenging works—nearly one hundred pieces—that have “enlarged our notions of what the art form [of ballet] can do both physically and theatrically.”<sup>5</sup> Relevant questions raised by Forsythe’s nearly four decades of choreography include: What defines the limits and operation of ballet as an aesthetic and occupational culture? How coherent was the tradition of ballet and how do these threads of tradition engage with contemporary renditions? Can the aesthetic of ballet in performance retain the rigor of traditional technique and yet be inhabited by different rules of discipline, social order and power structures? *Duo* offers us a case study to think these questions through—enabling us to critically explore the nexus (of artists, practices, materials, beliefs, discourses and institutions) that enables ballets to be remade and rethought.

## 1.1 William Forsythe

### 1.1.1 Forsythe’s Biography

Forsythe’s personal history as a ballet dancer gives insight into his temperament towards the balletic oeuvre, which is both loving and critical. In an interview in 1991, Forsythe explains:

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3 Translation by the author. Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” p. 16.

4 See Franko, “Splintered Encounters.”

5 Sulcas, “Using Forms Ingrained in Ballet to Help the Body Move Beyond It,” p. 11.

I love movement. I love dancing. I care enough about dancing enough to risk the other stuff I do. I see the apparent potential of ballet because, first of all, so many people know it. It's like a language. Ballet can't just stop evolving now. There must be a way to imagine new approaches. [...] A lot of people from different disciplines, strangely enough, seem to understand what I am doing and that I am definitely concerned with ballet.<sup>6</sup>

Unusually Forsythe began practicing ballet late—beginning not as a child or teenager as is common for success in this physically demanding profession, but at the age of 18. Despite this, he remembers himself as a child who was “always dancing.” Born in 1949 and raised in Long Island, New York Forsythe describes his disposition to dance as a child as follows:

First dancing I remember is ... pretending I was Fred Astaire, and pretending I had Ginger Rogers. And doing a ballroom dance for my parents. [...] They said, “do it again.” And I did it again, and the sunlight was streaming in and it was late afternoon on a summer day. It was a relatively modern house, it was a split level. That's what I remember. Then I remember splitting my head on the coffee table because I was dancing so wildly, also at the age of something before ten. And (*emphasizing each word*) always dancing. Just literally I was ... I just was always dancing, that's all. Then putting on music and dancing. Just ... just dancing. And then we moved when I was eleven. And the only way I felt confident in the new high school was to win all the dance contests. So, that was “The Twist” and the “Mashed Potato.”<sup>7</sup>

Forsythe's teenage memories of dancing give insight into what he finds meaningful in dance, upon a personal level. These are what I would call *relational* qualities, qualities which bring him in relation to other entities—through his imagination, amidst a constellation of relatives and their attention on him, recalling an imaginary partner, perceiving the movement of light, remembering the architecture of the space, and feeling the groove of dancing to the music. These remembered attributes suggest that dancing for Forsythe is not fundamentally an expression of one body, but composed of relational qualities of moving in concert with others in an environment. The discipline, control and form that would come later through his dance studies are initially not part of Forsythe's dancing experience.

As a young man in the late 1950s and 60s, Forsythe danced socially, influenced by mainstream rock 'n' roll and television programs, such as *American Bandstand*. Rock 'n' roll was a very different sort of dancing to classical ballet—involving improvisation, electric music and learning-by-doing. Dancers, moving as individuals and freed from specific male-female vocabulary, danced in a manner that appeared unrestrained and uninhibited, with movements that engaged the pelvis and released energy freely in many directions. It was an expression of American culture and also an active force, shaping Americans' understanding of their identity. Considering this, dance scholar

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6 Driver and the Editors of *Ballet Review* (hereafter, Driver et al.), “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 86.

7 Mike Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 3:00–4:00.

Cynthia Novack writes, “Along with the rock music of the period, dancing both reinforced and crystalized an image of the self: independent yet communal, free, sensual, daring.”<sup>8</sup>

The impact of rock ‘n’ roll culture upon Forsythe was as significant as his first dance experience. First, it was a form imbued with African American attributes: polyrhythms, coolness and a rejection of the doctrine of vertical alignment. Forsythe recounts fluidly crossing boundaries to dance with black students (“I was the only white kid allowed to dance with the black kids”), sharing the pleasure of learning to groove.<sup>9</sup> As a young man, he also took on his first choreographic projects, developing his high school musicals. Forsythe’s body politic was thus shaped by the American cultural heritage of the late 1950s and 60s. This influenced his musicality, giving him experience with improvisation, and supported his investigation of movement in a collective egalitarian plane in which individual kinesthetic experience was still important. I highlight these aspects of his biography to shed a different light upon what Forsythe has said often in public statements, namely that ballet is his “mother tongue” or that he “feels like a native ballet speaker.”<sup>10</sup> While Forsythe surely is fluent in ballet, it is important to remember that he gained this fluency after primary (national, familial, class) and secondary (pedagogical) formation.<sup>11</sup> This background is also a resource that he draws on and returns to. Late acculturation, as well as his first dance experiences in American social dance and musicals are factors that may have enabled him to be more resistant and critical towards ballet ideology or, one could say, to have resources of an outsider that better qualified him to invent and lead a social movement transforming the ballet genre.

Forsythe began the discipline of technical dance training when he entered Jacksonville University in 1967, learning American styles of ballet and modern dance technique, and choosing a major in theater (practice) and a minor in art history.<sup>12</sup> After two years, he left Jacksonville University to further study ballet at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York City. At night he watched the neoclassical ballets of George Balanchine (1904–1984) performed by the New York City Ballet, which Forsythe states were a seminal influence upon his view of choreography.<sup>13</sup> Balanchine’s work explored abstraction, musicality and rhythm, appropriating aspects of African American music and dance present in New York City at that time.<sup>14</sup> Forsythe was thus part of a predominantly Caucasian and privileged community learning ballet discipline and performing classical ballets in New York, but he also grooved and jived in ways reflective of the multicultural, urban culture of New York City. He was a latecomer to ballet, a movement

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8 Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, p. 38. On rock ‘n’ roll see *ibid.*, pp. 33–38.

9 Forsythe interviewed by Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 94.

10 Tusa, “Interview with William Forsythe”; Crompton, “A Different Focus.”

11 On primary and secondary habitus see Wacquant, “*Homines in Extremis*,” p. 7.

12 Email correspondence with William Forsythe, March 26, 2019.

13 Driver, “The Life, So Far,” p. 10.

14 Dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild makes the provocative argument, “And any white choreographer you name, from Bob Fosse to Bill Forsythe, is somehow using black aesthetic riches as their own.” See Gottschild, “The Black Dancing Body as a Measure of Culture,” p. 51. On “appropriation” see also Gottschild, “Stripping the Emperor.”

polyglot, highly sociable and (as many of my interviewees reminded me) precociously clever.

In 1971 Forsythe was promoted to be a company member at the Joffrey Ballet and in 1973 he joined the Stuttgart Ballet, chosen by John Cranko shortly before his untimely death.<sup>15</sup> Within the highly international ensemble of dancers that Cranko had established, Forsythe's career as a ballet maker took flight. In 1976, his first choreographic work, *Urlicht*, was a duet for himself and his first wife, Eileen Brady, to the 4<sup>th</sup> movement of Mahler's 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony. He was subsequently given the position of resident choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet, which enabled him to both perform and make work for the company. One informant remembered 'Billy' as always traveling with a stack of books, an indication of how keenly he read—reading diverse material such as dance analyst Rudolf von Laban, semiotician Roland Barthes, and writer/filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet, among others.<sup>16</sup> Forsythe eventually left this post to focus upon making choreography.

In the early 1980s, Forsythe worked internationally, choreographing pieces for the Stuttgart Ballet, Bavarian State Opera Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater, Joffrey Ballet, Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris and the Frankfurt Ballet. These works, with titles such as *Say Bye Bye* and *'Tis A Pity She's A Whore*, earned him a strong reputation as an avant-garde choreographer. In a laudatory review for the *New York Times* in 1982, American dance critic Anne Kisselgoff praises Forsythe—America's new “talent” for choreography. She also describes the challenge of viewing his recent work:

*Say bye-bye* [sic] is a kind of ballet not yet created in the United States. It is relevant to note that Mr. Forsythe, who began choreographing in 1977 [sic], has been working in Germany and the Netherlands. After seeing *Say bye-bye*, [sic] the director of a major American ballet troupe said he would like Mr. Forsythe to do a work for his company “but not so violent.”<sup>17</sup>

Ballet was, and is, a transnational phenomenon, and it has, as a consequence, a history of different styles and aesthetics, as remarked upon in Kisselgoff's review.<sup>18</sup> Forsythe was a New Yorker immersed in a European context in which there was considerable internationalism. His ballets made use of this motley character and influences.

Having worked with the municipal ballet company in Frankfurt in 1983, Forsythe became Artistic Director of the Ballett Frankfurt in 1984, and additionally General Director (*Intendant*) in 1989, molding and directing this company under quite stable and lucrative conditions for two decades. Under Forsythe's direction, the Ballett Frankfurt became a company of high international status, performing 'ballets' which were contemporary, critical and provocative. In these two decades, Forsythe's works crossed genres, making ballets, a musical, multimedia performance-installations, films and cultivating knowledge-production projects.

15 Choreographer John Cranko was Artistic Director of the Stuttgart Ballet from 1961–1973.

16 Kisselgoff, “Dance View: Forsythe's ‘Say Bye-Bye’ [sic] Startles and Excites,” p. 8.

17 Ibid.

18 See section 3.3 Transnational Careers.

After complex political negotiation with the city of Frankfurt in 2004, the city closed the Ballett Frankfurt, much to the dismay of many participants and an international community of support. The following year Forsythe opened The Forsythe Company, a smaller dance company working more broadly in the field of contemporary dance and performance, based between the cities of Frankfurt and Dresden. In the subsequent decade, Forsythe was to use the structure of his dance company to support the development of his “choreographic objects,” which circulated in the form of solo exhibitions within frameworks and institutions of the visual arts—such as the Venice Biennale, the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, and the Gagosian Gallery in Paris.<sup>19</sup>

In 2015, at the age of 66, Forsythe resigned from his post as Artistic Director of The Forsythe Company, enabling him to work more flexibly across the fields of dance, dance education and art. He resumed work with various ballet companies that same year, staging existing repertoire and choreographing new pieces. This reflected a return to his “mother tongue” of ballet.<sup>20</sup> Forsythe continues to make works that offer the dancers new liberties. Forsythe explains: “it’s got really to be done by people who have a discursive relationship with what they are dancing, rather than just ‘performing’ it. I say to the dancers, you must make a discourse when you dance. You have to make a re-affirmation of ballet and yet at the same time bring into question how ballet is danced.”<sup>21</sup>

### 1.1.2 Choreography, Dance and Counterpoint

I do always keep in mind this idea of counterpoint, which I seem to see everywhere. I see it accidentally in Merce Cunningham. I see it very consciously in Trisha Brown. You see it in all forms of classical dancing, its apotheosis being with [George] Balanchine and great stuff with [Marius] Petipa. Of course, in music it’s still used. Hip-hop uses counterpoint, big time. So, I think that there is something—a principle embedded in music that ... we’re looking for patterns. We like to identify patterns, even subconscious patterns like harmony. We don’t even need to think about [it]. Our body recognizes it. And in this case [*Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*], part of the joy of viewing is staying curious about where this structure is going. What is it? Is it talking about itself? Does it talk of itself? Is it talking about other things?<sup>22</sup>

The longitudinal study of *Duo* undertaken here considers the practices of choreography and dancing across the activities of making, rehearsing, performing, touring and re-constructing a choreography. The distinction between dancing and choreography follow from Forsythe. He writes: “Choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices. In the case that choreography and dance coincide, choreography often

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19 See Forsythe, “Choreographic Objects”; see Gaensheimer and Kramer, *William Forsythe: The Fact of the Matter*.

20 See Tusa, “Interview with William Forsythe.”

21 William Forsythe, interview with Ismene Brown in Frankfurt, October 2000. See Brown, “Artifact, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Sadler’s Wells.”

22 Unpublished interview with William Forsythe conducted by Thierry de Mey in Frankfurt, April 13, 2006, transcribed by me in 2006 for the project *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*.

serves as a channel for the desire to dance.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, in the best case, dance flows in the constraints enabled by choreography. Dancing, which Forsythe described in his memories of childhood as improvised and at times wild, is different for him than processes of organization, through which he produces a choreographic work as an adult. What I believe Forsythe emphasizes with this distinction between dance and choreography, and what I shall continue to reflect upon in this manuscript, are different means of relationality: how dancing (combining imagination, personal connection, relation, light and improvisation) is more emergently organized than Forsythe’s planned and constructed works of art (which are also, as I shall stress, *relational constructions*). It is the purpose of this publication to further explore these distinctions, as consequent for the experience of the dancers in enacting *Duo*.

An important aspect of Forsythe’s choreographic practice is *counterpoint*—a term Forsythe has appropriated from music, where its historic origins lie in the emergence of polyphony as the overlay of voices.<sup>24</sup> Through collaboration with scholars at The Ohio State University on the case study of counterpoint in his stage work *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, Forsythe defined counterpoint in organizational terms as “a field of action in which the intermittent and irregular coincidence of attributes between organizational elements produces an ordered interplay.”<sup>25</sup> In an interview with director Mike Figgis around 1994, Forsythe explained more candidly what he means, by choreography and counterpoint:

It’s not about steps anyway. Choreography is about organization. Either you’re organizing the body or your organizing bodies with other bodies. Or a body with other bodies in an environment that is organized. And there are these framings of organization. For me, this seems to be the challenge of choreography at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when I look at those colleagues who I really admire.<sup>26</sup>

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23 Forsythe, “Choreographic Objects,” p. 90. The distinction between dance, choreography and performance has been a critical theme in contemporary European dance since the 1990s. By the time that Forsythe writes this statement in 2008, the field of European contemporary dance is richly questioning the extent to which choreography can take place without problematizing or critically reforming dance—leading to extensive scholarship that examines these concerns. Rudi Laermans discusses this with regard of the legacy of postmodern dance and the rise of “reflexive dance”; see Laermans, *Moving Together*, in particular pp. 203–12. Pirkko Husemann’s writing investigates the critical choreography of Xavier Le Roy and Thomas Lehmen during this period, drawing from the theoretical perspective of Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory; see Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*. For a discussion of how this transformation has changed working practice and production conditions, see Sabisch, “For a Topology of Practices.”

24 *Counterpoint* is a term dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century meaning the “combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines according to a system of rules.” See Sachs and Dalhaus, “Counterpoint.” The term is often used as a synonym for polyphony. Distinctions may be made about whether the voices make an equal contribution or are organized hierarchically, as well as the extent to which the voices form a whole through their relations, or achieve complexity through layering/chance. See Frobenius et al., “Polyphony.”

25 Forsythe and Shaw, “Introduction: The Dance.”

26 Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 4:20–5:00.

While Forsythe's art of making counterpoint is specific to his aesthetic, the above understanding of choreography as a practice of organizing bodies in space and time remains pervasive in the field of contemporary dance.<sup>27</sup> As noted by performance maker and scholar Bojana Cvejić, by 1998 Forsythe shifts this definition to "organizing things in space and time," anticipating an expanded thinking of choreography involving non-humans, and movements beyond those initially envisioned as dance.<sup>28</sup>

Dance scholar Vass-Rhee concurs: "Forsythe's works apply improvisation as a generative and augmentative strategy, problematizing both ideas of *choreography* as pre-established sequences of steps and of *choreographer* as the individual who establishes these orders."<sup>29</sup> Rather Forsythe's practice of choreography, as I shall show, may produce arrangement upon many scales and across registers: within the body, between bodies, and within an environment which itself may be organized (containing light, sound, props, texts, costumes and stage elements). To achieve the complexity that interests him, Forsythe explains his approach of having to work from the inside:

It has to do with the fact that you cannot organize these things from outside. Because you can only perceive these events, because they are very complicated, from the inside. You have to be inside the event to notice enough to make a counterpoint like that work, at least the way we work here.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to Forsythe's claim that his events are organized through being inside, this study aims to explore this insider view—to understand how dancing together and becoming organized take place—how dancing and choreography interlace and bifurcate. Choreographic organization and social organization are entwined within Forsythe's understandings of dance and choreography. Through thinking with *Duo*, I seek to investigate this concretely: examining the dancers' practices of *Duo* and drawing theoretical insight from dance and practice theories. I ask: What explains the forces of dancing and choreography as processes that enable organization to emerge and also change? How do they unfold within Forsythe's work and working processes? What understanding of the social can be used to explain this?

### 1.1.3 The Current State of Research on Forsythe's Work

Ample scholarly writing has focused upon analysis of Forsythe's choreographic works and working processes, using Forsythe's plentiful interviews as key sources for interpreting these aesthetic objects.<sup>31</sup> This writing has informed our understanding of how

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27 Bojana Cvejić references the survey by the online dance journal *Corpus Web* in 2011, which reached out to affiliates of the field of contemporary dance: "Many respondents agreed upon a generic determination of choreography as the organization of movement in time and space, each placing accents on a different term or relation within the statement." See Cvejić, *Choreographing Problems*, pp. 7–8.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

29 Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 22.

30 Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 5:00–5:30.

31 For overviews of the scholarly writing on Forsythe's work, see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 34–60 (2011) and Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 13–20 (2007). At the time of writing

Forsythe's pieces break the norms and conventions of ballet performance. It has considered how Forsythe has critically reoriented ballet from its lingering imperial ties and ideology—also how Forsythe's ensembles have cultivated egalitarian and democratic social relations based on values of diversity and difference.<sup>32</sup> In particular, scholars and critics have noted how the ensembles' performances and working process have engaged ballet-trained artists to move beyond the hierarchy of ballet alignment,<sup>33</sup> movement figuration,<sup>34</sup> and the gender norms of classical ballet partnering.<sup>35</sup> They have also observed how Forsythe's pieces exceed the orderly inscription of steps by exploring the potential of improvisation. Scholarship has looked at key examples in order to note how the choreographies prescribe tasks and arrangements that require considerable decision-making by the performers, leaving gaps in the artistic works that make them flexible and authentic to the performers' choices each evening.<sup>36</sup> Lastly, it is well established that the processes involved in making Forsythe's works are richly collaborative and cooperative, changing the manner in which ballet-trained dancers contribute to choreography.<sup>37</sup>

This insightful and theoretically sophisticated scholarship, however, still lacks attention to key aspects that would warrant further understanding of Forsythe's oeuvre. Above all, the scholarship is written with a greater focus on the Ballett Frankfurt period (1984–2004) and without comparative review of the different eras of Forsythe's work, especially the late Forsythe Company period and thereafter, which I examine in

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there are three volumes of essays focusing exclusively on Forsythe's work: Driver, *William Forsythe* (2000); Siegmund, *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung* (2004); and Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography* (2011); additionally, Siegmund focuses extensively on Ballett Frankfurt productions in his *Abwesenheit* (2006). Three dissertations in the last decade also focus on Forsythe's oeuvre: Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress* (2011), Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution* (2012); Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge* (2019). Ample articles have also been published, in particular by longstanding Forsythe scholars Roslyn Sulcas and Gerald Siegmund. Recent publications have focused on Forsythe's choreographic objects; see, in particular, Gaensheimer and Kramer, *William Forsythe: The Fact of Matter* (2016) and Neri and Respini, *William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects* (2018). The myriad of interviews that Forsythe has offered to journalists is too vast to be cited here; my study is influenced by my readings of Forsythe's published conversations with Roslyn Sulcas, Senta Driver, Nik Haffner, Paul Kaiser, Louise Neri, John Tusa, Steven Spier and Zachary Whittenburg.

32 Forsythe is also critical of the limits of such egalitarian and democratic changes. He has stated: "I feel the project of a democratic dance is perhaps almost impossible to achieve within a theater. It seems that only by ambushing amateurs can you arrive at a truly democratic way of organizing dance." Spier, "Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies," p. 143.

33 Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

34 Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography."

35 On these norms, see Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, pp. 125–32. Reviewing the literature on gender construction in Forsythe's work, see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 46.

36 Lampert, *Tanzimprovisation*; Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography," in particular p. 50.

37 On collaboration in the context of the Ballett Frankfurt, see Spier, "Engendering and Composing Movement." On collaboration in the context of The Forsythe Company, see Vass-Rhee, "Distributed Dramaturgies"; "Schooling an Ensemble." For a dancer's account of the Ballett Frankfurt period, see Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point"; "The Company at Work, How They Train, Rehearse, and Invent"; "Methodologies." See also Rizzi, McManus, Haffner, Caspersen and Lang's writing published in Siegmund, *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung*. For dancers' accounts of The Forsythe Company period see Waterhouse, "Dancing Amidst"; see also Waterhouse et al., "Doing Duo."



this study. Also, while this literature has much enriched our understanding of Forsythe and the dancers' collaboration, it typically foregrounds Forsythe's testimony and the special collaboration of Forsythe with dancer Dana Caspersen (Forsythe's wife). More comprehensive study of the various positions and perspectives within the team is warranted.<sup>38</sup> Further methodological attention should also be paid regarding how to conduct and interpret interviews with the dancers. There is also the difficulty, when discussing Forsythe's work, of making the complex processual components understandable—especially to people who are not fluent in the ensemble's working terminology. Lastly, as Forsythe's archival materials are not yet organized in a public archive, there is the problem that new materials for study—which would fill gaps in the literature—are not yet available. As a former Forsythe dancer who was given access to these materials, I aim to bring forth a rich view of dancers' practice into a systemic and analytic discussion that will enable readers to gain a fuller perspective.

The radical nature of Forsythe's works is linked to processes and sociality. For the dancers, these pieces expand the potential of how motion can be contextualized, imagined, generated and performed; as a consequence, they also shift modes of how motion is thought<sup>39</sup> and perceived<sup>40</sup> for the audience. Indeed, as dance scholar Sabine Huschka has observed:

Forsythe distrusts and resists the aesthetic articulation of dance as moving bodies situated in an antiquated and inherited movement vocabulary, as well as the articulation of choreography as a codified movement space for the body. [...] The provocative moment of these works lies in the radical and medial broadening of the notion of "body," which now begins to encompass traces of the remembered, imagined, visual, and acoustic, in order to expand itself, in a sense, as an apparition of space-time. And the audience participates in the construction of that apparition.<sup>41</sup>

For Huschka, Forsythe's performances and performance installations "unfold" movement research into constructions of movement images, spaces of sensual experience, fragmented narratives and memories.<sup>42</sup> Vass-Rhee has rightly emphasized the importance of the acoustic layers of Forsythe's work: the fact that dancers speak, sing and vocalize as well as interact with sounding objects, sounding environments, and musicians.<sup>43</sup> Forsythe scholars have thus quite unanimously characterized Forsythe's artistic work as addressing the practices and conventions of ballet, through complex processes that transform and transgress these conventions.

The practice of ballet, in its forms of dance and choreography, is thus a central axis within Forsythe's creative work with dancers. It is also one Forsythe deems critical to the

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38 Cf. Vass-Rhee, "Dancing Music"; "Distributed Dramaturgies"; Driver, *William Forsythe*.

39 Siegmund, *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung*.

40 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*; Huschka, "Verlöschen als ästhetischer Fluchtpunkt oder 'Du musst dich selbst wahrnehmend Machen'."

41 Huschka, "Media-Bodies," p. 71.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

43 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*; Vass-Rhee, "Dancing Music"; Compare to Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography"; Manning and Massumi, "Just Like That"

enactment of *Duo* and his wish to share this piece with a public. Similar to the questions I posed earlier, Forsythe himself asks:

How does ballet get put together? When is it still ballet and when is it no longer ballet? If you are making something that is visibly balletic, how do you wish to participate in that history, and to what degree do you want to be complicit in its politics, its ideologies of gender and so on? Can you arrive at an essential, non-ideological state? Is that even an appropriate goal? [...] I think the mechanics of the form are extraordinary and I see it more as a coordinative phenomenon. I am not interested in undoing the propriety, the decorum, the politeness, or the behavior of ballet; just in going to its functional state, which is how dancers experience it.<sup>44</sup>

*Duo* is an example of one of Forsythe's investigations of the potential to strip ballet away from its ideology, to give new allowance to the organization—to think it through, to revolutionize and change it. As indicated here, and which I believe is the central point, Forsythe places the dancers' experiences in the middle—what they experience, biomechanically in their bodies, while enacting ballet.<sup>45</sup> He recognizes their bodies as a locus where making meaning is critically at stake in processing culture and norms. One purpose of my research is to inspect how this is the case through a study collecting and analyzing the dancers' experiences doing *Duo*. What dilemmas do *Duo* dancers experience in their bodies, when their bodies exist as the locus of choreographic and dance practices? My project is to explore theoretical terms for better understanding of exactly what *doing* ballet, dance and choreography signify—something that is critically missing in the wider discourse.

## 1.2 Teamwork

**“Bill is the nucleus.”**

**Interview with *Duo* dancer Riley Watts in Bern, January 11, 2017.**

*I ask Riley Watts to make himself comfortable and to find a place in the room for an interview, giving him the option to move the chairs or sit on the floor or cushions. Riley chooses the corner of the seminar table. After some discussion we decide to use audio recording, rather than video, to feel that we are exchanging more intimately rather than poised to perform physically. The transcript below reflects a short excerpt from this discussion, when Riley shares his memories of working with “Bill” Forsythe.*

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44 Forsythe cited in Noltenius, *Detail: Forsythe*, p. 49.

45 Forsythe says: “I have always wanted to facilitate dancing that shows the body's own experience of itself, and this is an idea in opposition to my desire, as a choreographer, to organize movement. Trying to have each dancer articulate, choreographically, what he or she knows about dancing has made some coexistence possible between the two apparently irreconcilable elements.” See Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” p. 141.

LIZ: How would you describe the dancer-choreographer relationship as you experienced it in the Forsythe Company?

RILEY: (*laughs*) It's such a complicated question. I always thought of it like Bill [Forsythe] is the nucleus and it was like a 3-D model. So, Bill is the center—center not in an absolute sense, but center in that everybody is strongly connected to him. So, we were like dots around him, you know? Not on a flat surface but really in a three-dimensional model. There would be certain times, depending on what we were working on, there might be one person that would be near to him—near to him somehow in spatial terms or they might be further away but have a very strong bond, like a very tense bond, even though they might be further away. Every dancer had their own relationship to him, that was unique to every single person in the room. And that was what sort of shaped the whole form of what it felt like to be in the company, that none of us had the same relationship to him. You and I don't have the same relationship that I have with this other person ... So every single person had—It's *point-point line* [a term from *Improvisation Technologies*]. Honestly, like it's just a 3-D model of *point-point line* in social terms. And it's constantly moving too. So, it's not like this sort of flat, hierarchical ballet model where you just like assume, oh great, now I'm a *coryphée*, now I'm a soloist—so that's just where I am. It doesn't work like that because we are making. Depending on what you're doing, this piece or this piece, or where you have that one conversation with Bill and suddenly it's like, oh, like, then there's a whole idea that emerges. [...] It feels like physics; it feels like magnetized personal physics.

When asked about the dancer-choreographer relationship, *Duo* dancer Riley Watts described a swarm of relations around the “nucleus” of Forsythe, changing with the practice of making choreographic works.<sup>46</sup> The intensity of bonds with Forsythe was reiterated in my interviews with other team members, who spoke about the ways that they felt professionally and even personally bound to Forsythe, all citing his specific artistic vision as the reason why they wanted to be employed at Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company. However, my interviews also probed the importance of the teamwork—which *Duo* dancers all coveted—recognizing the synergistic potential between dancers as a key force within the ensembles' choreographic culture.

Forsythe's ensembles operated through dynamic clusters of communication and process, distributing labor according to the different mediums of people's competence (dance, music, light, sound, video, costumes, marketing, theory, etc.). Rather than Forsythe managing hierarchy from the top, by delegating power—implemented through organizational managers—his control reached through the organizational clusters of his team, involving interaction at all levels. This enabled a malleability of changing arrangements, relying on self-organization within the choreographic processes. The mediums and materials of work congealed subgroups of activity—centering around the on-stage dancing, technical and stage design, costumes and make up, and offstage administrative action. These subgroups generally worked independently in the preparation or rehearsal phase then cooperated most intensely in the work leading up

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46 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

to and during the act of performance. One division within the company that affected its operation and working climate was that between an international English-speaking body of dancers, and the technical and administrative team—who were predominantly German natives, and conducted their work in German. Forsythe, who was bilingual, could move between these groups fluidly.

The different mediums, education and preferred languages of the team members were reflected in the variable terminology used among sections—as exhibited in the different scores for *Duo* (from the stage manager, the composer, the pianist) in contrast to the dancers' notebooks. This meant that each subdivision of the team focused on their area of specialization and could be unaware of information that might be relevant to others. Furthermore, allowing for this splintered way of working, official meetings of the entire company were uncommon. Creation was neither efficient nor optimized. When making a new work, often materials or set design or costumes would arrive, as requested by Forsythe, without the dancers knowing of this. Similarly, the dancers could be added or cut from pieces without the costume designer being consulted. There was never an established model or defined timeline for how development of a piece should progress, nor were there meetings to centralize and control this process of emergence. Coining the term “distributed dramaturgies” to indicate the potential by which the performers could all become dramaturgs within this setting, Vass-Rhee looks at the proclivities of this decentralized structure, finding: “Forsythe’s ensemble’s practice exemplifies a reversal of the trajectory towards informational coherence that typifies problem-solving, and in doing so, highlights a key aspect of devising work in theatre.”<sup>47</sup>

### 1.2.1 Supporting the Dancers

Every day there were many people working with the dancers, contributing to their bodily routines: there were one to two full-time rehearsal directors, who assisted or led rehearsals in Forsythe’s absence; ballet masters working on a temporary basis training the dancers each morning;<sup>48</sup> physical therapists and trainers.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the composer Thom Willems, there were one to two musical *répétiteurs* who played for ballet class and assisted with the composed and recorded music in rehearsal and performance. Forsythe also had his support team: one, if not two personal assistants and, after 1992, a staff member dedicated to video archiving.<sup>50</sup> Forsythe also typically worked with a

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47 Vass-Rhee, “Distributed Dramaturgies,” p. 92.

48 In the Ballett Frankfurt this alternated between the rehearsal directors and guest teachers with short-term contracts. In The Forsythe Company these teachers were always guest artists with short-term contracts.

49 Ballett Frankfurt worked with a masseur in the 1990s and, later on, a physical therapist. The Forsythe Company had short-term contracts for healing assistants (physical therapy, osteopathy, massage, shiatsu, reiki). After 2008, Patrick Rump, a trainer with a degree in sports science, was taken on for Forsythe and the dancers. He went on to have an important role training and supporting *Duo* dancers for performances.

50 Nicholas Champion, a former dancer with the Ballett Frankfurt. See Section 10.1, footnote 4.

dramaturg, and these individuals have subsequently played an important role in developing the scholarly literature about his work.<sup>51</sup>

Though the technicians were a separate operational unit, their work ‘touched’ the dancers through light, sound, stage elements and video. The stage manager was responsible for communicating cues to the dancers during the show. Costumes designers made costumes that were then cared for—washed and ironed, and hung up for the dancers—by dressing room assistants. One to two artists assisted with the dancers’ hair and make-up. Lastly, the ensembles had a managerial team for business, press, marketing, touring and eventually a website. The dancers engaged in photo shoots for these purposes. This organization is summarized in Appendix G.

### 1.2.2 Working with Forsythe

**“It’s like pushing the limits.”**

**Interview with Forsythe dancer Cyril Baldy and Duo dancer Allison Brown in Bern, January 24, 2017**

*Using my phone as an audio recorder on the lunch table, set next to our empty espresso cups, the dancers are aware that our conversation about Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company is on record. Conversing without a script for this interview, after warming up together in the studio, I aim to see how reuniting elicits our memories of the work. We discuss differences between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, with Allison citing her general “stress” over the costumes which she found often too “naked.” Triangulating, I ask Baldy for his insight, bridging from the word “stress.” What resulted was one of the most succinct portraits of this workplace generated in my interviews, one that also offers a dancer’s impressions of working together with “Bill” Forsythe.*

LIZ: And you? Stress?

CYRIL: I think the fact that at no point you could just rely on what you knew, on what you’ve done. There was like a common understanding of all the artists that I worked with—that there’s your limit and there is beyond it. And there was this constant tickling of the limit. Like pushing further than your own understanding, than your colleagues’ understanding, than Bill’s understanding. It’s like pushing the limit [...] of excellence—which to me both kind of blurred into each other. Because then you can talk in a mellow context about excellence ... it’s to, like, replicate exactly what has been told. But I don’t think he is ... Bill understands excellence as this dedication to make something artful beyond your own knowledge, beyond what is known to be known. We are not talking about something new, we are not talking about something that is like ... it’s like pushing the limits, yeah. It’s very thrilling when you have the life force that goes with it. But after a point that ... it can work against you. And I think that’s when it becomes stressful. To me, it’s stress on my nervous system, so you just shut down. So, it’s

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51 David Levin (1987–1988), Heidi Gilpin (1989–1991), Patricia Baudoin (dates unknown), Sabine Huschka (1998–1999), Steve Valk (1998–2002), Rebecca Groves (2002–2006) and Freya Vass-Rhee (2006–2013).

primarily why I left, because my nervous system couldn't handle it. It's that thing there is not one moment that you can just relax, or let it happen. There is always this, like, push underneath that was like ... it's never enough, it's never resolved.

The accounts of dancers Riley Watts and Cyril Baldy reproduced in this chapter indicate how forcefully the charismatic leadership of Forsythe riveted his team. The dancers observed the complexity and mobility of the system of relations made with Forsythe. Dancers expressed gratitude for the workplace that Forsythe facilitated—and also described the stress involved. Rather than being tools or muses, their relationship working with Forsythe was a common investment in mutually developing their potential—as colleagues working together on artistic pieces. Dance scholar Rudi Laermans calls this co-creation. He observes: “Self-transformation is a desired outcome: in sealing an artistically motivated collaboration, the dancer is often motivated by the desire to go through a parallel process of artistic de- and re-subjectification.”<sup>52</sup>

The bonds between the dancers and Forsythe—their *sociality* and *relationality* were resources through which choreography emerged. Forsythe was highly socially competent, as demonstrated in his facility to communicate effectively and forge strong ties with many different people. These bonds made people vulnerable to him, and him to them. His ability to sense the potential and direction of what could be produced *through* those social formations was significant. In this respect, this emotional investment was difficult to sustain. Forsythe himself notes: “It was impossible to communicate at the level I wanted to communicate. With such a large group I couldn't have a personal relationship with everyone, I couldn't take care of everyone.”<sup>53</sup> Care and personal relationships were part of the exchange of working with Forsythe, in which dancers also could give and develop their choreographic potential.

The dancers were aware that, as the choreographer, Forsythe's complex effect on people was interlaced with many aspects, including psychological ones. Noting these, Laermans observes: “It can thus be premised that in an intense collaboration between dancer and choreographer, both frequently come to stand for the other's object of desire.”<sup>54</sup> Forsythe was viewed by the dancers as non-patriarchal and, rather than heteronormative, flexible in his gendered relations and performance. The dancers noted that the process of working with him was never consistent, but involved shifting roles and relationships—changing long-term as well as short-term within the flow of one rehearsal. At times, he was the master whose movement they should learn; other times he was a nurturing and mentoring figure. He was also frequently a collaborator, investing and searching right beside the dancers; then sometimes he was eager to laugh or goof around, or to simply have lunch.<sup>55</sup> These relationships also varied according to the generation of dancers: the Ballett Frankfurt dancers emphasizing more peer-to-peer relations than the younger generation of The Forsythe Company.

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52 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 316 (italics in the original).

53 Forsythe, cited in Mackrell, *A New Dynamic*.

54 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 343.

55 See Rizzi, “Die Bühne als der Ort, an dem ich mit mir im Reinen bin,” p. 91.

*Duo* dancers each had very distinct and multifaceted relationships with Forsythe, describing their role as fundamentally cooperative.<sup>56</sup> Van Berkel, one of the two original *Duo* dancers, described working “with” not “for” William Forsythe.<sup>57</sup> Recounting her relationship to Forsythe in the choreographic process, she used the metaphor of him being the “painter” and they were the “colors”—noting that he would often give very clear starting points and people would work on many ideas. Van Berkel worked with “Billy” in mind, creating while giving authority to him in the editing phase. Working with Forsythe was—she makes a gesture like holding two ends of a rope, one hand at her rib cage and the other held forward in front of her—like a lasso or a tug of war: a close negotiation of ideas in physical dialogue.<sup>58</sup>

The working process was not always perfect and peaceful. Forsythe’s leadership was charismatic, and his way of working was unpredictable. Forsythe, in his own words, described his methodology as follows: “I’m quick. Da dee, da duh. I’m very impulsive. [...] I’m entirely instinctive [...]. I tend to instinctively throw things out there, and then deal with them afterwards.”<sup>59</sup> Dancers confirmed this, with statements such as: “You didn’t know how he was gonna come into the studio” and “I never knew what I was going to be asked to do that day.”<sup>60</sup> Forsythe was reflective upon the impact of his own authority upon people and developed strategies to move outside his own habits of cooperation: for example, by randomizing tasks he assigned to dancers, learning that dancers could defy expectations of what he thought they could and could not do.<sup>61</sup> Dancers also worked towards freeing themselves from Forsythe’s authority and gaining insight into how to expand their own artistic potential.

One significant challenge in both Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, and a frequent point arising in my interviews with the dancers, was the impact of not having ample time to rehearse. Another was Forsythe’s tendency to revise his pieces. *Duo* dancer Cora Bos-Kroese described:

Bill was always thinking out of the box. You never knew what you were dancing, because he would make changes. [...] It was free-falling. A trip! Dealing with situations,

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56 Dancers used both collaboration and cooperation as descriptive terms, even once the term “co-collaborative.” One aspect of my research was to try to understand what they meant by these terms and how to position this within the discourse. In this manuscript, I differentiate between collaboration and cooperation. I understand collaboration to be people working together to achieve a mutual goal, sharing interest and ownership of the outcome; collaborative projects involve equal responsibility and potential to initiate and revise this shared goal. I designate cooperation to be when people work together in a distributed fashion, in situations where their interests and responsibility within the project may be different. As I shall develop, few dancers (aside from Dana Caspersen) have collaborated with Forsythe, sharing authorship and project direction; I thus define their work predominantly as cooperative.

57 Regina van Berkel, email to the author, September 9, 2019.

58 Fieldwork notes. Meeting with Regina van Berkel in Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

59 William Forsythe, interview with Steven Spier in Frankfurt am Main, October 21, 1999. See Spier, “Inside the Knot That Two Bodies Make,” p. 108.

60 Forsythe dancers, anonymous interviews with the author.

61 Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 93.

you are constantly using survival instincts. You do things you didn't think you could do. You fall, you get up and you manage. Every day was a challenge.<sup>62</sup>

In the way they responded together to the shifting tasks of rehearsal, Bos-Kroese observed the “strength” and “close-knit” quality of the dancers of Ballett Frankfurt, despite factions and divisions between groups of friends and speakers of different languages. She also noted she was “always on her guard.” Other dancers echoed that the workplace, while euphoric, also generated stress and fear: stress to perform and adapt, and fear of not being able to meet demands. Cyril Baldy described this biologically as stress to his nervous system, reminding me how there was “not one moment that you can just relax, or let it happen.”<sup>63</sup>

*Duo* dancers saw Forsythe's strong influence upon their colleagues—how, through a couple of words or movements, he could change the way that they move. They noted that it was not always what he said exactly, but something else—that he enabled people to change and to move in ways that surprised even themselves. Francesca Harper recounts:

Being in a studio, Bill was so free. Taking all these different people into the company—we were all so different—but letting us move so naturally. I knew that what we were creating was original. I also watched [choreographer] Alvin Ailey in the studio. I see parallels, both are Capricorns—the freedom they instilled in their dancers, celebrating their individuality, and using their individuality as a source for the work. We were inspiring his vision, not the other way around. It was embedded in humanism.<sup>64</sup>

As Harper's testimony above indicates, Forsythe could facilitate people to take agency and move freely, even to surpass expectations and limits. Most found these new capacities to be exceptional and thrilling—this sustained and supported their choreographic work.

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This chapter has contextualized the present study within a review of the discourse on William Forsythe's work and his biography. Section 1.1 raised two overarching concerns: first, the question of how dancers are produced as subjects by an inherited history of aesthetic practice such as ballet; and second, the means and extent to which Forsythe and the dancers may exert agency when working together on choreographic projects. I have explored how Forsythe decentralized his authority by inviting his dancers to cooperate with him and one another, a relational work that is epitomized in *Duo*. Section 1.2 situated Forsythe's role within an examination of the constellation of teamwork in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. I have analyzed *Duo* dancers' accounts of working with Forsythe, describing their enmeshment and complicity in Forsythe's authorship and varied perception of his leadership style and methods. The terms *relational* and *social* are advanced to show how the dancers invest trifold: in one another, in their relationship with Forsythe and in the choreographic pieces that they produce.

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62 Cora Bos-Kroese, phone interview with the author, September 19, 2018.

63 Cyril Baldy, interview with the author, Bern, January 24, 2017.

64 Francesca Harper, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.





## Chapter 2: The Institutions of Ballett Frankfurt & The Forsythe Company

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The rectangular building that formerly housed the activities of the Ballett Frankfurt lies within the central district of Frankfurt am Main, a short walk east of the main train station.<sup>1</sup> The location, Willy-Brandt-Platz, lies at the border between the commercial district and the more multicultural neighborhood around the railway station.<sup>2</sup> Within walking distance of the theater are banks, cafes and luxury stores, including Ballett Frankfurt sponsors such as Mercedes-Benz and the Steigenberger Hotels chain. Walking west, the smell of doner kebab wafts through the air and one finds dodgier venues, such as sex clubs in the red-light district. In the decades since William Forsythe assumed artistic directorship of the Ballett Frankfurt in 1984, this central area of the city has gentrified considerably. A sculpture—the large looming symbol of the Euro, glowing blue and yellow—stands opposite the entrance to the public theater, a reminder that Frankfurt am Main is Germany’s banking capital, enmeshed in the flow of capital in the European Union.<sup>3</sup> The sculpture is visible to spectators at night drinking champagne in the theater foyer, glowing amidst the trees and city lights of Frankfurt’s skyscrapers. The spectators socializing in the foyer are also illuminated to pedestrians outside the building, conveying the public function of the theater to the city, as a place of elegant aesthetic communing. Behind the building is the river Main, with museums and promenades lined with avenues of pollarded London Plane trees (*Platanus sp.*). Each morning, after the early commuter traffic of bankers, the dancers of the Ballett Frankfurt would arrive, entering by the designated artists’ entrances tucked away at the sides of the building.

The theater complex at Willy-Brandt-Platz, which re-opened in 1951 after wartime damage had been repaired, is a material manifestation of Germany’s commitment

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1 In 2020, demolition of this theater was announced, with plans for rebuilding on site or elsewhere in discussion at the time of writing.

2 The plaza, called *Theaterplatz* until 1992, honors Willy Brandt, the former German chancellor and leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

3 The sculpture by artist Ottmar Hörl was erected in 2001. [https://www.ottmar-hoerl.de/de/projekte/2001/2001\\_1\\_Euro.php](https://www.ottmar-hoerl.de/de/projekte/2001/2001_1_Euro.php)

Figure 11. *The Opera House of the Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main.*



Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

to high culture in the performing arts. Called the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main*—which can be translated as the municipal stages or theater of Frankfurt—the building solidly spans an entire block, with a modern glass façade above the ground floor, 120 meters long and nine meters high (see Fig. 11). The modern building gives a central presence and a contemporary inflection to the city’s municipal companies creating opera, theater and (until 2004) ballet performances. Doors on the public side of this building open to a sidewalk and public tram line, conveniently linking the location to commuters. A chic restaurant with an international menu is situated on ground level.

The institution of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main*, which comes into focus in this chapter, provided contemporary infrastructure and a dwelling place for the artistic activity that produced Forsythe’s choreographic works. The perspective that I weave in this chapter partly reconstructs my own gaze as I joined the Ballett Frankfurt for its final months of operation in 2004. Similar to an ethnographer’s perspective—as an outsider coming into contact with a group of people—at that time I was foreign to the German municipal theater system, having trained in American ballet and (post)modern dance contexts.<sup>4</sup> My research of *Duo* offered me a framework to reflect further on

4 As a 24-year-old American dancer arriving in Frankfurt, I had accepted Forsythe’s invitation to join Ballett Frankfurt as a guest dancer without having visited the company in Germany. It was my first professional contract. I arrived just as the Ballett Frankfurt was closing and became a founding member of The Forsythe Company. In American dance contexts, dance is funded predominantly by commercial means or through private or corporate philanthropy, as well as supported through academic departments in universities. For a more detailed account of differences in financial frameworks of ballet companies, see Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 48–54.

these institutions in which Forsythe chose to work: to critically examine the infrastructural and organizational aspects. In this chapter I present an institutional portrait, elaborated through my secondary research conducted between 2015 and 2018—incorporating fieldwork on location, literature review pertaining to Forsythe’s institutional enmeshment, and interviews with the dancers and other members of the team.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.1 Shifting Institutions

One thousand and sixty-six people currently work for the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main* (hereafter *Städtische Bühnen*), which has a long history of public performances that goes back to 1782.<sup>6</sup> The organization is funded primarily by the city of Frankfurt, while also receiving money from the state of Hesse in addition to scholarships and other sources of revenue.<sup>7</sup> The two primary, historic divisions of this organization are the Opera and the Theater. The Frankfurt Opera Ballet existed as a subsidiary of the Opera until 1989, when Forsythe assumed the role of General Director (*Intendant*) and the Ballet became an equal pillar.<sup>8</sup> After August 1996, Forsythe additionally directed the Theater am Turm (TAT) at the ancillary venue of the Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt.<sup>9</sup>

In 2004, due chiefly to the city’s financial troubles, the Ballett Frankfurt was closed.<sup>10</sup> After arduous negotiations, Forsythe secured support for a new, smaller ensemble. The Forsythe Company moved operations to the Frankfurt Lab in the Gallus

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- 5 Though I use the word institution in continuity with dance studies scholarship, including Siegmund’s writing and more generally the recent volume by Hardt and Stern, I recognize that Forsythe’s ensembles are more precisely *organizations* in a sociological sense. Organizations have been described as “special institutions that involve (a) criteria to establish their boundaries and to distinguish their members from nonmembers, (b) principles of sovereignty concerning who is in charge, and (c) chains of command delineating responsibilities within the organization.” Hodgson, “What Are Institutions?,” p. 18. Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company meet the criteria of organizations as they have a professional structure defining members and nonmembers, an artist director, and pathways for communication within the team. For further discussion of these distinctions, see Hardt and Stern, *Choreographie und Institution*; also Eldridge and Crombie, *A Sociology of Organizations*.
  - 6 Statistics reflect figures from August 31, 2018, kindly provided by *Städtische Bühnen* employee Bruni Marx by email correspondence with the author, January 28, 2019. On the history of Ballett Frankfurt leading up to Forsythe’s arrival, see Heil, *Frankfurter Ballett von 1945 bis 1985*.
  - 7 In 2004, the *Städtische Bühnen* shifted from a public institution to a GmbH (*Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung*) or company with limited liability, in which individual members are not held responsible for the company’s debts.
  - 8 Forsythe began his contract as *Intendant* in March 1989. In the literature, this date has been given as either 1989 or 1990. My source is email correspondence with Forsythe’s administrative assistant, Alexandra Scott on March 23, 2019.
  - 9 See Spier, “Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies,” p. 146.
  - 10 Foreshadowing these troubles, see Midgette, “Forsythe in Frankfurt.” The complex political, economic and aesthetic reasons underpinning these changes were a point of inquiry in my ethnographic investigation that I could not resolve from my more limited contact, predominantly with *Duo* dancers. The transition was a difficult moment of institutional conflict and change. My request for phone interviews with Forsythe’s former business director, press director and legal advisor were politely declined. The dancers were also reluctant to discuss their memories. For these reasons, I

neighborhood of Frankfurt am Main in 2009—a building at the eastern side of the city, outside of the central hub and its luxury. The production structure of The Forsythe Company was a private-public partnership between the cities of Frankfurt/Dresden and the states of Hesse/Saxony.<sup>11</sup> Forsythe stepped down as Artistic Director a decade later, in 2015.

The changeover from Ballett Frankfurt to The Forsythe Company was a transformation in name, structure and funding, and, as I shall show further, in aesthetic. By adding his name to the ensemble's title and omitting the term "ballet," Forsythe helped frame his pursuits beyond ballet, according to his interest in new artistic directions—in the field of art, dance, research and dance education. This is consistent with his public declaration, made in an open letter in 2004. Forsythe stated:

In the course of a process that has developed over several years, there has been a change in the perception of my field of work, which made me aware that my professional intentions do not match my current position as general director of a large municipal institution.<sup>12</sup>

The Forsythe Company enabled Forsythe to work more independently than before, and consequently to have stability to continue with his experimental processes. Works like *Duo*, which were performed by both Ballett Frankfurt and dancers of The Forsythe Company, provided continuity.

When Forsythe first arrived in Frankfurt to work as a guest choreographer in 1981, The Frankfurt Opera Ballet was a company with mixed repertoire, including classics such as *Giselle*, and new works such as *Sinfonie in D* by Jiří Kylián. Under the direction of Egon Mason from 1981 until 1984, the company performed increasingly diverse pieces: such as Glenn Tetley's *Pierot Lunaire*, Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mason's own choreography and two works by Forsythe: *Time Cycle* (1981) and *Love Songs* (1981). In 1983, Forsythe took the group on a radical turn, engaging in a nine-month process in which the dancers' own reflections upon the occupational cultures of ballet and other contemporary dance companies were made central and incorporated into the piece *Gänge*—a work commenced in the preceding year with the company Nederlands Dans Theater. Siegmund observes: "Forsythe emphasizes the dancers' competence to describe their own actions, to use verbal language to become aware of how and why they do what do." This is an initial step, Siegmund finds, toward "emancipation" of the dancers—to be more than simply tools manipulated by the choreographer.<sup>13</sup>

With his appointment, Forsythe changed the name of the Frankfurt Opera Ballet to the Ballett Frankfurt, asserting his independence from the Opera and announc-

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leave this thread open in recognition of an important aspect of this history that remains a gap for further study.

11 Though new to dance, in the field of music orchestra mergers have been chronic in Germany. According to one source between 1992 and 2014 over 20 percent of Germany's orchestras disappeared, i.e., 37 ensembles dissolved or merged, predominantly due to budget cuts. See Mertens, "A United Front Against Orchestral Mergers."

12 Translation by the author. See "William Forsythe gibt das Frankfurter Ballett auf."

13 Translation by the author. See Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," p. 15. On *Gänge*, see in particular *ibid.*, pp. 13–16.

ing a change of aesthetic vision. Rather than a subsidiary role providing choreography for opera productions, as has often been the case in ballet history, over the course of Forsythe's two-decade tenure with the Ballett Frankfurt, the ensemble had an independent function and served Forsythe's exclusive artistic vision. In an interview with *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper, I enquired about the relation she felt to the structure of the *Städtische Bühnen*. She remarked: "We were original. We felt we were supported in being original, not being part of the opera and theater. [...] When you came to see the Ballett Frankfurt, you did not know what to expect. That was our microcosm."<sup>14</sup>

Forsythe and the dancers understood themselves to be rebels—"mavericks" to borrow Howard Becker's terminology, who challenged the limits of conventional ballet performances. Yet the institutional apparatus that supported the production and distribution of their work was fundamental to their choices and success. Forsythe was not working from the margins of his field but, rather like an "integrated professional," he honed the "technical abilities, social skills, and conceptual apparatus necessary to make it easy to make art." Becker finds that mavericks reflect critically on their genre: They "have been part of the conventional art world of their time, place, and medium but found it unacceptably constraining. They propose innovations the art world refuses to accept as within the limits of what it ordinarily produces."<sup>15</sup> To rectify this, Forsythe gave copious interviews and invited guests to produce discourse about his ballets. This enabled his pieces to be recognized more as he saw them: namely, as attempts to evolve the "potential" of ballet.<sup>16</sup>

The shift from being an "appendage" of the Opera to an independently recognized division took time.<sup>17</sup> The adjustment was shaped by Forsythe's success coupled with the pressure he exerted to acquire security, status and power—plus an unexpected alignment of factors. On the night of November 11–12, 1987, the opera stage suffered an arson attack. This necessitated extensive renovation to the building, requiring years to complete. In response to the fire, Forsythe was offered a prestigious second theater in which to take residence: the Paris Théâtre du Châtelet. That same year, the contracts of the Opera director ended; direction shifted from Michael Gielen to Gary Bertini. The city councilor responsible for culture (*Kulturdezernent*), Hilmar Hoffmann, sprang into action, giving Forsythe and his ensemble a higher status at the *Städtische Bühnen* by granting him the title of *Intendant*, while also undertaking important architectural revisions to the building to provide proper rehearsal rooms. Strikingly, Forsythe was the first independent ballet director in Germany.<sup>18</sup>

The progressive history of the Frankfurt Opera was a critical precedent for Forsythe's avant-garde ballets. Yet its internal dynamics as a municipal organization were highly complex entwinements with city politics. Though the city of Frankfurt's economy had

14 Francesca Harper, phone interview with the author, September 22, 2018.

15 On the distinction between mavericks and integrated professionals and how they situate themselves in "art worlds" see Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 226–46; herein, citations on p. 229 and p. 233, respectively.

16 Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 86.

17 Translation by the author. Michael Gielen cited in Heil, *Frankfurter Ballett von 1945 bis 1985*, p. 7.

18 See Seigmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," p. 21, p. 24.

boomed in the 1980s, the 90s brought difficulties triggered by German reunification. In the 1980s, Frankfurt had been quite competitive in making its artistic scene comparable to other major centers in Germany and abroad. However, Frankfurt was not the state capital of Hesse, and the budget trouble in the 90s rendered the arts precarious. Budgets for the arts were “frozen” in 1993 and then cuts began, bringing arts funding down from 12 percent to 8.5 percent of municipal spending.<sup>19</sup> *Duo*, created in 1996, thus emerged after the stability of twelve years of institutional support (rocky as this period was due to politics and the arson attack). By that time, Forsythe’s choreographic methods and philosophy were well known to his close personnel. Still, institutional tensions continued and the financial stress only increased.

In public interviews, Forsythe was extremely frank about the hierarchy among divisions of the *Städtische Bühnen* and the mixed benefits he found in working within a city institution.<sup>20</sup> Of all the resources that the institution provided, Forsythe stressed his real dependency and gratitude for the support given to his dancers—in terms of full-time contracts and benefits. Forsythe commented: “At some point, you have got to go to the real resource, which is the dancer and the availability of the dancer. And [with Ballett Frankfurt] that’s great.”<sup>21</sup> Historically, the Opera was the largest and most prestigious division of the *Städtische Bühnen*, receiving the most funds and holding the most performances.<sup>22</sup> Yet the distribution of resources (money, stage-space, personnel, and so on) among subgroups could cause resentment. Noting these challenges, in 1990, Forsythe remarked:

In Frankfurt the opera was directed by Adorno disciples, adherents of German Cultural Critique. It was a kind of radical opera, known as “director’s theater,” doing unusual productions as opposed to being a star-vehicle kind of opera house. Now, we have a new *Intendant* who is, let’s say, more conservative, putting millions into the guest fees. A star walked in for one *Otello*, for several hundred thousand marks, and it was really mediocre. Meanwhile, I’m thinking I could have employed six dancers for two years!<sup>23</sup>

Such comments are revealing, not only of the very different markets for opera and ballet but also of the institutional tensions inherent in sharing a building and budget together.

## 2.2 The “Givens”

As a goal- and interest-oriented company whose main public function was the production of ballet performances, the conditions of these performances—what Forsythe

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19 See Midgette, “Forsythe in Frankfurt,” p. 15.

20 Mike Figgis’ documentary film captures these tensions poignantly. See Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*.

21 Forsythe in Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 88.

22 For example, in 1990 the Opera staged approximately 300 performances a year, compared to the Ballet’s 60 performances. See *ibid.*, pp. 88–89.

23 Forsythe in Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 89.

called the “limits” or “givens”—are important factors for understanding the organizational structure of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.<sup>24</sup> These infrastructural resources defined the production and distribution of Forsythe’s choreographic works.<sup>25</sup>

In an interview in 1990 with Senta Driver and the editors of *Ballet Review*, Forsythe commented upon these factors. I quote at length:

Frankfurt is like any theater—a matter of logistics. A German opera house is basically a huge administration supposedly at the service of an artistic body, whether it be an opera ensemble or a ballet company. And these great big organizations known as German opera houses have limits, like any other organization. They set up a certain number of givens, and you have to work within those. [...] In Germany, once things are established, they stay that way. [...] I’ve worked in Germany since ’81. [...] When I signed the contract, it was perfectly clear to me what I was getting into. It’s not endless money. I have a budget of maybe \$150,000 a year to do everything outside of paying my dancers’ salaries. That is actually not a lot of money for a large ballet company. All my dancers’ salaries are paid, and they have two kinds of pensions. [...] There are three theaters in the Frankfurt opera house complex. Twelve hundred full-time employees. Stagehands, two orchestras, an acting ensemble, a ballet ensemble, an opera ensemble, electricians, metal workers, lighting people—everything. Given all that, people think, “Oh, Forsythe can just do anything, get anything he wants, because he’s subsidized and it doesn’t matter.” But most of the money we receive comes from taxes. It’s not someone’s private money. We’re indebted to the community. And what we’re producing is what the community supports. We’re not doing only what we’d like to. We can’t do that. It’s not just a matter of fulfilled desires.<sup>26</sup>

In this statement, Forsythe reveals that he feels bound by shared obligations. There are commitments and responsibility to his dancers and team, to the taxpayers funding his ensemble, and to the audience. In return for resources—money, space and personnel—the ensemble must create, perform and tour ballet productions. While the daily operation of the Ballett Frankfurt is closed to the public and thus flexible, their performative ‘outcomes’ are tallied and evaluated.

Perhaps in recognition of the financial support that the ensemble was given, in this interview Forsythe justifies the fact that he and the team (“we”) are not free as artists. In this and other public statements, Forsythe stresses the extreme pressure of this labor—which at times brought him and the artists to the edge of existential breakdown. Anne Midgette elaborates on this in her review of the conditions of Ballett Frankfurt’s working process, emphasizing the role of time:

In the Municipal Theaters of Frankfurt, Bureau number 46 of the city government, the ballet only has a certain amount of rehearsal time. The ballet company is expected to produce a certain number of pieces; it has a certain number of dancers (all, technically

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24 Ibid., p. 87.

25 Similarly, on the role of resources in shaping collective creativity, see Ugo Corte’s fascinating study of BMX bike riders in North Carolina. See Corte, “A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory.”

26 Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” pp. 87–88.



speaking, government officials). And this “whole situation,” Forsythe says, “has determined how we’ve worked. Everything we’ve done there has been a survival tactic.” The biggest issue it was necessary to “survive” was the lack of adequate rehearsal time.<sup>27</sup>

Collaboration with his dancers and developing strategies of constraining and performing improvisation were tactics to “survive” the demands of these production conditions—enabling Forsythe to construct complex works in startlingly brief periods of creation. The entire process had to add up: the right number of days creating the work, the correct number of shows and tours, and the appropriate number of audience members.

In his notion of an “art world” Becker considers the impact of the state and infrastructure, outlining how these establish conventions and constraints in which artists operate—prescribing artistic processes.<sup>28</sup> The numbers constituting the “givens” of Forsythe’s ensembles are thus telling indicators of these organizational models: these are the budget figures, the number of full-time dancers and employees, the number of performances offered, the amount of new works produced, tickets sold and seats available per performance, and the degree to which the budget was used. While these numbers did fluctuate from year to year, Table 1 outlines these figures for the 2001–2002 season of Ballett Frankfurt and the 2006–2007 season of The Forsythe Company to enable comparison. These show that while The Forsythe Company had fewer laborers in the team, their output of performances was approximately the same—yet distributed across two cities (Frankfurt and Dresden). I view this development critically: as symptomatic of the pressure exerted upon artists to fulfill cultural policy, in ways requiring additional mobility—despite fewer financial resources.

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27 Midgette, “Forsythe in Frankfurt,” p. 17.

28 Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 165–91.

Table 1. The 'Givens' of Ballett Frankfurt versus The Forsythe Company

	Ballett Frankfurt	The Forsythe Company
	2001–2002 Season	2006–2007 Season
<b>Budget</b> <sup>*1</sup>	~7.5 million €	~4 million €
<b>Dancers (full-time)</b> <sup>*2</sup>	37	17
<b>Team (full-time)</b> <sup>*3</sup>	31	16
<b>Performances</b>		
Frankfurt am Main <sup>*4</sup>	50–60	25–30
Dresden <sup>*5</sup>	0	25–30
Additional residency <sup>*6</sup>	0 (Paris 1990–1998)	10 (Zurich 2005–2007)
Touring <sup>*7</sup>	32	21
Guest performances <sup>*8</sup>	5	0
<b>Number of new works per year</b> <sup>*9</sup>		
Full-length	1	2
One-act	2	2
<b>Number of tickets sold</b> <sup>*10</sup>	96 % attendance	unknown

\*1: Ben-Itzak, "The Buzz, 4–2." The figures on the Ballett Frankfurt budget reported by the press around this time vary: \$6.6 Million (2002), see Riding, "Leader of Frankfurt Ballet Losing His Post," p. 5; \$9 Million (2001), see Lawson, "The Man Who Stood Ballet on Its Head." £4 Million for the Ballet and £3 Million for the TAT (2002), see Brown, "Forsythe Makes a Surprising Exit." | \*2: Ballett Frankfurt data: unpublished document listing dancers of Ballett Frankfurt, provided by William Forsythe. The Forsythe Company data: program, *Human Writes*, September 8–15, 2006, Festspielhaus Hellerau. | \*3: Ballett Frankfurt data: program, *The Vile Parody of Address, Duo, N.N.N.N., Quintet*, November 21–29, 2002, Frankfurt Opera House. The Forsythe Company data: program, *Human Writes*, September 8–15, 2006, Festspielhaus Hellerau. | \*4: Ballett Frankfurt data: Forsythe in Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 88. The Forsythe Company data: See "Forsythe bleibt in Frankfurt." | \*5: The Forsythe Company data: See "Forsythe bleibt in Frankfurt." | \*6: The Forsythe Company data: Flyer from Schauspielhaus Zürich advertising the 2006 season of The Forsythe Company. | \*7: The Ballett Frankfurt data: calendars (*Spielpläne*) for the 2001–2002 and 2006–2007 seasons. The Forsythe Company data: calendar (*Spielplan*) for the 2006–2007 season. | \*8: Ibid. | \*9: Ibid. | \*10: Brown, "Forsythe Makes a Surprise Exit."

## 2.3 Architecture and Stages

The *architecture* of the theater is a fundamental factor impacting the design of choreography—affecting the product of a performance, as well as the process of making it.<sup>29</sup> Externally, the building of the *Städtische Bühnen* appears as one solid block, but it is actually a complex ensemble of structures which have grown together for more than

29 What I elaborate adds a different aspect than organizational typologies based on technology. See Eldridge and Crombie, *A Sociology of Organizations*, in particular pp. 42–45.

100 years. As architectural specialists have noted, the building was shaped through construction, destruction (bombing, fire) and renewal in a piecemeal fashion.<sup>30</sup> It also shifted dynamically, sculpted by the artists' activities within. In this way, the institutional structures become apparent within the fabric of the building, formed by context and materials.

Within the theater complex of the *Städtische Bühnen* at Willy-Brandt-Platz there are three stages: two large spaces primarily used by the Opera (see Fig. 12) and Theater divisions, respectively, and a 'small house' (*Kammerspiel*).<sup>31</sup> Each theater is shaped with a classical proscenium view—with capacity for an audience of 1369 in the Opera House, 712 in the Theater House, and 192 in the *Kammerspiel*.<sup>32</sup> During the time of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe made use of all three spaces.

Figure 12. The view from the stage. Opera House of the *Städtische Bühnen* Frankfurt am Main.

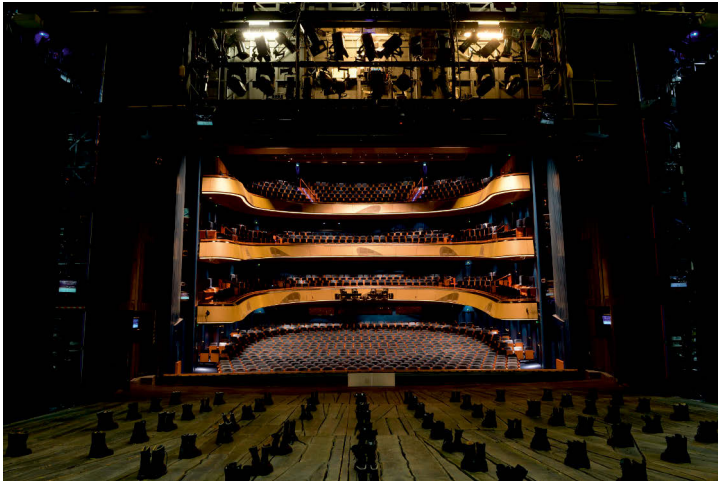


Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

Transformation of the theatrical space is part of the magic and craft of the performing arts. In creating his ballets, Forsythe used this potential of the stages at the *Städtische Bühnen* to full effect. For example, he directed the technicians to transform

30 First came the original work by renowned theater architect Heinrich Seeling in 1902. Renovation in 1949–51 after air raid damage kept the original entry façade while improving the auditorium and surrounding workspace. To allow for both the municipal opera and theater to play in the same location, a second adjoining theater was built in 1959–63. Renovations in 1987 and 1991–2 improved acoustics, technology and, in 2007–10, the working spaces. See Schmal et al., *Grosse Oper – Viel Theater?*, pp. 9–10.

31 The *Kammerspiel* is currently used only by the Theater division.

32 These figures are listed in documentation by Mechthild Rühl, Press Director of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company from 1995–2015. These documents were kindly made available to me by William Forsythe.

the stage space by making the backstage area visible—opening up the curtain at the back and sides to reveal an expansive void and exposed walls. He could also instruct the dancers to perform as closely as possible to the audience by extending the dance floor over the orchestra pit and placing a curtain behind them (as was done in *Duo*). Forsythe adapted lighting instruments to show the space in a radiant or dim quality of light; he worked with the composer or choose music accordingly to fill the space with more or less sound. But Forsythe could not re-engineer the placement of the spectators, the number of seats in which they might sit and their distance to the event. He could not change the classical perspective from which spectators saw the ballet: as having a focal center that receded into the distance.<sup>33</sup> He could not shift their division into different balconies or tiers, each priced according to position. Nor could Forsythe remove the economic pressure to sell these tickets and fill these seats with paying spectators. Forsythe worked within these conditions as enabling constraints.

Given that the principle of organization of the body in space is “paradigmatic” in most Forsythe’s works, changes of these spaces and production conditions are strongly linked to changes in his choreographic aesthetic.<sup>34</sup> Pivotal in this narrative is Forsythe’s direction after August 1996 of the fourth division of the *Städtische Bühnen*, the Theater Am Turm (TAT) at the Bockenheimer Depot (see Fig. 13).<sup>35</sup> This former tram station, a brick building with an exquisitely high wooden ceiling, had been previously converted into configurable theater space without a fixed stage and with adaptable seating arrangements in the auditorium. The multipurpose space was large and open—flexible in its ‘choreography.’ Stadium seating could be installed, setting up risers with seats for up to 400 audience members; different configurations for the stage and audience could also be built at Forsythe’s request. The venue became an experimental ground for Forsythe, in which he created new performance pieces that broke away from the fixed perspective of the proscenium.<sup>36</sup> The Bockenheimer Depot (hereafter Depot) was the primary Frankfurt venue of The Forsythe Company from 2005–15, and it was in this location that *Duo* was reconstructed for performance in 2012.

In contrast to the Ballett Frankfurt, The Forsythe Company did not create new performances for the venues of the Opera and Theater stages of the *Städtische Bühnen*, but rather in two primary theaters: the Depot in Frankfurt and the Festspielhaus Hellerau in Dresden (see Fig. 14). For the first three seasons, the company also created new works for the Schiffbau in Zürich, a renovated ship-making factory with multiple performance

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33 Siegmund, “Körper, Heterotopie und der begehrende Blick.”

34 Spier, “Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies,” p. 139. On the spatial aspects of Forsythe’s choreographies and their relationship to architecture see also Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 46–47; Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*.

35 The TAT was an important part of Frankfurt’s performing arts scene and an internationally known location for experimental theater. It existed in various forms and locations from 1953. The TAT moved to the Bockenheimer Depot in 1995 and was closed in 2004, allegedly due to budgetary problems. Its projects were frequently socio-politically engaged and critical. See Spier, “Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies,” p. 146; See also “Tod des TAT.”

36 Works including *Endless House* (1999) in which spectators were bussed from the Frankfurt Opera after the first act to the Bockenheimer Depot, also the premieres of *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000) and *Kammer/Kammer* (2000).

Figure 13. Configurable Space of the Bockenheimer Depot, Frankfurt.

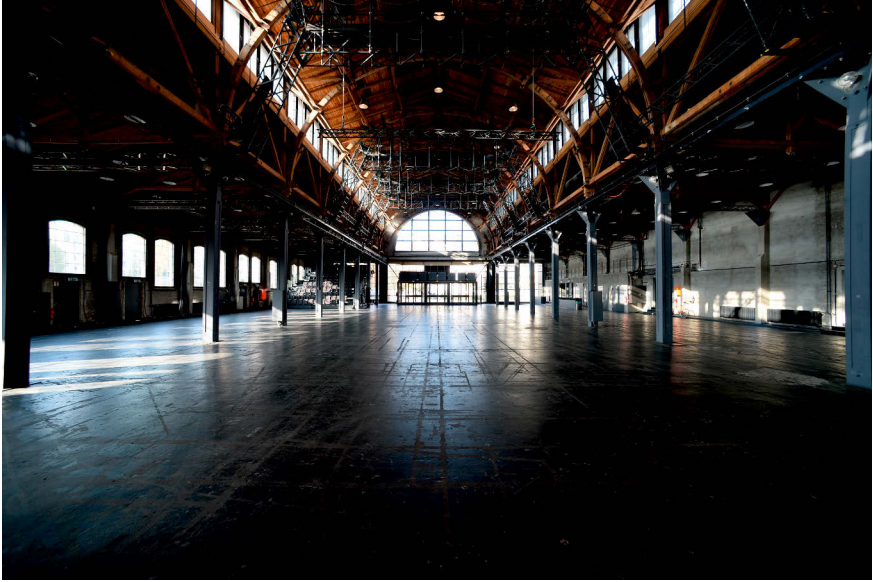


Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

venues inside. All three of these venues were spacious, configurable halls, different to the large, proscenium theaters to which the company frequently toured.

I agree with Vass-Rhee's assessment that these "versatile" spaces went hand-in-hand with changes in Forsythe's aesthetic.<sup>37</sup> At the Depot, Forsythe had the choice to refrain from using a proscenium and instead to build his desired configuration for the audience, shifting the number of people, their seating or lack thereof, their position and distance in relation to the spectacle. This changed the texture, acoustics, and even expectation of what a performance entailed, both for the audience and the dancers.<sup>38</sup> The choreography, which could not be separated from the architectural affordances, shaped the dancers' techniques for perceiving one another, the space, the music and the spectators. These "affordances," a concept that Vass-Rhee develops from James J. Gibson, stand for the entwinement of movement, environment and perception. Vass-Rhee shows how across Forsythe's longstanding work as a choreographer, he has persistently explored "visual-sonic affordances of movement and its presentation in performance."<sup>39</sup> This has engendered works with an abundance of experimental sound-making architectures and process, including many experiments—like *Duo*—in the register of *quiet* constellations of dance.

37 Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 47.

38 Works by Forsythe including: *you made me a monster* (2005), *Clouds After Cranach* (2005), *Heterotopia* (2006), *Angoloscuro/Camerascura* (2007), *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time* (2007 version), the premiere of *I don't believe in outer space* (2008), and *The Returns* (2009).

39 Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 77; see also Waterhouse, "Dancing Amidst," pp. 167–71.

Figure 14. Festspielhaus Hellerau in Dresden.

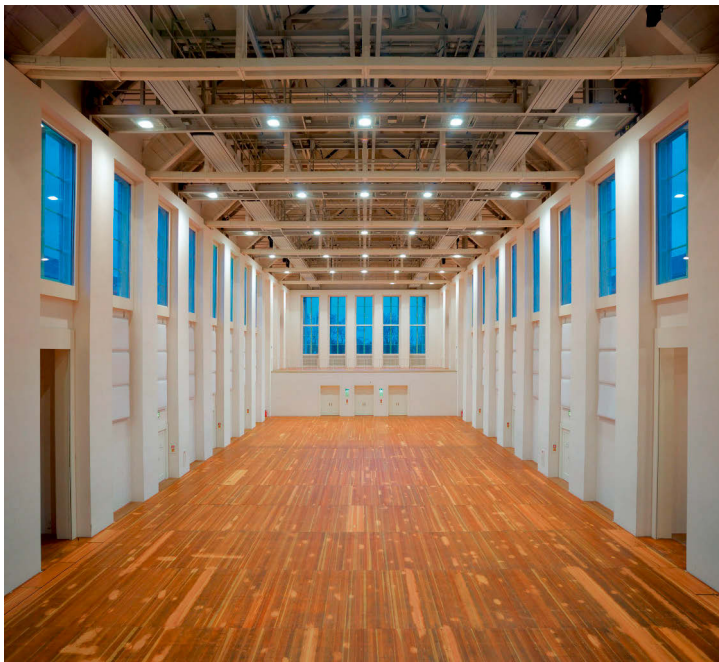


Photo © Lothar Sprenger.

Changing from the Opera House to the Depot thus corresponded in a shift in the performative process of the dancers, which came to emphasize other skills in The Forsythe Company: group improvisation, sensation and different processes of movement research. Looking retrospectively, Forsythe remarks in 2005:

“I stopped doing ballet because I couldn’t afford pointe shoes for my dancers anymore,” he says, adding with a laugh: “Is there a better reason? We also had to move out of the Frankfurt Opera House, and I don’t think ballet works as well in tight spaces. A ballet is like a hothouse flower: it needs certain conditions.”<sup>40</sup>

Here, augmenting Forsythe’s statement, I have articulated pragmatic ways that aesthetics and production conditions intertwine, through the spatiality of relations in the dancers’ process, tied to the context of the architecture of the theater. We can consider this explicitly now in *Duo*.

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40 Cappelle, “William Forsythe Dances to a New Tune.”

## 2.4 Duo's Setting and Music

*Duo* was created in 1996 for the Opera stage at the *Städtische Bühnen* in Frankfurt—a particular context. These material constraints could not always be replicated when *Duo* went on tour with the Ballett Frankfurt or later when *Duo* was reconstructed in The Forsythe Company.

The music by Thom Willems was a formative feature in this staging. Willems' score for the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* was written for live piano and electronics. The piano was concealed and distant, played backstage. The electronic acoustics were intermittent, swelling with height and volume above the spectators. When combined, these musical layers created dissonance, felt perceptibly by the performers and audience as a spatialized musical environment. The music synchronized occasionally with the dancers' movements, but generally provided an independent musical atmosphere. It was layered with the audible sounds of the dancers' breath as they moved, an aspect they described as part of the choreography as opposed to the musical score.

The appearance of the dancers' movement depended on multiple factors: the lighting, the dancers' costumes, as well as scenic elements such as the backdrop, floor color and the spectators' distance from the stage. Forsythe set the dancers' motion at the front of the stage, placing a black curtain behind them. They usually performed on a black floor. Their movements referenced classical ballet vocabulary, yet the dancers wore contemporary long sleeve leotards and flesh-colored socks without tights (see Figs. 9–10). These black costumes broke with classical conventions as well as common attire in the genre of leotard ballets: *Duo* leotards were different than the dancers' colored practice clothes and were unusually sheer across the dancers' breasts.<sup>41</sup> They were also individually tailored, with slightly different neck and hip lines. The costumes emphasized the bodily registers of the dancers' movement—their legs and torsos differentiated.

The two performers' intimacy and fragility was enhanced by their bareness in these mesh costumes and by Forsythe's decision to bring them as close to the audience as possible. The theater was, however, a vast and formal frame, codifying their bodies as participants in high art. For those educated in ballet conventions, the costumes were a contemporary commentary upon the leotard ballet precedents by choreographer George Balanchine and his philosophy of "ballet is woman."<sup>42</sup> By doubling the dancers, Forsythe made the women's collaboration the subject—highlighting their attention to one another and clothing the beautiful synchrony they had achieved with costumes showing that articulate refinement.

While developed by women, this sensitive cooperation could be interpreted by men as well. One of the first *Duo* dancers, Jill Johnson explained her philosophy:

There's a rightful sensitivity to what femininity is now, with our transgender siblings having their way and culture, and as we adopt new ways of seeing about that. So, I would say, that *Duo's* not necessarily just for women. I think that there are qualities that we could say are feminine. [...] Maybe the best way to describe it is that in my experience

41 On leotard ballets and their sub-genres, see Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 26–32.

42 Macaulay, "Of Women, Men and Ballet in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," p. 14.

of making it and performing it, *Duo* was a real opportunity to be women. I'm grateful to Bill [Forsythe] for providing that space for that expression—which can be translated in many different ways. So, I don't think it's gender specific, but as a woman who identifies as a woman, for me there's a woman in it. [...] You know in a way, I hesitate to define what it is, because I think it continues to have a life so, maybe in a way it's tracking experiences and it's still leaving it open.<sup>43</sup>

Johnson here emphasizes the “open” processual components of the choreography, which allow for the gendered aspects she experienced to evolve—with new performers and changing perception of gender at-large. From his perspective, in an interview, Forsythe also commented upon the potential of the gendered performance to change, providing precedents that could also enable new projects of thinking masculinity. He said:

I was a man showing motions. And then the women took responsibility and incorporated those motions. And it became assigned by ... what do I call it ... the social visibility of a performance into a feminine domain. And then it went back to men, but with this feminine imperative. Do you know what I mean? It was very important for me [...] I get annoyed when it gets too rough. If it gets, or there's too much what we consider as stereotypically masculine energy. And I think those two characters are actually quite delicate, Brigel [Gjoka] and Riley [Watts], and for them to sustain a masculine delicacy is an interesting project also.<sup>44</sup>

While open to change, the *Duo* project consistently explored *delicate* cooperation. The setting for the piece supported the performers' concentration and the audience's perception and involvement therein.

Performances of *Duo* could thus be disturbed when the dancers came *too* close to an audience (such as when the hall was not large enough) and/or when spectators felt uncomfortable, or aroused by the women. The piece was designed so that the dancers' intimacy would be protected by a *proper* distance—their bodies veiled by their costumes and their technique seen from the gap of space between the performers and the audience. The dancers could also be bothered when the piano was too close to them, not giving them enough independence for their timings to emerge. While performing, the dancers focused upon their co-motion, yet the setting was critical. *Duo* was not simply an abstract ballet transplantable to any theater and public: it was a delicate event.

To provide insight into this ecosystem of musicality, below I analyze the musical layer of the premiere on January 20, 1996.

### 2.4.1 Dissonant Counterpoint

Members of the audience cough as the dancers stand in silence. The performers begin moving, with one synchronous, quiet gesture. Then their steps strike the floor rhythmically, like Morse code: thumps caught by a microphone that amplifies their sound.<sup>45</sup>

43 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

44 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

45 The performers, composer and choreographer could not remember at which point they began using microphones to amplify the sound of the *Duo* performers. Vass-Rhee cited testimony from



The pianist begins playing after the two women have fallen to the floor. She plays dispersed descending notes in the treble region. These are unresolved and unconventional harmonies: atonal music. The unseen piano sounds live—yet distant. The notes played are sparse: single notes and chords, without syncopation, trills or frills. The phrasing is minimal, making it difficult to grasp a melody or locate a tonal center. The tempo is slower than the tick of a clock, without the somberness or heaviness of *adagio*.

The women move with lightness, through configurations that seem very deliberate but without any solemnity. They appear separate from the sounds outside of their bell jar.

The performers repeat the movement motifs from the beginning and fall a second time to the floor. Now electronic flageolets enter the composition: atmospheric and louder than the piano. Their slow motif is an ascending progression of three tones. Like the sound of airy strings in a faraway orchestra, or distant radio signals, they suggest a space outside the theater. Their layering lends dissonance to the composition: heard within the piano, and between the piano and the electronics. Coughs persist in the audience.

With the first lengthy phrase of unison, the performers are breathing audibly and more synchronously. Air runs into their noses, and out their open mouths. Sometimes they form the sound—making caverns with their vocal tracts. They lower their tongues for vowels and consonants to pass, breathing-movement. Soon this windy speak turns into breathing tired with the motion. Their footfalls continue to add audible punctuations to the atmosphere. Their bodies are light, but they have real weight that is arduous to move.

The music of *Duo*—of dancers, live piano and atmospheric strings—ebbs and flows like waves. Sometimes the compositional layers merge all together; other times it is just two layers of the composition corresponding. This is a multidimensional counterpoint. When the electronics build, they become louder, faster and twangy. They also drop out, showing the dancers back to their ambient breath. The piano, while intermittently more elaborate, never builds to any discernable rhythms or melodies. For the entire composition, the pianist remains far off and disconnected from the dancers. The dancers' ecosystem of movement logic is never tarnished, only placed in relation—contrasted and juxtaposed—with other sources.

Midway through the piece there is a resounding lull of silence. The dancers pause, lying on their sides like sirens. After the dancers resume moving, the piano starts, and then the electronics. The dissonance increases and a female voice begins to sing—the source sounds like a sample, entering and exiting irregularly. Perhaps a medieval song? Like the twang of a music box, or church bells playing out of sync in two different steeples, there is a separate togetherness, brought into one by the listener. The volume of all layers rises, and the dancers increase their exertion, jumping. A few words are softly whispered between them.

After this climax, they end with rhythmical motions in place; these are academic citations of ballet positions. There are some notes from the piano, which stops a few

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Morrow and sound designer Niels Lanz that this began in 2003; many of my informants thought it was earlier. See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 241–42.

seconds before the women end their motions, directly facing the audience, as the lights blackout.

### 2.4.2 *Duo's Distant Piano*

#### A Consonant Dissonance

**Fieldwork note: Meeting in Rüsselsheim with David Morrow, July 25, 2017**

David Morrow performed as the pianist in *Duo* from 1997 to 2002. Our interview takes place at David's house in Rüsselsheim, a mid-size city near Frankfurt am Main. David—almost sixty, with grey hair and blue eyes—speaks extremely quietly, with enthusiasm and dry humor. Having prepared for my visit, on his piano are multiple scores for the piano music of *Duo* with different titles: from “Racing Margot” to “*Duo*,” “*Duo* for David” and “URGENT FOR DAVID MORROW.” David sits at the piano and plays a later version for me, which is annotated with words and marks made with light pencil.

The music is pretty much based on two chords, he explains. These make a clear situation, without defining too much: meaning the harmony is not a logical progression or one that has a definitive affect, happy or sad. He criticizes that when practiced or played alone the piano itself can acquire a mono harmony that is in itself not interesting enough: “the music has no tension.” He stops after two pages, telling me that he is playing a bit too quickly and that it would be better to do it with the acoustic elements because the music does not make sense without that. Though the dancers are independent of the music, the music is not entirely independent of them and the situation. It all hangs together, in an atmospheric way—a consonant dissonance.

On the *Duo* score at the piano there are small notes handwritten in pencil every few measures, with poetic words such as: “stirring,” and “sometimes indecision.” David explains, “I had to find my approach to things,” especially given the challenge of the technical setup. He emphasizes the music has to be “alive” not mechanical. He justifies: “for me it is always a relationship between the abstract and finding a personal relationship.” He asks me, is it not the same with the dancers? That everyone finds a way, of adding something of themselves?

Morrow's testimony helps clarify the complex acoustic architecture of *Duo*. The dancers and the audience listen to the piano music of *Duo* from a distance. The piano was hidden from the audience's view by the black curtain serving as the dancers' backdrop. The piano was placed in the wings, as far away from the dancers as possible. Morrow explains: “There is no real connection with the piano and that is ok. [...] Basically, I'm only responding in a couple places to the dancers.”<sup>46</sup> Still the actions and the silences had to be aligned.

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46 David Morrow, interview with the author, Rüsselsheim, July 25, 2017.

To synchronize timing, a monitor was placed on the piano showing the livestream video of the dancers performing. This allowed the pianist to see the movements he or she needed. Composer Thom Willems confirms:

What was extremely important was giving accents to the dancers. Because you were watching a video [monitor] at the same time you could look at them. The accents support the dancers. It helps them a lot, you know? Some leg movements and arm movements. That was the main focus actually to support them.<sup>47</sup>

Morrow remembered wearing headphones, allowing him to hear the acoustics on the stage but also serving as the line for technicians to communicate. The chatter of the technicians speaking over the line was frequently distracting. His annotation of Willem's piano score acted as a strategy to stay focused within the music, and also to spend time in the contemplation which accompanied it—remembering the annotated koans of his musical dramaturgy. These were strategies to produce music, without overproducing sound.

As a consequence of the specific positioning of the piano required in performance, rehearsing the piece in the smaller space of a studio was difficult—there, the piano would be too close. Perhaps because of this, the dancers mostly rehearsed in silence, entraining to themselves and not the music.

One thing that can go wrong in *Duo* is placing the piano too close to the dancers. In 2012 when *Duo* was reconstructed, moving from the opera stage to the smaller Depot, Morrow knew “it would not work.” In the Depot there was no space backstage or in the wings for the piano to be distant: “There was no way you can make the piano sound like in the distance.”<sup>48</sup> Another potential problem that arose around the musicality of *Duo* stemmed from the pianist playing too much, ruining the delicate balance of the situation. Willems describes:

The issue is that you have to dare to become extremely simple and silent in that piece. We poetically hold back; hold extremely back. That was the main objective actually, and that was not always so successful. To dare to stop, to be silent, you know? To give it space.<sup>49</sup>

Whether too close or too much, the musicality of *Duo* was delicate.

This sensitivity especially influenced the piece's reconstruction in 2012. From my interviews with the dancers, they thought Forsythe had made the decision to cancel *Duo* performances in 2012 because they were not ready to perform. Yet, given Morrow's testimony, it is likely that the reconstruction was also compounded because of difficulty of staging *Duo*'s distant piano in a new space—the Bockenheimer Depot. This illustrates how the choreography of the piece is enmeshed within the architecture of performance, requiring the right proportions of music and dance in the new space. In other words, material and architectural conditions are seminal to the particular constitution of the choreography.

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47 Thom Willems, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

48 David Morrow, interview with the author, Rüsselsheim, July 25, 2017.

49 Thom Willems, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

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This chapter has developed an organizational portrait of Forsythe's ensembles, Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. Taking a materialist approach to studying practice, the chapter demonstrated how the artists' activities are both constrained and enabled through dynamic material configurations. After an introduction to the field and the organization of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main* (section 2.1), the structural "givens" of these municipal ensembles are deciphered (section 2.2). Depicting the shifting architecture of the stage spaces in which the ensembles work (section 2.3), I have focused in detail upon how these production conditions impacted the dancers' practice. In particular, I have analyzed the reconstruction of *Duo* in 2012 and the challenge of reconstructing *Duo's* distant piano (section 2.4). Overall, this chapter highlights the infrastructural, economic and architectural aspects that exert a notable influence upon the dancers' practices—a configuration of materials and resources underlying and enabling the choreographic pieces.



## Chapter 3: The Dancers

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Each morning the dancers of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company commuted to work wearing their street clothes, soon to be replaced with well-worn sweatpants, T-shirts, leotards and socks. In the last chapter, I explored the material and infrastructural conditions that enabled Forsythe's choreographies to emerge and change—showing this entwinement to be dynamically interlaced with the political and economic landscape of Frankfurt am Main. In this chapter I turn to the so-called human resources of these organizations: focusing on the dancers. Besides stating who these artists are, I explore their cultural and professional backgrounds, their working contracts and their values. Through these queries, I shape an occupational portrait of dancers coming together for professional activity and clarify key aspects of the occupational culture that supported *Duo*.

As a new dancer joining the Ballett Frankfurt in 2004, my first action was to fly from Columbus, Ohio, to Frankfurt. After dropping my luggage off at a hotel, I met a German member of the team at the theater, who escorted me to the public city office (*Ordnungsamt*) to register myself as foreigner with a working visa. The apparatus of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main*, in terms of how it legally legitimized dancers to travel and become members of the team was a fundamental aspect of the workplace—a fascinating institutional 'choreography.' In this chapter I will show how my story of immigration fits into the mosaic of international dancers joining forces in Frankfurt and begin discussing what this transnationalism signifies for *Duo*.

### 3.1 Frankfurt am Main

Frankfurt is well known as an international and intellectual German city—the fifth largest by population in Germany. Statistics for the population in 2017 (see Table 2) demonstrate the diversity of its inhabitants: showing nearly thirty percent of the population to be foreigners and one quarter Germans with a migration background. This is relevant to understanding the climate of Forsythe's companies, for the international character of the ensembles was mirrored by the city population.

Table 2. Frankfurt am Main Population (2017)<sup>\*1</sup>

<b>Population</b>	741 093
<b>Population density (inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	2 985
<b>Up to 17 years (percent)</b>	16.7
<b>65 years and over (percent)</b>	15.7
<b>Foreigners (percent)</b>	29.5
<b>German inhabitants with migration background<sup>*2</sup> (percent)</b>	23.6

\*1: See “Statistisches Portrait / Statistical Portrait Frankfurt am Main 2017.” | \*2: People who emigrated to Germany or who have at least one parent who emigrated to Germany.

In the present era of increasing far-right agitation against immigration in both Europe and the United States, it is worth pausing to acknowledge Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company’s utopic assembly of international dancers—as well as the values and legal policy that made this possible. Though Germany was late to acknowledge itself as a country of immigration, and not all fields in the performing arts have opened generously to migrants, municipal ballet companies in western Germany have been notably international for decades.<sup>1</sup> Without this underlying cultural value of the artistic profession and its recognition by the state, as an American, Forsythe might not have come to the Stuttgart Ballet in 1973 and his companies would not have achieved the international diversity they boasted.

Ballett Frankfurt would place Frankfurt on the map as a locus of contemporary innovation—a “magnet place” for dancers seeking to engage in radical choreographic work. Sociologist Michael Farrell describes a “magnet place” as a location “where people value the expertise and practice the skills the prospective members hope to acquire.”<sup>2</sup> Under Forsythe’s direction, the ensemble became a company with considerable reputation and international status, touring worldwide throughout Europe, North America and also to Asia, Australia and South America. Dancer Dana Caspersen recounts:

The company, both companies really [Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company], were always kind of a hub for international dancers. So, there was, was literally almost always ten or twenty guests [visiting dancers] in the room. It was always full of people. And Frankfurt Ballett was always the same ... people were in and out, taking class all the time, hanging out at rehearsals. [...] The broader network that was connected to the work was extensive and it would come. And then, when we were on tour people were constantly coming, so you really got to meet a lot of people. We connected to a lot of different folks.<sup>3</sup>

1 Admittedly, this diversity reflected the mobility of predominantly Caucasian dancers within the ballet network (moving within and between Europe, North America, Britain and Australia); people of color were a minority therein. For further discussion of these issues focusing on European theater, see Sharifi, “Theatre and Migration,” in particular on Germany pp. 336–72.

2 See Farrell, *Collaborative Circles*, p. 19.

3 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018.

In Forsythe's ensembles, there was extensive border crossing, mingling and intermingling of dancers, fueled by an excitement of being attractive and different: "original," said *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper, a "hub" and "network" as Dana Caspersen described it. On the whole, the ensembles were tolerant and open to guests and visitors.

## 3.2 The Dancers' Working Conditions

### 3.2.1 Auditions

Throughout their careers, professional dancers are sorted into schools and companies through a process of attending auditions, or selection based upon their performance in training or rehearsal.<sup>4</sup> Breaking this mold, Forsythe did not hold public group auditions for new dancers. When asked, "Where do you find your dancers?" Forsythe replied, "They find me."<sup>5</sup> Reversing the sorting process was one of many ways that Forsythe negated norms and common procedures in the field of dance. Forsythe relied on dancers to choose *him*. Dancers made this decision after performing Forsythe's work in another company, seeing his companies on tour, and based upon understanding drawn through their professional and social networks.

'Finding' Forsythe was, however, not as easy as it sounds. Although it was clear where he worked, the building at the *Städtische Bühnen* was closed to outsiders, with guards at the entrance. With no publicly announced procedure for how to get a job, aspiring dancers strategically used their social networks to learn from friends how to get into the studio and make contact. Once in proximity to Forsythe, they had to overcome anxieties and ask him personally if he would consider them. In the quote cited above, Forsythe belittles his influence: he did not accept everyone who managed to request a personal audition. Moreover, when expressing to him personally their interest in a job, without the ritual of institutional procedures, dancers were placed in a vulnerable and intimate position. Beyond dancing ability, becoming a Forsythe dancer required drive, determination and the capability to use social resources to navigate the process. These skills foreshadowed competences necessary for work in the company. Thus, rather than being trained in a school for Forsythe's methods, or living in Frankfurt first before joining the company, most dancers moved to Frankfurt upon being granted a position in the ensemble, drawn by their curiosity and attraction to Forsythe's creative work, and desire to take part in it. The auditioning process reveals how, despite the prevailing institutional structure, an intimate pact with Forsythe and significant social capital secured one's access to the company—setting the tone for the cooperation to come.

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4 Freelance dance projects are significantly less audition-oriented than classical ballet and municipal theaters' structures of production.

5 Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 90.



### 3.2.2 Soloist Contracts

Within most classical ballet companies world-wide, dancers are organized by rank within a pyramid structure. The hierarchal ballet system reflects the performance of ballet since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dividing the labor of artists between ensemble or solo roles.<sup>6</sup> The pyramid has a broad base; the majority of dancers make up the ensemble as the *corps de ballet*. At the top are the highest status dancers called *étoiles* (stars) or principal dancers. Frequently there are multiple ranks between.<sup>7</sup> Corresponding with their status, dancers perform roles that are more or less featured in the choreography, and are compensated with different salaries. Distinctions in rank are internationally respected. A ballet dancer's career is oriented towards the ideal of upwards progression towards solo or principal roles. In contrast, contemporary dance companies are more egalitarian, placing dancers all at the same level.

The contracts of dancers in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company reflected the standardized legal contracts for dancers of different rank working in a private German theater. When Forsythe assumed directorship of Ballett Frankfurt, he chose to convert the company into an egalitarian team. He gave all subsequent new members of the Ballett Frankfurt contracts all of the *same* type and pay level as soloists (*Solomitglieder*). This effectively leveled the hierarchy, making all members share the same status, title and earnings. Through this legal action Forsythe explicitly disrupted the hierarchal ideology of ballet. Translating this status into English terms, some former Ballett Frankfurt artists list themselves as principal dancers of the Ballett Frankfurt in their biographies.

As with all employees in the municipal theater of Frankfurt, dancers received thirteen months' pay a year; the extra month was divided and paid out as a bonus for the Christmas and summer holidays. Despite Frankfurt being a comparatively expensive German city, the salary was enough that they could afford to live well; they were also paid comparatively higher than other ballet and contemporary dancers of equal status.<sup>8</sup>

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6 See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 34.

7 For example, currently in the Paris Opera Ballet there are five ranks of dancers, who are named, from highest to lowest: *Étoiles*, *Premiers Danseurs*, *Sujets*, *Coryphées*, *Quadrilles*. At the Hamburg Ballet there are also five ranks: Principals, Character Artists, Soloists, *Corps de Ballet*, and Apprentices.

8 Some legendary dancers made six-figure incomes; exceptions like Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev earned even more. Wulff finds that ballet dancers' salaries depended on union rules and national standards. Some dancers were paid only for the weeks they worked (approximately six months a year), others full-time. Considering data from 1993–6, she finds: *corps de ballet* dancers "earned from \$400 to \$1,048 per week and soloists from \$1,125 to \$1,200 per month, and the salaries of principals ranged from \$1,500 per month to \$2,560 per week. Famous principals could also be paid sums like \$30,000 for a couple of guest performances with another company." Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 57. In comparison, a dancer of the Ballett Frankfurt in 1994 reported receiving 2400DM per month (before tax), approximately \$1450, reflecting soloist/principal status. Their salary was however elevated by additional soloist fees, overtime payments in line with municipal and union regulations and *per diems* when on tour. This was a sizable bonus to their salaries, given the lengthy hours that they worked when creating new pieces and the substantial number of weeks they spent touring. These salaries were also adjusted every two years for inflation. In The Forsythe Company, dancers earned 4000€ per month in 2005 (before tax), with adjustment for inflation over the next decade. They did not earn overtime pay but did collect *per diems* on tour.

Paid vacation was a minimum of four weeks in Ballett Frankfurt and was often longer than this in The Forsythe Company, whose contracts additionally allowed dancers several weeks each year to pursue individual projects, something that was looked on as a period of continuing education or professional development. The employees of these ensembles joined the German state pension system, with their employers contributing equally to a retirement fund. In 1990 Forsythe explains, dancers “can walk out of there [Ballett Frankfurt] with \$10,000 or \$15,000 if they decide to leave at the end of, say, 16 years.”<sup>9</sup>

As with all German citizens, the dancers could choose between public or private health care. Dancers who became pregnant were offered maternity leave in accordance with German law and many returned to work thereafter. In conformity with legislation around workplace injury, dancers who were injured onstage or in rehearsal also received proper paid leave, corresponding to the rules of their insurance plan. Their wages were secure, with rules protecting the dancers from being fired rashly; after 15 years, one achieved tenure status at the theater. While Forsythe had on occasion terminated a dancer or employee’s contract, in general members felt secure in their employment, though always under pressure to demonstrate their value.<sup>10</sup> Such support and resources should be acknowledged in terms of how the structure of the ensemble and the legal provisions around work created the framework for long-term stable collaboration: bringing together international dancers, caring for their health and offering financial stability for life-planning. Compared to the low wages common among freelance artists, Forsythe’s working conditions allowed for his dancers to be financially secure.<sup>11</sup>

In my fieldwork, I tried to understand the complex ways that the dancers felt themselves ‘enssembled’ through the production conditions and their occupational culture. Did they feel influenced by the city and culture of Frankfurt? In Wulff’s ethnographic fieldwork at the Ballett Frankfurt, she observed that the long hours of touring and performing made local integration difficult:

[...] most people involved found themselves working twelve hours per day. Just like touring, the making of a new ballet takes the form of an intensive short-time community that makes the outside world temporarily unreal. (This often put a strain on relationships with family and friends who are not in the production and not in the theatre, let alone those not in the country.)<sup>12</sup>

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9 Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 87.

10 An exception perhaps was the period of 1998–2004. In an article written in 2000, Midgette writes that Forsythe’s “statements about reducing the company’s size have reportedly led to some concern, not to say panic, among the dancers; from the present 36, already a reduced number, he speaks of going down to 22, then 16.” See Midgette, “Forsythe in Frankfurt,” p. 20.

11 For an overview of socioeconomic conditions in Germany, see Sabisch, “For a Topology of Practices,” pp. 61–63.

12 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 159. Similarly, Klein writes of Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch: “The intense work and extensive touring barely allowed for anything else.” See Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 158.

Rather than bonding with locals, most dancers chose to live within the enclave of their work and professional ties—which, as Caspersen has emphasized, consisted of a dance network stretched across the cities in which they had lived, worked and performed on tour. Like other dancers that I interviewed, Caspersen recounted, “I felt like Frankfurt itself was where I lived. It didn’t feel like home.”<sup>13</sup>

Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company were, however, far from “total institutions,” to borrow a concept from sociologist Erving Goffman, who coined this phrase to refer to institutions that bar participants from interaction with the outside.<sup>14</sup> Compared to other dance ensembles, they were very welcoming to other dancers, as exemplified in the company’s open-door policy for guests. Yet Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company were an intense world in which making and dancing choreographic pieces became the energetic and existential focus of one’s life. The dancers reminded me it was also a rewarding lifestyle in which cooperative relations were vibrant.

The institutionalization of their ensembles protected Forsythe’s dancers from the precarious economy of the freelance dance market, in which dancers’ schedules are organized in line with projects, which frequently overlap, take up all their attention and pay poorly. Freelance dancers often live together throughout creative residencies and tours. Successful artists with abundant international projects may only be home for a few months—or even weeks—each year. Ideally, freelance conditions enable artists to be more flexible in constructing their artistic work outside of the conventions and routines of institutions. However, the poverty and staggering tractability required of freelance artists make this lifestyle as difficult as it is empowering.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, dancers in Forsythe’s ensembles were ‘home’ for greater stretches of time and toured under more lucrative conditions—better hotels, with the privacy of single rooms. The ensembles also evoked a more liberal and creative climate than comparable ballet or German municipal companies and were significantly less hierarchal. In my interviews, the dancers spoke positively overall about their working conditions.

While these communities were fine models, they were not perfect. Many dancers struggled to achieve a good work-life balance. To borrow an adage from sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild “work becomes home.”<sup>16</sup> On one hand, these ensembles were an activity site comprised of people who understood and cared for one another—who together appreciated the embodied aspects of dancing lives. Constantly returning to one another for support, the ensemble reinforced the group’s beliefs regarding the values of choreographic ventures. Yet the ‘home’ of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company was not a place of rejuvenation and rest, making stress and exhaustion a common issue.

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13 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018. This is reported similarly in Pina Bausch’s company, see Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 150.

14 See Goffman, “The Characteristics of Total Institutions.”

15 Compare to Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 291; Kunst, *Artist at Work*, pp. 37–38. Kunst critically shows the difficulties of project-based labor in the arts, as “a cheap low-class labour force that should be held in a state of ‘experimental precariousness’ for as long as possible.” See Kunst, *Artist at Work*, p. 158, with discussion spanning pp. 153–75.

16 See Hochschild, *The Time Bind*. In contrast to Hochschild’s study, the dancers did not describe the complementary process of ‘home becoming work’ and few dancers lived in homes with children.

Dancers performing *Duo* since 2015 have aimed to uphold the work standards set by their previous ensemble contracts with Forsythe. They continue to be paid at a high level, touring worldwide as freelance artists in performances, maintaining their training and performance condition on their own, without the support of a company structure. These tours have been organized and promoted by Sadler's Wells Theatre of London, which since 2005 adopted a focus explicitly on contemporary dance.<sup>17</sup> In this new arrangement, like freelancers, they must pay for their healthcare and vacation time themselves. Since 2018, the dancers share the touring profits equally with Forsythe, and refer to themselves as collaborators. Their other work—as successful freelance choreographers, performers and teachers—fills gaps between these performances.

### 3.3 Transnational Careers

#### 3.3.1 “Ballet Across Borders”

*Duo* dancer Francesca Harper remembers Ballett Frankfurt was all about “crossing culture, crossing ideas, crossing borders.” There she felt, “I have no boundaries. It was a limitless feeling I felt.”<sup>18</sup> They were, according to dancer Dana Caspersen, an “international” group.<sup>19</sup> Such diversity reflects wider patterns of transnational mobility, which can be traced back for centuries in the lineages of ballet dancers.<sup>20</sup> The concept of the transnational implies migrants who not only cross borders, but engage in complex “multi-stranded social relations that link [...] their societies of origin and settlement.”<sup>21</sup> Ballet history is riddled with transnational contact, weaving a complex exploration of place, meaning, culture and appropriation.<sup>22</sup>

In her pioneering ethnographic research on career and culture in the world of ballet dancers, anthropologist Helena Wulff considers dancers' mobility in their careers: migrating throughout their education, moving between professional companies and traveling extensively on tour.<sup>23</sup> Wulff presents an insightful view of transnational mobility as an active component shaping the careers of dancers, “in a transnational web of ideas,

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17 See “Annual Review 2017–18: Sadler's Wells.”

18 Francesca Harper, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

19 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018.

20 The ballet tradition, derived from European folk and court dances and professionalized by Louis XIV has flourished in urban centers and followed paths of European cultural exchange. This has led to a “centre-periphery structure.” See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 165; for a synopsis of this history, see pp. 37–38.

21 Schiller et al., “Towards a Definition of Transnationalism,” p. ix.

22 On appropriation, see Gottschild, “Stripping the Emperor.” See also Gottschild, “The Black Dancing Body as a Measure of Culture.”

23 Wulff notes this is true for dancers as well as choreographers, rehearsal assistants, even technicians. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, in particular pp. 39–41. In studying the mobility of the contemporary dance community of Brussels, Rudi Laermans also finds exceptional mobility, noting that only a “tiny minority” work for several years with the same company. See Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 290.

encounters and communications.”<sup>24</sup> Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company provided a unique microcosm, which produced alternatives to the procedures and working climates of established ballet centers. In this way, a particular occupational culture was shaped that was also attributable to the specific funding and infrastructural conditions enumerated in the last chapter and the contractual conditions of labor outlined in the previous section.

The ballet centers with the highest international status are the French, Russian, British, Danish and American schools.<sup>25</sup> Germany is conspicuously absent from this list for complex reasons, notably that classical music, opera and theater have held dominance, with ballet frequently serving as a subsidiary of opera. Without a national school to prep his dancers for his particular creative process, Forsythe’s companies sourced artists from other places.

In her consideration of ballet’s transnationalism, Wulff challenges the overall idea of the ballet world as a purely closed, ideological and traditional aesthetic vocation, entrapped in national centers. Instead, Wulff discovers “a tension between tradition and change.”<sup>26</sup> Including the Ballett Frankfurt in her fieldwork allows for her to explore how the company becomes a center, espousing new values and (re)defining a new ballet style. While Wulff characterized the change in the traditional ballet world overall as slow, she concurs that in Forsythe’s innovative ensembles it was fast and profoundly challenging to tradition.

### 3.3.2 Education and Professional Experience

Ballett Frankfurt’s members were predominantly highly experienced ballet dancers who had worked with multiple companies and passed through distinguished institutions of ballet and dance education.<sup>27</sup> Some had achieved high international status as soloists or principal dancers. Though there were pockets of common stylistic formation within the company, overall the dancers embodied a plethora of ballet trainings and styles. Forsythe was fascinated and inspired by unusual talent, choosing individuals rather than seeking a common type. This led him to occasionally include exceptional dancers without classical training who had other skills that he valued—such as proficiency in contemporary dance, choreography, hip-hop, tap, dance theater, or even astrophysics. It was all about exceptions: dancers with unusual capabilities, body types and creative proficiencies.

There are few available statistics to compare the international diversity of the Ballett Frankfurt to other companies. Wulff finds approximately 20 percent of the dancers in

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24 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 18.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

27 Schools such as: the Australian Ballet School, Pôle National Supérieur de Danse Rosella Hightower in Cannes, Mudra School, School of the Hamburg Ballet, the John Cranko Schule in Stuttgart, the Juilliard School, Codarts Rotterdam, Royal Ballet School, School of American Ballet, and the Royal Swedish Ballet School, among others; companies such as: Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, the National Ballet of Canada, Hamburg Ballet, the Stuttgart Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater and the Royal Swedish Ballet, to name a few.

her study of classical companies were foreigners.<sup>28</sup> In western Germany, projects to expand the opera ballets into more independent companies had been steered for decades by international leaders and involved dancers from around the world. In comparison to Wulff's findings, in 1977—when Forsythe was beginning his work at the Stuttgart Ballet as a choreographer—the Stuttgart Ballet reported having dancers of 17 different nationalities.<sup>29</sup> Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch had dancers coming from 20 different nations.<sup>30</sup> In comparison, Forsythe's ensembles had dancers from 28 countries (see section 3.3.3). In the Stuttgart Ballet, bilingual rehearsals were “standard.”<sup>31</sup> In Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, Forsythe conducted rehearsals with his dancers in English, communicating to the technicians and staff in German.

### 3.3.3 Statistics for Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company

Approximately 155 dancers worked full-time with Forsythe in the context of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company; eleven of these learned and/or performed *Duo*.<sup>32</sup> Overall, these dancers came from 28 different countries, with half of them spending five or more years in the ensembles. Ballett Frankfurt was the larger ensemble, with between 30 and 40 dancers; The Forsythe Company was comparatively smaller with 16–18 artists.<sup>33</sup> Of these dancers, in both companies half were typically men and half women, a practice stemming from classical ballet companies (in total 75 men and 80 women). These artists were 42 percent European (nine percent German and six percent French), 37 percent American, and seven percent dual citizens. Notably, 55 percent were English native speakers (from America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand).<sup>34</sup> Sexuality was not heteronormative, but included vibrant expressions of homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality.

Both the Stuttgart Ballet and Forsythe's ensembles had sizeable populations of American dancers—40 percent and 38 percent respectively. In 1977, director Marcia Haydée explained the Stuttgart Ballet's Americanization upon not only artistic grounds but, as I have shown, as a result of the attractive conditions of legal employment that offered dancers German standards of job security, social welfare and consecrated measures of work-life balance. Forsythe, an American, has also justified these proportions on artistic grounds, commenting:

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28 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 41.

29 Goldman, “Stuttgart Ballet Comes ‘Home’ to America,” p. 69.

30 Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, p. 10. Klein also describes how the dancers' diversity—not only culturally, but also in terms of age, experience, training, and body type—was central to the company's identity and practice of “translating” differences. See also *ibid.*, p.162.

31 Goldman, “Stuttgart Ballet Comes ‘Home’ to America,” p. 69.

32 See Appendix B. In comparison, 210 dancers worked with Pina Bausch in Tanztheater Wuppertal during Bausch's 35-year direction of the company between 1973–2009. See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, p. 151.

33 Both were smaller than classical ballet companies, which Wulff reports had 75 (American Ballet Theatre), 80 (Royal Swedish Ballet), 88 (British Royal Ballet) and over 100 dancers (The New York City Ballet, the Paris Opéra Ballet, Kirov Ballet) at the time of her fieldwork. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 34.

34 For further statistics, see Appendix H.

American dancers have the unique ability to move with great physical freedom. They can cover space with breadth like no other dancers. The innate sense of syncopation and jazz that the American dancers have has been especially useful to the builders of our repertory. American dancers are less reserved than Europeans and have less reservation about unconventional aspects of their art.<sup>35</sup>

While Forsythe's remarks may be shaded by the context of speaking to an American newspaper, they give important information about how he thinks and interprets the transnational ballet community. They confirm his insider observation of national ballet styles.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.3.4 Diversity

This question of, how do we decenter the whiteness of dance studies transnationally? [...] One way I want to contribute to this: I think there's a whole new way we have to write the history of ballet, and it's the global history. Of course, ballet was moving between cultures—not just in the twentieth century, but in all those movements, between France and Germany and Italy and England—and so ballet has always been a transnational form, from its inception. And so I think we have to rewrite the whole history of ballet so that we follow all of that migration of the form.<sup>37</sup>

The “crossing culture, crossing ideas, crossing borders” felt by *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper is an expression of the diversity at the core of the ensembles of the Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. This is highly significant for *Duo*, a dance exploring unison and similarity, as it shows that the central values of the ensembles were *not* the sameness (and whiteness) of classical ballet, but rather an appreciation of diversity and difference.

In both Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, the dancers had distinct and unique bodies and movement predilections. Typically, in a classical ballet company, dancers of different national origin and training still fit an idealized body image, movement style, and gender representation.<sup>38</sup> Sulcas concurs:

The sense of the dancers as individuals [...] has also to do with the variety of physiques that Forsythe employs: unlike most classical dance companies, there is no one ideal

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35 Goldman, “Stuttgart Ballet Comes ‘Home’ to America,” p. 69.

36 Wulff writes: “The idea of national ballet styles can be traced back to the major ballet schools’ providing different types of training that have been acclaimed transnationally: the French, the Russian, the British, the Danish and the American schools—the traditional ballet centres, in other words.” See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 41; on ballet styles and transnationalism, see *ibid.*, pp. 37–44.

37 Dance scholar Susan Manning, see Clayton et al., “Inside/Beside Dance Studies,” p. 22.

38 The norms of ballet dancers being: long legs, arched feet and balanced proportions; that they are athletic and (in particular for women) thin; that they have good line, grace and technical skills such as balance, flexibility and turnout; and lastly that they portray the heteronormative ideal of a woman who is delicate and demure, and a man who is taller than his female partner and capable of lifting, leading and even marrying her.

body type for the dancers. [...] it means that the dance is highly influenced by individual physical possibilities rather than, as is usual for ballet (and particularly for female dancers), by the physical capabilities and lines of the aesthetically dominant body.<sup>39</sup>

Forsythe's environment was enriched by these differences to the traditional ballet archetypes.<sup>40</sup>

Ballett Frankfurt marks an important epoch in ballet history as a company radically open to dancers of different ethnicities and which attracted a high percentage of dancers of color.<sup>41</sup> African American *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper remembered Ballett Frankfurt as revolutionary in its inclusion of dancers with African heritage and portrayal of diversity on stage.<sup>42</sup> Harper understood Forsythe's vision as "pioneering" in that it did not reproduce a world, but explored how exchange and inspiration could do things beyond what was already known. She encouraged me to write about the "cultural shift" and "social impact" of the Ballett Frankfurt—for example, "when something like ten out of thirty people dancing on stage were people of color." For Harper, "Bill really prioritized that. It was really a revolution." The "hybrid ballet language was inclusive."<sup>43</sup>

In our conversation, Harper recollects the role of music in generating inclusivity. Using hip-hop music in Ballett Frankfurt's creative studio process was for Harper, "an acknowledgement of my culture." She felt the same rhythms within Thom Willem's music as well as in Forsythe's musicality. Forsythe was a white man who had learned to dance in the rock 'n' roll era and had moved through Balanchine's appropriations of African American cool, style and rhythm. Forsythe concurs, "black culture has had an amazing effect on our physiques as dancers. It has had an amazing effect on ballet dancers, on everything. That's great. I'm really thankful for that."<sup>44</sup> Harper recalled, "Hip-hop was big in the 90s," noting how the dancers of Ballett Frankfurt would put on music after training and dance around to artists such as Missy Elliott, Busta Rhymes and Queen Latifah. As a Professor at the University of Southern California since 2015, Forsythe has continued his work to build bridges between dancers and dance forms, thinking of dance globally and actively supporting the students' fusion of hip-hop, ballet and other genres.

Pursuing emancipation from rigid ideals and expectations, the environment of the Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company was more open to accepting multiple body images and consequently the many possible ethnicities and identities of a dancer. Thus, the company was a magnet for anyone who had previously been shamed or excluded

39 Sulcas, "William Forsythe: The Poetry of Disappearance and the Great Tradition," p. 33.

40 On these traditional roles and types, see Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 102.

41 The term color is used here in accordance with Sharifi's definition of non-white people of African, Asian, Latin American, Pacific, Arab, Jewish or indigenous origin or background. See Sharifi, *Theater and Migration*, p. 328.

42 In addition to Harper, dancers Alan Barnes, Bertha Bermúdez Pascual, Ramon Flowers, Desmond Hart, Stephen Galloway, Nora Kimball-Mentzos, Desmond Richardson, and Bahiyah Sayeed Gaines, among others. The Forsythe Company, a smaller ensemble, had one African American dancer, Josh Johnson. There was a higher proportion of Asian dancers, with two Japanese artists and one ethnic Tibetan dancer (Yoko Ando, Yasutake Shimaji, and Sang Jijia, respectively).

43 Francesca Harper, phone interview with author, September 20, 2018.

44 Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 94.



by the norms of the ballet world—dancers who were too tall, too short, too colored, too colorful, too fat, too thin, too effeminate, too crazy, too smart, too resistant to authority.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3.5 Change and Continuity: Ballett Frankfurt & The Forsythe Company

Dance companies are complex ecosystems. Even those under the constant direction of one choreographer pass through differing phases of production conditions, constellations made up of artistic and administrative collaborators, and different generations of dancers.<sup>46</sup> On average, Ballett Frankfurt was a younger group of dancers than The Forsythe Company. The Forsythe Company had a strong multi-generational structure with new dancers in their early- to mid-twenties, dancers with late Ballett Frankfurt experience, and experienced Ballett Frankfurt dancers aging into their forties.<sup>47</sup> Practices of mentorship enabled these levels to richly synergize—with new dancers learning movement and performance techniques from the more experienced, but also veteran dancers profiting from the skills and creative energy that the new members brought into the ensemble.<sup>48</sup>

Some dancers viewed The Forsythe Company as a break with Ballett Frankfurt, others as its logical continuation. Working in a smaller, multi-generational company meant that The Forsythe Company stopped performing many of the large group pieces and virtuosic ballets that were part of the repertoire of Ballett Frankfurt. Instead, The Forsythe Company focused on new repertoire in which the dancers created their own roles, performing only selected works from late Ballett Frankfurt.<sup>49</sup> In this way, The Forsythe

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45 The reality of such norms and the painful way that institutions of ballet education enforced them were recently made public in an advertisement for athletic clothing featuring the first African American principal ballet dancer of American Ballet Theater, Misty Copeland. In it, a rejection letter addressed to the 13-year-old Copeland is read: “Dear Candidate, thank you for your application to our ballet academy. Unfortunately, you have not been accepted. You lack the right feet, Achilles tendons, turnout, torso length and bust. You have the wrong body for ballet.” See Goins, “Changing Ballet’s Perception Means Embracing Black Bodies.”

46 For an examination of generations within the 35-year lineage of Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, see Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, in particular pp. 152–59. On generations of dancers in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (founded 1958), see DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations*, in particular p. 84, p. 238.

47 Seven of the original dancers in The Forsythe Company, all of whom who had previously been with Ballett Frankfurt, stayed from 2005–2015 (Yoko Ando, Dana Caspersen, Amancio Gonzalez, David Kern, Fabrice Mazliah, Jone San Martin, and Ander Zabala). The eldest, David Kern, was born in 1959.

48 See Vass-Rhee, “Schooling an Ensemble,” in particular p. 225.

49 The repertoire of Ballett Frankfurt performed by The Forsythe Company was: *Loss of Small Detail* (June 2005); *Kammer/Kammer* (June 2005, October 2005, May 2006, June 2008, April 2015); *Decreation* (May 2007, October 2007, June 2008, January 2009, April 2009, October 2009, May 2012, November 2014); mixed program with *The Room As It Was*, *Of Any If And*, *N.N.N.N.*, and *One Flat Thing*, reproduced (September 2005 and February 2006); mixed program with *Ricercar* and *Quintett* (November 2006 and February 2007); mixed program with *7 to 10 Passages* (March 2007); mixed program with *Woolf Phrase* and *N.N.N.N.* (September 2010, November 2010); and mixed program

Company pieces markedly shifted away from performance demonstrating balletic virtuosity—such as pointe work, partnering involving lifts and citation of ballet steps. Instead, individuals improvised in relation to one another, coordinating their actions in small groups. The female dancers were no longer dancing in pointe shoes. Many members of the company began experimenting with performing in sneakers, which provided traction and cushioning. Physical therapy and dance science practices also enabled training tailored to support bodies of different ages.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, labor was distributed, so that no individual person would be overly taxed in any one performance or rehearsal phase.

Between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, the embodied knowledge and experience that the dancers brought into the ensembles also shifted. While Forsythe had pursued higher education in parallel to dancing at Jacksonville University in Florida, few Ballett Frankfurt dancers had studied at University or an Arts Conservatory.<sup>51</sup> Compared to Ballett Frankfurt, more dancers in The Forsythe Company held diplomas from institutions of higher education.<sup>52</sup> These career paths gave the dancers broader experience in styles and techniques of contemporary dance, in addition to academic competences in reading and writing. I speculate that this tendency more broadly reflects developments within the dance profession internationally in recent decades, in which finishing one's schooling and going on to higher education has become more valued. This impacted the company culture and *Duo*: influencing how dancers trained, communicated and understood what constituted the 'right' way of a rehearsal and a 'good' performance.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.4 The Dancers' Occupational Culture

Culture can generally be thought of as the values shared by members of a group (be it a community, organization or sub-unit) that manifest themselves in the practices of that group. Hence, culture can be associated with a nation, region, corporation, department, function or any form of grouping (e.g., a profession or an occupation).<sup>54</sup>

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with N.N.N.N. (March 2014). My sources are casting lists and schedules in William Forsythe's private collection of documents, as well as my own collection of programs.

50 See section 4.2 Training.

51 Comparably more dancers had encounters with higher education than would be found in an equivalent classical company of equally high status. Exceptions include Ballett Frankfurt artists who attended the Juilliard School in New York City, Codarts Rotterdam, Bunka Gakuen University in Tokyo and University of Melbourne. Of the *Duo* dancers, Francesca Harper had taken summer courses at Columbia University before choosing to dance professionally.

52 Including the Juilliard School, Codarts Rotterdam, the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts, Palucca University of Dance Dresden, Hollins University in Virginia, Woodbury Institute of Champlain College, and myself at Harvard University/The Ohio State University. Later generation *Duo* dancer Riley Watts was a graduate of the Juilliard School.

53 See Chapter 11: Re-Creating *Duo* (1996–2016).

54 See Johnson et al., "Organizational and Occupational Culture and the Perception of Managerial Accounting Terms," p. 318.

By performing Forsythe's choreographic work almost exclusively, Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company invested in a common occupational culture: a shared set of values underlying the practices in which the team members cooperated and produced artistic artifacts. Here I use the term culture to mean the developed knowledge and resources of a group that enables social behavior.<sup>55</sup> This professional culture differed from, for example, Nederlands Dans Theater's occupational culture, or that of Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, or the freelance dance community of Frankfurt, to name a few related scenes. Even the occupational cultures of The Forsythe Company and Ballett Frankfurt, for all their continuity, included difference—changing with the people who were involved, the times and the choreographic activity practiced by the companies.

The intensity, longevity and exclusivity of the dancers' investment in Forsythe's company affected them deeply: constituting their body knowledge, habits, dispositions and perceptions, as learned and acquired through personal histories. Half of the dancers spent over five years as members. Together, they built and shared embodied knowledge and values that enabled them to cooperate. I find it is not a stretch to say that these artists were mutually constituted *with* the artworks and *with* the occupational culture, creating a movement style and a cache of choreographic resources. This would likewise be true for other longstanding dance ensembles: companies such as those of Alvin Ailey, George Balanchine, Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham, Ohad Naharin and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, to name a few across historical epochs, national contexts and styles.<sup>56</sup>

Four general conditions affecting the formation of a dance ensemble's occupational culture are the genre of dance, the extent to which the occupational culture is insular, group size and dancer turnover rate. A dance ensemble's culture would also vary according to whether the ensemble performs a mixed repertoire—as in many municipal German dance companies—or one strain, as in Forsythe's. In the case of the latter (that is, in so-called 'choreographer's companies') the intensity of focus on one style creates cumulative and possibly transformative change, in which sociality and subjectivity are

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55 The terms *organizational* and *occupational cultures* are common in organizational science, and are well documented in this literature. For a review of different approaches, see Denison, "What is the Difference between Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate." Taking a view that looks at the experiences of the dancers ethnographically, and seeks to understand complex negotiations of their workplaces longitudinally, my work aligns with other vocational studies foregrounding the term culture; see in particular Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, p. 107, footnote 7. My aim is to describe the occupational culture of Forsythe's ensembles, which, as I have explained, are complexly linked to the German and Frankfurt scene. In this way, my work explores culture differently than Cynthia Novack's pioneering ethnography analyzing the dance form of contact improvisation, which passes back and forth between the dance form and the socio-cultural frame of American history. See Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, in particular pp. 3–16.

56 A comparative analysis of different dance ensembles' occupational cultures extends beyond the scope of my writing here. Existing sources on the companies, works and working processes of choreographers Alvin Ailey, Merce Cunningham, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Pina Bausch that could contribute productively to such an analysis include: DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations*; Copeland, *Merce Cunningham*; Meade and Rothfuss, *Merce Cunningham*; De Keersmaeker and Cvejić's series of choreographic scores; Guisgand, *Les fils d'un entre-lacs sans fin*; Laermans, *Moving Together*, in particular pp. 293–310; Climenhaga, *The Pina Bausch Sourcebook*; Schulze-Reuber, *Das Tanztheater Pina Bausch* and Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*.

implicated. To further understand the ways that this common culture was developed, I now turn to dance scholar Tomic-Vajagic's writing on dancers' *habitus* and Wulff's discussion of choreographic *style*.

### 3.4.1 Habitus

What does the dancer contribute to the dance? According to dance scholar Tomic-Vajagic, the answer is complex, pertaining to individual character, physicality, expression, as well as to training and choreographic style. To better conceptualize the "totality of underlying influences" affecting dancers' approaches to performance interpretation, one idea that Tomic-Vajagic works with is Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*.<sup>57</sup> For Bourdieu, *habitus* congeals the motivational, cognitive and embodied structures that enable people to *practice*—to learn from personal history and be active in the world. One's *habitus* encompasses the dispositions, strategies, beliefs, perceptions and sensorimotor skills that an individual acquires through their history of interactions. *Habitus* can be observed in humans' implicit or tacit skills, their morals, their subjective tastes, their likes and dislikes, their expectations and anticipations as based upon their histories. Rather than something intellectual or caused solely by discipline or rules, *habitus* is embodied and experienced as "feel for the game."<sup>58</sup>

For Bourdieu *habitus* is improvisatory, generative and changing—but not mechanical or automatic.<sup>59</sup> His writing explores how humans are regularized in their common-sense actions, without ever being forced by rules. He observes: "a given situation brings into play a whole body of wisdom, sayings, commonplaces, ethical precepts [...] and, at a deeper level, the unconscious principles of the *ethos* which [...] determines 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities."<sup>60</sup>

Tomic-Vajagic takes *habitus* as a tool for helping to think further about factors that affect a dancer's interpretation of choreography.<sup>61</sup> According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is constituted through one's familial upbringing and education.<sup>62</sup> Tomic-Vajagic therefore considers each dancer's particular set of movement-proclivities and professional

57 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, see in particular p. 87.

58 Bourdieu: see Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 12. *Habitus* is Bourdieu's term for *modus operandi* and common sense: why we do what we do in practice. See *ibid.*, pp. 120–41; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 72–87; Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 52–65; Wacquant, "Habitus as Topic and Tool"; Wacquant, "Homines in Extremis." Dance scholars Friederike Lampert and Einav Katan also work with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to analyze dance improvisation. Katan notes that in Gaga dance technique, *habitus* does not stay at the level of *doxa*, "an ideology embodied in behavior that might hinder perception." Rather: "the process of gaining a *habitus* and the inner reflection on its values constitute an access to understanding, as a genuinely critical skill." See Katan, *Embodied Philosophy in Dance*, pp. 163–68; here p. 166. See Lampert, *Tanzimprovisation*, pp. 118–25.

59 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 78.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

61 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 86–108; see in particular pp. 105–7.

62 In that way, *habitus* may be said to belong to an individual person—in Bourdieu's terms a "singular *habitus*"—standing for a unique way to navigate a process that is collective. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 86.

disposition to be based upon his or her embodied history—from movement allowances in childhood to various contexts of discipline and formation. She particularly focuses on the impact of dance schools, which shape the dancer’s body (and self) into a tool used to perform a certain work. She emphasizes not only the embodied aspects of training, but also the dancers’ understanding of their roles. Additionally, she considers the cultural frames in which the dancers were raised and in which context they currently dance. Given all these factors, Tomic-Vajagic takes the view that dancer agency is “multifaceted and multilayered.” She finds that these aspects, both conscious and unconscious, have a substantial impact on the performance of any choreographic work. In total, she observes “that a significant depth of information about the choreographic work itself emerges through observation of what it communicates when it is embodied by different dancers.”<sup>63</sup>

*Habitus*, I understand as a process of subject formation. Though *habitus* can be misunderstood to be reflexive behavior that repeats, I concur with Bourdieu that the concept is of a dynamic process that produces regularity—a process that is emergent and evolving, in which reflection and change are possible.<sup>64</sup> Like Bourdieu, I find the structuring capacity of humans to predict is not purely intellectual, but also affective and embodied, pertaining to strategies and beliefs. My understanding of subjectivity dovetails with Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, as well as with Tomic-Vajagic’s approach to looking at dancers’ practices of interpretation.<sup>65</sup> I differ from Tomic-Vajagic in that I look more into the relational aspects of dancing together, by choosing the case study of a duet and not solo interpretation. By calling attention to the relational impact of dancing together in my case study, I suggest how *habitus* links individuals—in a community where dancing together builds beliefs, dispositions and capacities to create.

### 3.4.2 Choreographic Styles

A choreographic style is one manifestation of a dance company’s occupational culture. Wulff’s multi-sited ethnography, *Ballet Across Borders*, emphasizes the comingling and crossover of ballet styles in her case studies. In her view, “younger dancers are increasingly learning not only to change ballet style, but also to switch back and forth between different ones, as well as between old national styles and new choreographic styles like the one developed by William Forsythe.”<sup>66</sup> Clearly within the Ballet Frankfurt, the ‘new’ was at issue, not reproducing old national styles. In contrast to occupational cultures of ballet’s key centers, in which normative climates and pedagogical institutions maintained traditional ballet technique and interpretation practice, in Forsythe’s ensembles,

63 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer’s Contribution*, p. 287.

64 Bourdieu writes: “One of the reasons for the use of the term *habitus* is the wish to set aside the common conception of habit as a mechanical assembly or performed programme, as Hegel does when in the *Phenomenology of Mind* he speaks of ‘habit as dexterity.’” See Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 218, footnote 47.

65 Here I have not considered *habitus*, as Bourdieu would, within the triad of field and capital; nor do I in my analysis of *Duo* foreground competition as a means to acquire status, which is a major concern of Bourdieu’s.

66 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 41.

creativity, change, even rebellion and revolution were vital forces.<sup>67</sup> In this way—and in contrast to the blending and mixing that Wulff observes—the choreographic style and occupational culture contested and transfigured the normative operations of ballet.

Diversity was central to this innovation. As I have described previously, the ensembles of Ballett Frankfurt and the Forsythe Company prized diversity. Dancers of different national origin and career paths came together and adapted, producing the Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company style. When asked about how his dancers from different backgrounds adjust to produce his style, Forsythe provided the following explanation:

We talk about all kinds of dancing. We think about dancing. There is a lot of theoretical discussion. And we're very arm conscious. I think that's for us the key to our style. One *tendu* [ballet step, stretching one leg] is perhaps someone else's *tendu*, but our *port de bras* [style of arm movements] is really indicative of what we do.<sup>68</sup>

Stressing that the style is not purely physical, Forsythe emphasizes communication and sharing ideas. Wulff adds another insight, underlining that these were long-term processes. She writes:

It can, however, take a very long time to learn a certain choreographic style properly. When William Forsythe's productions are danced by companies other than his own, they tend to do it with great success, but not always as articulately as his own dancers. Forsythe's own dancers have (in most cases) been practising his steps and concepts for years, some for more than a decade, whereas other dancers usually only have about a month to learn them. And this shows in their respective performances.<sup>69</sup>

Wulff emphasizes here the difference between short-term learning and long-term changes that happen when dancers become part of a choreographic community—the latter a change in *habitus*, including social and intellectual components, which produces a style in performance.

Though my informants did not want to criticize other dancers on record, they spoke fervently and nostalgically about the distinctions between interpretations of Forsythe's works—about a visible distinction of intelligence, freedom, coordination and expression that distinguished *their* ensembles. The dancers' differences were their strength—gaps and misunderstandings becoming fruitful. As one example illustrating this, dancer Antony Rizzi has observed:

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67 In such centers, conformity to aesthetic values and style is upheld. Dancers almost exclusively pass directly from school to company (i.e., producing *habitus* at a young age that is not confronted with other new styles). Still no technique is completely rigid. Tomic-Vajagic observes the plasticity of training practices within such centers, finding there are “stylistic and pedagogical shifts [...] with new teachers interpreting technical requirements in their own ways.” Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, p. 92.

68 Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 91. This practice of *port de bras* is also called *épaulement*. Considering this in detail, see section 6.1 *Épaulement*.

69 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 42.

I loved it when dancers, like Jone San Martin, whose mother tongue was something other than English, sometimes would not fully understand Bill's ideas and words, but then conjure up incredible material from those misunderstandings.<sup>70</sup>

The dynamic negotiation of dance practices shifted with waves of new dancers arriving and experienced dancers leaving. In fact, across Forsythe's diverse repertoire and four decades of work, his choreographic signature and the dancers' practices varied extensively. The work was much more about grappling and negotiation, misunderstanding and compromise than conforming to rules, conventions and norms. Togetherness in this context was not competition for reputation, but exchange through learning and inventing together. Before joining these ensembles, most dancers had already passed through many contexts and adapted to many styles, creating a rich set of resources for their shared investment in making new choreographic pieces together.

To specify how the occupational cultures of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company were different to that of other ensembles, here I draw out five characteristics: First, as Forsythe himself has emphasized, their balletic coordination of *épaulement*, the usage of the upper body. I shall explore this further in chapter 6. Second, a shared rhythmical and musical sense (*entrainment*), which will be the focus of chapter 8. Third, a common reliance upon strategies of improvisation and composition shaped through extensive discussion and conceptual terms. Fourth, attaching importance to the cooperative aspects of creating new choreography and the gains of working together. Lastly, a complex of shared beliefs encompassing diversity, creativity, curiosity, optimism, adventure, 'nothing-against,' learning, freedom and change. Conversely these could also be expressed as an aversion to uniformity, prejudice, tradition, rote repetition, negativity, inertia, ignorance and stasis. Their multiplicity was their strength.

### 3.5 Duo Dancers

*Duo* dancers were predominantly women—nine women and two men—and one-quarter (27 percent) were dancers of color (Gaines, Harper and Scharafali). The chronology of *Duo* partners is visualized in Appendix C.

The eleven dancers that have learned *Duo* in the context of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company are of Albanian, American, Canadian, Dutch, and German nationality (45 percent European, 36 percent American, 18 percent Canadian).<sup>71</sup> They exemplify dancers of high artistic pedigree.<sup>72</sup> Most *Duo* pairs involved persons of different national origin and training. Therefore, it can be concluded that shared cultural background or identical training prior to joining Forsythe's ensembles were not necessary for dancing *Duo* well.

70 Translation by the author. Rizzi, "Die Bühne als der Ort, an dem ich mir im Reinen bin," p. 91.

71 In comparison, between 1976–2013 over 300 dancers have learned Pina Bausch's *Das Frühlingsopfer*; eleven dancers have danced the seminal role of the *Opfer*. Klein does not provide statistics on nationality or biography. See Klein, "Die Logik der Praxis," pp. 131–32.

72 See the artist biographies in Appendix D.

The example of *Duo* pointedly demonstrates how an ensemble's occupational culture and diversity may influence the aesthetic of a choreographic work. *Duo* is a dance in which the dancers' motion vacillates between similarity and difference—a dance of counterpoint. In this, the dancers resist unison in which creative difference suffers. They contest unison produced through rote repetition and putative discipline. They are not, in themselves, similar—in appearance or character. *Duo* pairs are dancers of different national origins and career paths: a Dutch woman paired with a Canadian, two Canadian dancers, both raised in Toronto, who went on to explore different ballet lineages and careers; other pairings between American, Dutch and Italian dancers; and most recently, an American man paired with an Albanian. These differences were part of *Duo's* richness and movement aesthetic.

*Duo* dancers explore the movement that they inherit. Coming in and out of unison, they negotiate difference. They become sensitive to qualities of dissonance. They develop refined perception of moving and being together—or not. In dancing *Duo*, variations and micro-differences are queried to explore the limits of sameness. The dancers recognize that they are two distinct artists, carrying individual cultural and occupational histories, often both. Regina van Berkel concurs: “Two dancers cannot be the same.”<sup>73</sup>

The broader demographics of the ensembles have been the focus of this chapter, showing how the *Duo* dancers worked within a rich community of distinguished dancers who valued their uniqueness and what they became—through working *together*. To Forsythe and the dancers, *Duo* was interesting because of the individual nuance the performers brought to it: their capacities to analyze, criticize and invent the movement together. This kept the performance evolving. The practice of choreography indeed *built* shared understanding—each pair requiring time to do so.

While the choreography of *Duo* cites the balletic convention of perfect unison, the unity of *Duo* is not a convenient or easily achieved unity. Contrary to what she observes in the Ballett Frankfurt, Wulff finds that ballet companies generally exhibit a homogeneity of practice; this, for example, allows principal dancers of different nationalities working in different dance companies to substitute injured artists in a performance of *Swan Lake* with very little rehearsal—having never performed with one another or in this company's version of the choreography.<sup>74</sup> Something like this could not happen in Forsythe's ensembles; it could never happen in *Duo*. Rather, adaptation to Forsythe's ensemble takes time, as Wulff herself remarked. And learning *Duo*, as we shall see, also requires negotiation and extensive practice.

The term “contact zone” emphasizes this. Developed by Mary Louise Pratt during her studies of language communities to consider the critical limits of cooperation and shared understanding, a contact zone defines the following; Pratt writes:

I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colo-

73 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

74 Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 39.



nialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.<sup>75</sup>

In Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, the dancers grappled and negotiated many vectors of power within ballet practice and ideology: gender hegemony, systemic racism, disciplinary working regimes and controlling aesthetics of movement. The ensembles were contact zones: alternative social spaces enriched through aesthetic encounter. To encapsulate this, the dancers understood their work at large as creative enabling—not preserving the past, but generatively exploring *what else* they might discover. Reifying what I propose here, a succinct summary of the occupational culture is provided by dancer Dana Caspersen below.

### “What else is this?”

#### Phone interview with dancer Dana Caspersen, December 19, 2018

LIZ: What were the values of Ballett Frankfurt?

DANA: What I notice now, working elsewhere, is that when people start working together, the process can get clamped down—ossified. It’s really hard to keep things moving. I’m more and more valuing what Bill [Forsythe] was able to enable there [in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company]: this environment where we kept researching, we really kept looking at things, questioning things and redoing things. And there was a big value around curiosity. People were supportive of each other, you know, it was really a working situation where there was always people saying: look at this, what do you think of this? So, it was a lot of back and forth and there was always a teaching element, people were teaching each other—both parts and also ideas. There was obviously a lot of collaboration in a lot of different ways. Let’s see, what were some of the other values. (*pause*) A big value was to always take a thing and re-see it, that was like a major part of it. “What else is this?” was a question that I think Bill kept posing over and over and then the company took this on, as kind of a fundamental question. Not like: Let’s throw all this out, what else can we do? But given the material of the situation, what else is there that might be emerging that we haven’t paid attention to yet? Or that we might enable?

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*Duo* dancers’ testimonies underline the manner in which the dancers learned *together* and *from* one another, as well as the importance of their heterogeneity. This chapter has developed a portrait of the 155 dancers who worked with Forsythe, examining the community within which *Duo* dancers worked. This background research is required for understanding *Duo* as a dance that highlights pairs of dancers who commit to research of what they share in common.

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75 See Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” p. 34.

This chapter has outlined the complex relations between place, career, migration, touring, identity and cooperation in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. Section 3.1 focused on the topics of place and nationality in the context of international Frankfurt am Main, drawing upon census data from the city. Section 3.2 considered documents in Forsythe's private archive and interviews with the dancers to discern the legal aspects defining the dancers' understanding of their work. Section 3.3 explored the transnationalism of Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company based on demographic data of the dancers who have worked in these institutions, analyzed with regard to Helena Wulff's prior research on transnationalism in ballet companies. Section 3.4 examined the ensembles' movement styles and occupational culture—drawing upon Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and prior study by dance scholar Tamara Tomic-Vajagic of dancers' contributions and Wulff's analysis of dance styles. Section 3.5 congealed these arguments by returning to the case study: I investigated the diversity of the artists involved and the seminal role of difference in the enactment of the *Duo* project. In total, this chapter has clarified features of continuity and distinction between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. Through investigation of these topics, I have argued for a dynamic understanding of occupational culture, in which the dancers' subjectivity and labor are as important as the works of art they create.

What has not yet been dealt with extensively in this chapter are the dancers' working practices. In the next chapter I consider these, exploring the following questions: What practices comprise the dancers' choreographic labor? How were these practices institutionalized or congealed through teamwork? To what extent were these stable and routine, as opposed to pliant and changing? Were they distinct for each choreographic work? Did the dancers' diversity and the unpredictability of Forsythe's creative process in any way subvert totality or challenge the notion of what a practice *is*?



## Chapter 4: The Dancers' Practices

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The documentary film *Just Dancing Around*, made by filmmaker Mike Figgis ca. 1994, follows the Ballett Frankfurt through three weeks of activity making a new piece. In footage titled “three weeks before first performance,” a large group of dancers led by a rehearsal director are busy working on a dance phrase, the studio awash with movement, music and laughter. According to Figgis, “Billy [Forsythe] makes his first appearance” on the third day of rehearsal. Figgis shows Forsythe working on his own in the studio, dancing as the other dancers self-organize their rehearsal around him. One dancer watches while resting on a stool; others cluster busily, speaking and moving with each other.<sup>1</sup> Forsythe explains in an interview with Figgis:

I like dancing. [...] In a situation when the whole company is working on something and there's about ten groups of three people or whatever, organizing some little thing. I like working there because everyone is busy, and that means I can concentrate. I do not have to concentrate in a (*emphasizing each word*) room by myself. I don't have to have complete isolation to think. I like just the idea that everyone is working on movement, and you pick up on that. So, I can feel pretty, what is it (*pause*), undisturbed in a room full of people.<sup>2</sup>

In this statement, Forsythe describes his enjoyment of the “pick up” and relay of choreographic practice: the way a group of people can help to focus his attention.

The general scope of the dancers' activities in the realm of choreographic labor is the subject of this chapter. Figgis's glimpse of the dancers' practices, shown through the camera lens and editing matrix, conveys a complex ecosystem—a shared logic of being busy and enabling a choreographic piece to emerge. The ensemble dancers appear to share a common purpose and understanding of what is going on in the studio that swings from being directed by Forsythe and rehearsal directors, to being self-organizing. Without insider experience, the logic is likely to be puzzling. The dancers swarm with activities: inventing, teaching, rehearsing, watching and discussing movement. Forsythe's quote makes clear that these are social practices. Even when one is working

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1 See Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 4:00–8:00.

2 See *ibid.*, 6:00–7:00.

alone, as with Forsythe at the side of the studio, one still shares the space. Other people's movements and activities get picked up on, people cluster up to get something done. One dancer called it a "hive" modality.<sup>3</sup> In addition to sharing the space and comfortably partitioning the room with labor, the artists share—as Figgis's film makes clear—a progression of time ticking down towards the deadline of performance. The ensemble members share understanding and engage *with* and *through* an array of activities pertaining to their sense of dance and choreography. This field of "doings and sayings" is the focus of this chapter, beheld through my autobiographical history amidst these practices, as well as the theoretical framework of the "practice turn."<sup>4</sup>

*The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (2001) marks an academic movement that has cultivated a pragmatic understanding of the social, rooted in what emerges *between* people and *through* activity itself.<sup>5</sup> The focus of this scholarship is human practices. While scholars' definitions of practice vary, they generally consider it to consist of embodied and contextually situated human activities, organized through common understanding of actions and their effects. Practices are not isolated strands of doing, but interlaced and spread over time. What holds them together is one matter of debate: whether context, material factors, a shared understanding or goals are more significant. Practice theorists also take different views about the importance of routine and regularity versus the effects of disruption and error; they place differing emphases on the role of materials and non-human interactions.<sup>6</sup> They differ in their thinking about how human reflection and speaking shape practices, and thus what sort of relationship they imply between mind and body. Scholars of practice take distinct approaches to theorizing the ways that subjects are formed through repetition and interaction *via* practice as well as of course the sense of the social that accumulates through practicing together.<sup>7</sup>

Based upon my case study, I understand the term *practice* as follows: practicing *Duo* involves repeated and enduring activities pertaining to the dancers' shared understanding of the choreographic, coupled with their desire to make an artistic work emerge. Practicing *Duo* is spread across different sorts of activities: making the choreography, daily training, teaching or learning the piece, rehearsing the piece, going on tour and performing the piece. Although many practices are specific to *Duo's* choreographic microcosm and the dyadic context that shapes their enactment, they are also woven into the practices of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company more generally. They are also enmeshed with the dancers' personal and cultural practices, enacted within and

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3 Tilman O'Donnell, work meeting via videoconference, February 4, 2020.

4 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 73. See Schatzki et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. See Waterhouse, "Dancing Amidst."

5 See Schatzki et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. As with most academic movements, this turn marks a reaction against other styles of thinking: "including intellectualism, representationalism, individualisms (e.g., rational choice theory, methodological individualism, network analysis), structuralism, structure-functionalism, systems theory, semiotics, and many strains of humanism and poststructuralism." Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," p. 2.

6 In review see Reckwitz, "Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken"; Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*.

7 Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory." See also Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, in particular pp. 105–12.

outside their professional field. In this chapter I consider how the ensemble's teamwork congealed occupational practices. The following sections take a look at the "generative routines" of training, rehearsal, performance and touring.<sup>8</sup> I show how the dancers' artistry and creativity is maintained within an institutional frame, giving form to routine that is rife with invention and exception.

## 4.1 Seasonal Rhythms

The working schedule of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company was organized by *seasons* which, like government or school schedules, began in late summer. The details of the schedule were planned around choreographic works: creating these performances, rehearsing existing pieces or repertoire, and performing them at 'home' and on tour. The different team members held separate working hours, based upon the specific tasks and constraints of their jobs.<sup>9</sup>

The dancers' schedules had various rhythms. When rehearsing in Frankfurt, they came closest to a regular 40-hour week: Monday to Friday, or else Monday to Saturday, roughly 10 am to 5 pm each day. When performing and touring, their working hours centered around the evening show, with intense nighttime hours and rest scheduled in the afternoons. When creating a new piece, they worked additional hours. Aside from Christmas and New Year, they typically disregarded public holidays, working to their own rhythm.

The labor involved in performances varied, depending on whether the work was for a full-length evening piece, or a performance composed of short pieces, such as *Duo*. Generally, the organization of labor in The Forsythe Company was focused on full-length pieces, in which all the dancers participated. In contrast, the labor of the Ballett Frankfurt more commonly varied between production of full-length works and mixed evenings of short works; within this there were likely to be multiple sets of dancers ('casts') learning the roles.<sup>10</sup> By comparison, the dancers in The Forsythe Company were typically involved in all the pieces and Forsythe was present for all rehearsals. This created a more regular tempo and rhythm of routine, growing greater commonality of working practices.

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8 This focus on generative aspects of routine is emphasized in the scholarship of Michel Foucault and Karin Knorr Cetina; see discussion in Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, p. 108.

9 Each team entrained to its own particular rhythm. The technicians' work was not always aligned with the dancers' as the former often needed to operate when the dancers were off the stage—including the tiring job of removing (i.e., 'striking') the set and packing materials after a tour finished. The administrative team had the most canonical schedule, with evenings and weekends free, following the schedule of public holidays. The administrative team did not tour with the company; select members were sent, as needed, for short stays.

10 This distribution of roles among 'casts' allowed more artists to participate and share experiences of the same roles, creating networks of people who had shared parts. It was seldom time-efficient, requiring doubling of rehearsals—one for each cast. But it did distribute the particularly rewarding and exhausting labor of performing more evenly among dancers, and distribute choreographic knowledge among them.

The distribution of labor was influenced by the size of the ensemble: Ballett Frankfurt had nearly twice the number of dancers as The Forsythe Company. Not all Ballett Frankfurt dancers were in each performance; the individual dancers' schedules varied based upon casting. *Duo* dancers remembered occasionally having gaps of free time when they were not involved in rehearsal, in particular when a dancer was new and had fewer roles. Similarly, it was common that a dancer might get 'called in' to a rehearsal, or alternately 'cut' from a new piece in the making. Despite requiring his dancers to always be 'on-call' for rehearsal, Forsythe encouraged them to maintain artistic projects outside the company, which many dancers pursued during these gaps. Unpredictable shifts in the rhythm of the creative work were part of the excitement and intensity of these ensembles—irregularity *supported* by the routine in their training practice, which helped maintain their physical readiness to perform and create.

## 4.2 Training

Generally, across genres of western dance from ballet to contemporary, training is the starting point of most professional dancers' daily practice. Forsythe chose ballet as the principal form of training for his companies. The dancers were provided with a daily ballet class of approximately 75 minutes, five or frequently six times a week. While their rehearsal and performance activities might vary considerably, training was a stable keystone. It was also an inherited one: the regularity of disciplining the body—known to be effective in ballet—gained through repetition of exercises and strict, physical labor.

How this routine was 'performed' in Forsythe's ensembles deserves attention. The class was taught by either a full-time ballet master/mistress or a guest teacher—not by Forsythe. It varied in its style: from the Russian Vaganova method, to what was often referred to as 'French style,' to classes taught by dancers from the Ballett Frankfurt lineage, and even (in The Forsythe Company) a class hybridizing principles from ballet and modern dance. Forsythe encouraged but did not regulate or police the training, allowing for dancers to decide whether or not they attended. This respected that dancers might choose alternative modes, as well as individual frequencies of training that might better suit their body, the repertoire they were performing, or even their needs in recovering from an injury. Dancer Dana Caspersen notes that, given the diversity of repertoire of the company, dancers valued the regularity of ballet training to enable them to feel strong and prepared.<sup>11</sup> This shows how training provided a generative basis, supporting more diverse movement activity in rehearsal.

Furthermore, the ballet class was a format for rehearsal and performance of identities, in which persons were constituted and norms transgressed. In a more traditional context, ballet training (also called 'class') follows a standardized form of exercises and codes of practice which are internationally reproduced, with emphasis varying

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11 Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," p. 26.

among different technical, expressive and musical elements.<sup>12</sup> Forsythe dancers were well versed in these practices, reflecting “embodied and cultural knowledge that the dancer acquires and internalizes throughout their whole career.”<sup>13</sup> Codes of ballet training support the performance of ballet repertoire by teaching dancers to perform *en masse* and to self-regulate with discipline. Traditionally dancers arrive early to prepare, wear the proper attire and do not speak or socialize. In training, they memorize and reproduce the exercises that the teacher demonstrates accurately, doing so in unison with the music and other dancers. All the while, the dancers strive to perform to the best of their ability and to improve their individual technique.<sup>14</sup> They do so through strategies such as studying their reflection in the mirror, learning from others and incorporating the teacher’s corrections.

The ballet world is well known for enforcing a strict regime of training. One *Duo* dancer described her work before joining Forsythe’s company as follows: “If I was sick or my corn between my toe was hurting me too much, I’m not gonna take a day off. I’m gonna cut a hole in my pointe shoe to stick my toe out so I can continue dancing.” She added, with regard to the pyramid structure in which everyone is always trying to climb: “You never missed anything ’cause then you’d lose your spot.”<sup>15</sup> Ballet is notoriously oppressive toward women around maintaining a lithe physique. The dancers’ testimony in my interviews reflected knowledge that eating disorders are common.<sup>16</sup> The rigor of idealized appearance was forcefully imposed by those in power—implicitly through casting but also through direct controls. One dancer recounted, “you gain two pounds and, you know, you’re called into the office.” In contrast to this, *Duo* dancers remember Forsythe and themselves speaking out against such damaging behavior, wishing dancers to be empowered, healthy and respectful of their bodies. The dancers never ‘weighed in’ before putting on their *Duo* costumes. Instead of shame, *Duo* pairs admired and acknowledged the beauty and diversity of one another’s bodies—though not all *Duo* dancers could wear their own costumes with confidence. One female dancer spoke about her different attitudes to her “many bodies”—reflecting her monthly changes with menstruation and her body’s transformation during the years that she performed *Duo*. Collectively contesting the strict coupling of an ideal body type and training in ballet, overall these dancers found Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company—and *Duo*—to be liberating contexts.

Dancer Allison Brown remembers how surprising she found the class environment when she first joined Ballett Frankfurt. In contrast to environments like the New York City Ballet, she recounted, “You had Amanda Miller with her wild haircut, but she had pointe shoes on, and she was like doing her own version of the combinations at the

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12 Exceptional teachers, such as George Balanchine and Stanley Williams, were known to break from these molds. For a detailed example of one of Balanchine’s classes, see Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine’s Mozartiana*, pp. 10–16.

13 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer’s Contribution*, p. 90.

14 A technique that is individual-collective, as I shall show further in Chapter 6.

15 Forsythe dancer, anonymous interview with the author.

16 One *Duo* dancer told me in confidence, she had gone a decade without menstruating during her career as a ballet dancer. Two female *Duo* dancers described having eating disorders in their careers before working in Ballett Frankfurt.



barre and everyone just had their own ... you were just free to be free; they were just free. It's all about exceptions."<sup>17</sup> Brown recalls the contradictions with an emotive swell of her voice: Miller's pointe shoes, yet an atmosphere of freedom.

Through bending classical conventions, the climate of the ballet class in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company was generally spirited and fun. The dancers wore playful clothes.<sup>18</sup> Particularly in The Forsythe Company, the dancers changed the teachers' exercises to do what they needed or preferred to do—sacrilege in a classical context. There was openness for men and women to cross the gendered technical zones inherent in classical ballet. Additionally, the musicality was rousing. Despite performing difficult exercises *en masse* in groups, synchronized to the music, the dancers found their individual approach. They remembered enjoying the music and feeling the groove, sometimes (with liberal teachers) singing out-loud and making jokes with one another.<sup>19</sup> On the whole, the ideology of ballet norms and discipline were challenged through this engendering of exceptions.

Pointe shoes featured prominently in Brown's memory, as they were still a necessary tool for Forsythe's repertoire in the Ballett Frankfurt. Because of the technical demands of pointe technique, a skill requiring daily maintenance, Brown explains: "You had to take class. You had to take the time to get the pointe shoes on, you had to break them in, get ready for that whole performance. You could not slack."<sup>20</sup> This changed in The Forsythe Company, as the repertoire no longer relied on the technical skill of dancing *en pointe*, as well as other aspects of classical virtuosity. Accordingly, it was no longer necessary to train as extensively in ballet, and many dancers stopped attending class.<sup>21</sup>

One consequence of this was that, at the time when *Duo* was reconstructed in 2012, the ballet inflected movements of *Duo* proved challenging to reconstruct (that is, the line of turning out the legs, the attenuated extensions, and the stamina for performing these musically). To prepare themselves, the dancers enlisted with a personal trainer, hand-selected by Forsythe.<sup>22</sup> This enabled a new sort of readiness—supported by weightlifting and sports science principles. Increasingly, dancers in The Forsythe Company had mixed feelings about the ritual of ballet class: enjoying, but sometimes also resenting, the 'daily grind.' This reflects that not all dancers felt satisfied by ballet training as a basis for contemporary work. Being a dancer was finding a way to stay positive and make the training routine a resource for rehearsing creativity.

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17 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

18 This pageantry is also a part of classical ballet companies, though often repressed in schools that require participants to wear standardized colors of leotards.

19 A pianist always accompanied the exercises. Pianist David Morrow described his work as improvising on Jazz standards, J.S. Bach, Tango, Bossa Nova, film themes and Broadway musicals. David Morrow, email to the author, October 10, 2018.

20 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Bern, January 24, 2017.

21 This is different to the dancers of Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, in which Klein observes "the training and the habitus of the younger dancers [...] have become much more 'dancerly' than those of earlier generations." See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, p. 156.

22 Patrick Rump, who had begun in 2007 as 'Director of Sports Science' for the company. Rump was also enlisted to train the dancers for Forsythe's program *A Quiet Evening of Dance* in 2018, which would include the most recent version of *Duo*.

### 4.3 Rehearsal

Rehearsals in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company took many forms. The schedule was planned by Forsythe and his rehearsal assistants, through consideration of the upcoming performances and prioritizing what needed to be done. Space and time were partitioned accordingly, the dancers split into subgroups as necessary. Rehearsal was run by Forsythe, an assistant, or the dancers themselves—with Forsythe taking increasing authority as the performance came closer. In contrast to the regimes in ballet companies in which dancers submit to authority or rehearse the same section of a choreography ad nauseum, the dancers in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company learned to be proactive in shaping what was done in rehearsal, based upon their needs and interests in the work at hand.

Rehearsal rhythms were built upon the foundation of the morning training. On days without a performance in the evening, training would be followed by rehearsal, a lunch break, and then a second set of rehearsals. When creating a new piece, in the weeks immediately prior to performances, the dancers rehearsed long hours. The dancers remember this work being tough, using the words *exhausting* and *stressed* copiously in interviews, and talking about the work as an existential challenge to survive.<sup>23</sup> Despite this, while it was sometimes not evident from my transcripts, when listening to audio recordings of these interviews I could hear tones of pleasure and pride in the dancers' voices; the dancers also *enjoyed* working so intensely. Working together on making performances emerge was an immersive and thrilling project in which the dancers were roused by making pieces come to life.

Their rehearsals were anything but repetitive. Because of the shortage of rehearsal time to learn Forsythe's complex choreographies, the dancers had to work quickly. Also, Forsythe was notorious for being unpredictable—changing his pieces and his demands on the dancers. The dancers felt like anything could happen in those rehearsals. The intensity of their labor created an insular occupational culture and engrossing bonds between the team.

The institutional spaces of the Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company were a dwelling place, enabling the practices of working choreographically to cohere. The dancers described being profoundly affected on a sensory level by the spaces of their daily rehearsal regime, itself constrained by the materiality of the buildings. On rehearsal days, the dancers shifted from the dressing rooms to the studios, between the smokers' lounge and canteen (in Ballett Frankfurt), then perhaps onto the stage for a rehearsal. Constantly on the move, busy in the studios, they rarely sat down at a table and meetings were few. Between times, they rested, lying down on the floor or with legs propped up on walls and chairs—their bodies layered from head to toe, trying to stay warm and ready to move.

Forsythe's leadership and artistic vision was constitutive and seminal: the motor and regulator for how and why everyone came together. The schedule of training and rehearsal provided a stable framework, making the unpredictability inherent in their creative work possible.

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23 Compare to Forsythe's similar testimony; Midgett, "Forsythe in Frankfurt," p. 17.

#### 4.4 Performance

Performance is a nocturnal practice. Performances, like rehearsals and trainings, are also serial. Dancers in Forsythe's ensembles often performed five consecutive nights in row; 50–60 performances in total each year. The dancers continued to train and rehearse throughout these performance periods.

There is extreme physical effect upon the body in performing Forsythe's pieces. Each morning after a performance, dancers would wake up with something akin to an 'athletic hangover'—a biological soup of chemicals in their flesh: lactic acid, stiff neck, aches and pains. Training was often delayed an hour to compensate for the late hours worked performing a show the previous night and to allow time for bodies to recover; the emphasis switched from building technique to recovery. Rehearsals, led by Forsythe, would focus on improving the show (always a work in progress) or—in the times of Ballett Frankfurt when pieces were learned by multiple sets of dancers—giving a new group time to rehearse. Rest before a performance was deemed necessary by most dancers, who treasured downtime to recharge and unwind.

Performing repeatedly does not eliminate nerves but it does, over time, enable one to cope with pressure. A performance day was typically more elevated in tension and expectation than a regular rehearsal day, with time ticking along toward the designated hour of the show (typically 8pm).<sup>24</sup> Each dancer had his or her own personal routine before the performance. Some arrived two hours early, others a mere hour (less was seen to be unprofessional). Their costumes underneath an extra layer of training clothes, they would go through the process of getting ready. In *The Forsythe Company*, Forsythe encouraged the dancers to look like themselves and not transform their appearance for the stage with makeup and complicated hairstyles, so less preparation for hair and makeup was needed. Assisted by a hairdresser ready to comb, spear and spray, female *Duo* dancers' hair was bound into an elegant French twist (using professional pins that gave it the resilience of a helmet, a style affectionately called a 'banana'). In the makeup room, which served as an oasis, the mood was relaxed. Warmly lit by the makeup lights and sweet-smelling, coffee was poured and snacks eaten.

Before a performance, dancers would 'warm-up' for a second time that day, either through a simplified ballet class or individual practice. During this preparation, excitement or nervous jitters were contagious. Shared motivation climaxed and doubts were dispelled. Far from sullen and serious, warming-up was convivial with surges of activity and jokes. With a friendly 'hello' from Forsythe and frequently some last-minute corrections, the dancers would sense that the performance was 15–20 minutes away. Hydrating, priming, playing and reviewing, they would develop the mode they needed to feel ready. In the minutes before performance, *Duo* dancers in Ballett Frankfurt remember holding one another, side-by-side, and singing while walking synchronously—effecting a sort of rhythmic entrainment.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Matinee performances were unusual.

25 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016. Allison Brown, studio session, dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

With so much experience of performing, most dancers learn to be effectively nervous in performance. Forsythe dancers describe this as state as '200 percent intensity,' high pressure and high adrenalin. Dancers learned to perform well under this high stress through individual techniques: rituals such as their timing of arrival and espresso, their favorite music, certain breath or physical exercises and social ways of blowing off steam. But more than this, over a lifetime of performing they acquired experience that allowed them to manage stress and fear, converting these into focus, energy and flow. The stakes were high for every performance, with the ensemble's reputation and one's individual display of competence always at stake. Critically, one's nervousness was never one's alone but collectively felt, based upon shared sensing of the upcoming event and complicity in the outcome. Each performance was unique, surprising, intense and exhausting.

With the nocturnal dictates of performance keeping dancers busy until 10 pm or later, performing could feel like a chronic loop of arriving and leaving the theater, with little interaction with the outside world. One's private clothes would remain clean; one's costumes would become sweaty. After performance, the dancers would focus on their bodies by rehydrating, showering and eating. They would also typically talk about what had happened with their peers to try and grasp the ephemerality and nightly variation, and the links between rehearsal and the evening performance. Some were celebratory, some critical—a factor of personality and style. Dancers frequently performed to 'anonymous' audiences, with whom they made no contact after the event. They also received small tokens of appreciation: a drink at a premiere or a rose from the theater.

## 4.5 Creation

In the ebb and flow of company life—of performances and rehearsals, tours and recuperation at home in Frankfurt—"creation" was a coveted time in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company in which new pieces were made.<sup>26</sup> Periods of creation involved a higher intensity of work, literally measured in overtime hours in Ballett Frankfurt, with days extending late into the evening.<sup>27</sup> The duration of the creative process varied. Pressured by the institutionalized statute restricting creation to 21 days in The Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe expanded this into four to eight weeks in The Forsythe Company.<sup>28</sup> The creative process entailed contingency, risk and speculation, and the awareness of the ensemble cohesively registering time moving forward, toward the deadline of the premiere. The dancers took professional satisfaction in knowing that they were contributing to the field by making challenging works. Creating also enabled them to develop personally and receive recognition (from Forsythe, their peers and the audience).

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26 On the term "creation" see Introduction to Part III: Creation.

27 In the Ballett Frankfurt, these hours were more extreme than in The Forsythe Company: a dinner break was added and the dancers worked until 10:45 pm. Dancers in The Forsythe Company were not paid overtime.

28 Midgette, "Forsythe in Frankfurt," p. 18.

Many dancers auditioned for Ballett Frankfurt or The Forsythe Company because they wanted to take part in the process of making new pieces with Forsythe. *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson likened this to an activity of “research.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the strongly directive process of ballet making, Forsythe assumed the authority of a “semi-directive regime.” For Rudi Laermans, this mode of making dance “hovers between the overtly hierarchical style known from ballet and the ‘flat’ collaboration typifying the functioning of genuine dance collectives.”<sup>30</sup> Without this rigid hierarchy, some dancers were frustrated and disoriented by the complex process—even choosing to leave the ensemble. Yet the majority wished for these intense periods of research.

There was no recipe for making a new work. While Forsythe would reuse movement material and movement-making methods, the expanse of creative practices was enormous. This work involved the dancers not only learning movement from Forsythe, but also inventing and improvising their own movement. They collaborated upon developing movement systems, often entangling notations, drawings, objects or media. They also conceived texts, songs and textual dramaturgies and worked with objects as sound sources. Sometimes they brought material that might become part of costume, film or scenic elements.

The dancers described Forsythe’s style of creativity as valuing ‘not-knowing’ what would take place—this means not having an image, or plan for what *type* (style, structure, concept, and so on) of choreography would be made as well not knowing *how* it would be made. They shared an understanding that their work contained greater possibility than any one structure, set idea or any one final performance could convey. Forsythe explains: “When I’m making a work, the dancers and I are involved with a network of ideas that are resonating at that time, that possess a kind of inner logic for us. But the reasons for the actual choices are hard to pin down. It’s like a huge cloud of events around the work.”<sup>31</sup>

Among the dancers that I interviewed, most associated not-knowing with the feeling of excitement and potential rather than failure or incompetence. The community believed not-knowing was a communal practice—it was not that the dancers were excluded from knowledge that Forsythe or someone else might possess. Together, they sensed the unknown as generative, because of their tolerance and common strategies for emergent cooperation. Their methods opened up possibilities: such as doing the opposite, looking at the material from a different position, working with a restriction (backwards, upside down, and so on), changing the setting or making an exception. They acquired patience for the ambiguity of the process, with the multiple sources of information and fluidity which with Forsythe might change direction. While they looked

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29 Jill Johnson explained: “I liked doing classical ballets. I was brought up here [The National Ballet of Canada] in the system. It was a choreographer’s company too, so we were exposed to all kinds of work and I liked that, I wanted to have range. But when Bill came, the way he was making was just like artistic. I just—that was it. I knew I wanted to go and continue that research.” Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

30 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 295.

31 Forsythe in an interview with Roslyn Sulcas, cited in Vass-Rhee, “Distributed Dramaturgies,” p. 97.

to Forsythe as the leader to make final decisions, it was understood that experimentation also took him beyond his limits of knowledge and ability to predict the future. The team valued not-knowing what the new creation would be like until the piece finally materialized—with the audience—for the premiere.

Yet creation also continued after the premiere. Forsythe was notorious for continuing to revise his methods and pieces, for throwing out drafts or making changes at the very last minute. Observing this, Siegmund writes:

For all the continuity of his thinking about dance and movement, Forsythe has always understood how to change the use of his pieces in such a way that they do not exhaust themselves in the mere repetition of a formula. Favored ways of working are thrown overboard as well as solutions once found. He is almost infamous for changing pieces before the premiere, literally until the last minute before the curtain rises. [...] When the Ballett Frankfurt premiered two parts of *Slingerland* in 1990 in the presence of Queen Beatrix in the Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the start was delayed by more than half an hour because Forsythe made changes on the stage until the very last second.<sup>32</sup>

While in other dance ensembles such capricious behavior would have been viewed as irritating or incompetent, Forsythe's ability to galvanize the team and follow creative impulses was legendary. Not only did the team trust Forsythe's choreographic direction, the ensemble had acquired experience that changes and reversals, especially under stress, could lead to innovative performances.

This does not mean the process was without dynamic moments of strife or struggle. Among the dancers there were often contested motives and strong emotions as a piece was in creation—such as when the dancers or Forsythe did not feel confident about performing a work, or perhaps a piece did not feel radical enough or there was still searching to be done. Negotiations of the conventions and values of the work happened internally within the production team before it opened up to the external world of audiences and critics.<sup>33</sup> Forsythe's vibrant power as a leader capable of motivating group support for a piece—or contrary to this, destroying the team's confidence—was considerable. Yet Forsythe's leadership could only shape his team so far.

Typically, until the piece was actively valued by the ensemble members, the process of creation would continue. This meant that creative practice was not isolated but could become part of rehearsing and performing. Occasionally, when circumstances changed and if the piece was no longer fitting the performers, it was likely to enter a stage of revision. Forsythe and the team might discard aspects of the existing work or even try something new. Although seldom, sometimes a piece would be abandoned after a short

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32 Translation by the author. See Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," p. 22.

33 In Csikszentmihalyi's view, which is similar to Howard Becker's, creativity is not only that which pours out of creative individuals, but that which "leaves a trace in the cultural matrix" and is dependent on the field's acknowledgement of the change made in the domain. He writes: "It is important to remember, however, that a domain cannot be changed without the explicit or implicit consent of a field responsible for it." Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, p. 27, p. 28.

run of performances following the premiere. Thus, the constitution of a piece was not purely directive, nor democratic, but influenced by a complex social chemistry in which leadership shaped group tendencies.

Because of this common understanding that the creation phase might continue after the premiere, each subsequent performance of an existing work became another opportunity, motivating reflection and artistic innovation. Creative processes did not stop entirely but shifted dynamically—winding up and down. When a creation was finishing there would be a change in rehearsal style, signifying a piece was more formed than *in* formation.

Overall, the atmosphere of creation was remembered by the dancers in terms of its special social and affectual aspects, which they described as different from professional rehearsal cultures that they had known in other ensembles—especially within ballet companies. The process was vertiginous. The group cohered in facing the challenge of making a new work together. There was an abundance of horizontal sharing with one another, as much as with Forsythe. It was also playful and fun—replete with laughter, humor, enjoyment and spontaneity. Yet because creative work was the opposite of routine—highly irregular and unpredictable—the ensemble's creative practice was stressful and tiring. Dancers described the stress from maintaining a nervous system ready to adapt and invent in the moment. Creative practice with Forsythe thus moved across a matrix of different intensities and affects.<sup>34</sup> Making choreography, I would like to argue, was the ethos of the dancers' labor, infiltrating their approach to training, rehearsal and performance.

## 4.6 Touring

Touring is an important aspect of the professional culture of many dance companies.<sup>35</sup> While highly glamorous to outsiders, the realities merit greater scrutiny. Season plans in Forsythe's archive document performances in Frankfurt and elsewhere within Germany—cities such as Stuttgart, Munich and Hamburg. They also detail extensive locations abroad: in western Europe across capitals such as Paris, Amsterdam, London, Brussels, Rome; and to other continents, visiting the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Japan and Brazil. From 1990 to 1998, Ballett Frankfurt had a one-month residency in Paris each year, giving approximately 20 performances at the Théâtre du Châtelet.<sup>36</sup> The Forsythe Company had a one-month residency in the Schauspielhaus Zürich for the first three seasons of its operation.

Traveling impacted the artists and repertoire. Touring generated new contexts, stimulating variety and fresh textures in performance. Receiving world-wide attention

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34 Csikszentmihalyi has also highlighted the satisfying aspects of creativity as well as the troubles; Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, pp. 73–76.

35 On ballet companies, see Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 145–49; on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, see DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations*, in particular pp. 66–67 and pp. 93–94; on Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, see Klein, "Die Logik der Praxis," pp. 129–31.

36 Sulcas, "Watching the Ballet Frankfurt, 1988–2009," p. 4.

increased the ensembles' status, reputation and cultural capital. The organizations also profited from revenue earned on tour—which Forsythe stressed in public interviews was essential to his company making profit.<sup>37</sup> It was not unknown for the dancers to be on tour for three months a year (comprised of multiple trips), accounting for 30 or more performances.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.6.1 The Cost of Touring

Touring deeply impacted the bodily life of the dancers, as they shifted locations quickly and were asked to adapt to local contexts. There was a rhythm to this jet-set lifestyle: on trains and airplanes, packing up, arriving at the next hotel, experiencing jetlag, gaining orientation, attending dress rehearsals, waking up then rehearsing the next day, performing, performing again, going elsewhere, unpacking, recovering, and so on. While the dancers traveled all together, individuality was maintained at a high cost to theaters—with each member of the team receiving their own hotel room and *per diems*.

Traveling to perform internationally offered a sense of purpose and fulfilment to the dancers—having exchange with diverse audiences, seeing cities around the world and also enjoying some luxury when staying in four-star hotels. Yet despite the glamour of the touring schedule, with the professional work ethic of Forsythe dancers, being on tour was primarily dedicated to working. The hotel and restaurant services made it possible to retreat: to focus exclusively on the show. One dancer summed it up to me: “You know how a tour is. You’re mostly going from the hotel to the theater.”<sup>39</sup> Another explained, touring is “the greatest and also the worst part of the lifestyle.”<sup>40</sup>

The nomadism can lead to depletion.<sup>41</sup> After the end of the 2014–2015 season of The Forsythe Company, Forsythe resigned from his post for reasons of health; a new artistic director was selected to take his position.<sup>42</sup> After closing negotiations, Forsythe commented to a reporter: “With only 16 people, we all burnt out. I should have rung the alarm sooner, but you always wonder if it is an anomaly or a trend.” Traveling was not the only reason—there was increased workload and the aging of the team too.<sup>43</sup>

Outside of Forsythe's groups, a rising number of high-status artists are also beginning to protest about the damaging environmental aspect of touring—with Jérôme Bel,

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37 Driver et al., “A Conversation with William Forsythe,” p. 90.

38 See Appendix I for an example, illustrating the 1995–1996 season in which *Duo* was made.

39 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018.

40 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

41 Supporting my experiences as a former Forsythe dancer and the accounts of *Duo* dancers such as Riley Watts, Wulff writes about her experience touring as an ethnographer with the Royal Swedish Ballet. She notes that while dancers describe touring as something “they enjoy,” it also presents challenges: homesickness, “extra-intense” schedules, little time for exploration of the cities where they were working, and especially after a long time on tour, stress from the closeness of working together. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 147.

42 Italian choreographer Jacopo Godani, former dancer of the Ballett Frankfurt.

43 Forsythe cites the overwork due to the numbers of premieres required and the smaller team size. Cappelle, “William Forsythe Dances to a New Tune.” Seven dancers from the Ballet Frankfurt stayed the full ten years of The Forsythe Company, aging from their thirties into their forties. Forsythe grew from 55 to 65, leaving his work when many people would retire.



Tino Sehgal, Katie Mitchell, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker all having omitted plane travel from their artistic practice.<sup>44</sup>

Building upon this sketch, the details of *Duo*'s touring history are the subject of the next chapter.

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This chapter has examined the dancers' practices and contextualized these within the "practice turn."<sup>45</sup> Describing these activities in vivid detail, I investigated the dancers' seasonal rhythms (4.1), training (4.2), rehearsal (4.3), performing (4.4), creation (4.5) and touring (4.6); this analysis has drawn extensively from interviews with *Duo* dancers, as well as my own experience as a former Forsythe dancer. Two cumulative aspects of my argument are as follows: First, the chapter explored the tension between how the dancers' practices were, on one hand, generative, creative and variable, and, on the other hand, repetitive and routinized. In contrast with other studies that take an either/or approach, I have considered the possibility that routine and unpredictability are *paired* as entwining aspects of practice.<sup>46</sup> Second, the chapter also highlighted the existential impact of this labor for the artists: veering between intensities of positive eustress and negative distress. Overall, my discussion canvasses the importance of movement exchange and creative process, clarifying how choreographic artefacts, social bonds and Forsythe's leadership held together a riveting nexus of activity.

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44 Sulcas, "When the Choreographer Won't Fly, the Dancers Rehearse by Skype," p. 2.

45 Schatzki et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*.

46 Reckwitz, "Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken," in particular pp. 294–95.

## Chapter 5: *Duo's* Art World

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Works of art, from this point of view, are not the products of individual makers, “artists” who possess a rare and special gift. They are, rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world’s characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence. Artists are some subgroup of the world’s participants who, by common agreement, possess a special gift, therefore make a unique and indispensable contribution to the work, and thereby make it art. [...] The world exists in the cooperative activity of those people, not as a structure or organization, and we use words like those only as shorthand for the notion of networks of people cooperating.

—Howard Becker<sup>1</sup>

Howard Becker’s now classic sociological study, *Art Worlds* (1982), poignantly draws into view the span of cooperative activities that produce artistic works and ascribe them with artistic value. To debate the ‘essential’ contribution of the artist author, Becker takes a deliberately provocative position. Even when an individual artist works alone—such as a painter, poet, composer or choreographer making a solo—Becker emphasizes that they rely on cooperative links, materials that they did not find or produce themselves, common conventions and frequently also on legal and institutional support. With reputation being a critical power locus affecting whether or not an artwork is accepted, artists are also dependent on their social ties. An “art world” is Becker’s term for a network of cooperation that produces art: people whose choices, small and large, contribute to an artwork existing and being meaningful.

Becker’s view is particularly insightful for considering the work of William Forsythe and the example of *Duo*. This perspective helps to interpret the impact of production conditions on choreographic artefacts, as well as to highlight the choreographer’s interdependence with his or her team. It avoids deifying the choreographer and oversimplifying the social processes through which the author’s vision becomes manifest. While Becker recognizes the “unique and indispensable contribution” an artist makes to his or her work, Becker concludes that an array of activities support art making. Becker

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1 Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. 35.

stresses: the artist “works in the center of a network of cooperating people, *all of whose work is essential to the final outcome.*”<sup>2</sup>

Becker clarifies that the concept of an art world is a metaphor he uses to consider concrete realities: “A ‘world’ as I understand it [...] consists of real people who are trying to get things done, largely by getting other people to do things that will assist them in their project.”<sup>3</sup> Comparing his thinking to Bourdieu’s field theory, Becker distinguishes a field as a concept of a *limited* space governed by forces that distribute rationed things that people want (reputation, resources, money, status, etc.). A world, for Becker is not spatial; rather, it has to do with the “flesh-and-blood” of people.<sup>4</sup> An art world is a practical location opened *through* cooperation: people paying attention and gradually shaping their activity in relation to others.<sup>5</sup> Different from Bourdieu’s theory—which focuses on limitations, competition and advancement through the acquisition of various kinds of capital—Becker’s vision of cooperation is less mired in competition, though it does not preclude it. Becker sees the art world as an unlimited space of potential. In this, he echoes Forsythe dancers, with their generative emphasis on ‘What else?’

For Becker: “The basic question of an analysis centered on ‘world’ is who is doing what with who that affects the resulting work of art?”<sup>6</sup> Here I follow this lead, returning to my case study. Who is doing *Duo* with whom, when and where, is the focus of this section, tracing the performance history of the project from 1996 to 2018. Having already indicated the extent of infrastructure, people and practices supporting *Duo*, now I look at the performers’ lineage in greater detail. I highlight how the distribution of performance through touring affected the choreographic work, showing how the project is held together through cooperative links, material conditions, shared spaces and the investment of a small group of artists. Looking chronologically at these interweaving activities, I chronicle how the piece has been produced over twenty years—a braiding together of efforts. Where possible, I draw comparison from an existing study of Pina Bausch’s seminal piece *Das Frühlingsopfer* (*The Rite of Spring*), made by dance scholar Gabriele Klein.<sup>7</sup>

## 5.1 Touring

Between 1996 and 2018, *Duo* was performed by Forsythe’s dancers approximately 148 times—in 41 cities, in 19 countries and on four continents (see Figs. 15–16).<sup>8</sup> This rhythm

2 Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. 35, p. 25, emphasis mine.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 379.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 375.

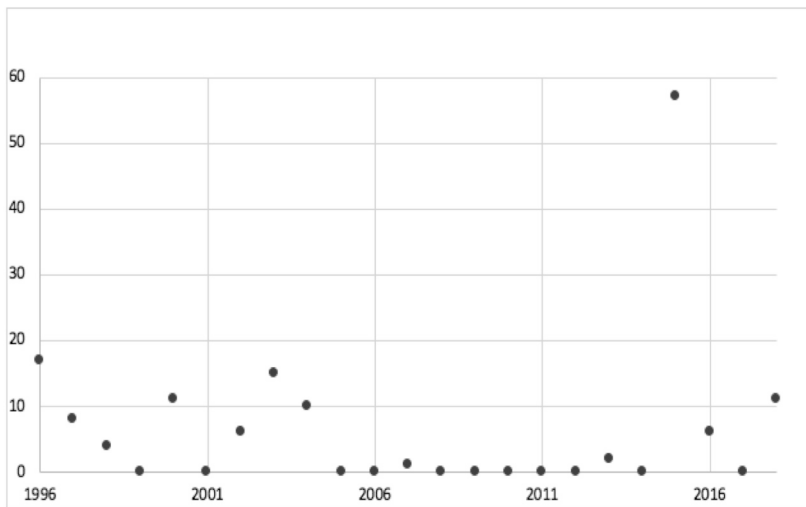
6 Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 384–85. Dance scholars Helena Wulff and Rudi Laermans both give serious consideration of Becker’s ideas in their studies of ballet and contemporary dance, respectively. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*; in particular pp. 33–35. See Laermans, *Moving Together*, in particular pp. 274–83.

7 See Klein, “Die Logik der Praxis.”

8 This figure counts performances of *Duo*, *DUO2015* and *Dialogue* (*DUO2015*). It does not count performances by companies/dancers outside Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company. For compari-

of repetition and displacement shows two waves of activity. In Ballett Frankfurt, *Duo* was performed 72 times, with the highest frequency of performances within the first year and during the tours of the final season of Ballett Frankfurt. Throughout the period of The Forsythe Company, *Duo* was primarily dormant. *Duo* resurged in a new form, under the title *DUO2015*, as part of the *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* tour during which there were 57 performances in 2015.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 15. Number of Performances of the Duo Project per Year (1996 – 2018).



The data visualized in Figures 15 and 16 was developed from study of archival documents in Forsythe's and the dancers' private archives (programs, tour plans, archival videos of performances, personal notes). The process of triangulation between these documents and interviews with the dancers and musicians gives confidence to the completeness and accuracy of these findings. Yet the history is not without ambiguities and indications of missing elements. To reach a more in-depth understanding of the cooperation on *Duo*, I studied videos of *key performances*.<sup>10</sup> These provided broader evidence

son, between 1976 and 2013 Pina Bausch's *Das Frühlingsopfer* was performed by the Bausch company more than 300 times—in 74 cities, in 38 countries and on four continents. See *ibid.*, p. 131. Forsythe's touring, by comparison, centers on Europe and North America, with no reach to South America and little touring in Asia.

9 For a complete list of the *Duo* project performances, see Waterhouse, "Supplements to Processing Choreography."

10 See the section titled Key Performances in the Introduction of this book for discussion of the criteria and selection process. See also Appendix F, section 2.

Figure 16. Locations of Duo Project Performances (1996 – 2018).



of *Duo* not just as an original to be repeated, but a process of continual collaboration, shaped by new contexts and performers.

## 5.2 Reconstructive Chronology of *Duo* Performances

The first performance of *Duo* took place on January 20, 1996, on the stage of Frankfurt's Opera House. The video archives reveal a piece that is freshly-made and fragile. (As one indication of this, a dancer's hair falls down from her upswept 'banana' hairstyle during a performance.) In the previous three weeks, Forsythe had worked closely with the dancers Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson to create the piece: inventing the movement, developing the choreographic structure and choosing the right music, lights and costumes. The premiere of the piece in January (a run of six performances) was followed by tours to Paris, Rome and Bregenz in Austria. *Duo* appeared as the second work in a program of six short pieces, under the title *Six Counter Points*. Ballett Frankfurt *répétiteur* Margot Kazimirska played Thom Willems' score for solo piano.<sup>11</sup>

When dancer Jill Johnson left Ballett Frankfurt at the end of the 1995–1996 season, a new member of Ballett Frankfurt—Canadian dancer Allison Brown—was coached to take her part. Brown learned Johnson's part from van Berkel. Their first experience dancing *Duo* was a gala performance for Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark. Over the course of the next season, Brown performed *Duo* on tour in Leverkusen and again in Frankfurt, gaining confidence and receiving valuable feedback from her peers. On May 8, 1997, a key performance of *Duo* in Frankfurt shows Brown's early adjustments

11 The works on this program were, in order: *The The*, *Duo*, *Trio*, *Four Point Counter*, *Two Ballets in the Manner of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century* 1. *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* 2. *Approximate Sonata*.

to her new role, with van Berkel at her side. Unlike the premiere—danced upon a black floor—Forsythe choose a light gray floor.<sup>12</sup> Optically this drew attention to the movements of the dancers' lower bodies, effectively changing the atmosphere. This performance also marked the entrance of David Morrow as pianist, playing a new version of Thom Willem's score.

At the end of the 1996–1997 season, new dancers began to learn *Duo*: Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines with Francesca Harper.<sup>13</sup> *Duo* was no longer featured in the program *Six Counter Points*, but instead placed within other evenings of mixed repertoire. Bringing in new dancers to the work was pragmatic, given the possibility of injury. It was also a means of refining the piece, and further enabling its impact upon the ensemble.<sup>14</sup> In the beginning of the 1997–1998 season, Brown performed with Gaines on tour in Helsinki. In Spring 1998, Brown returned to dancing with van Berkel on tour in Antwerp.

*Duo* was not performed in the 1998–1999 season. Upon Jill Johnson's return to Ballett Frankfurt in 1999, and with Regina van Berkel's departure from Ballett Frankfurt in 2000, Brown switched roles to perform with Johnson, with whom she would perform together for the next three years. In a string of seven performances in Frankfurt in early March 2000, van Berkel and Johnson began, followed by Brown (in her new role, taking on the part of van Berkel) with Johnson. Next, the dancers toured to Mulhouse, France. At the end of the 1999–2000 season, performances of *Duo* took place at the Montpellier Dance Festival, in conditions remembered as difficult—by the dancers and pianist Morrow—for finding the right balance of music and movement, consonance and dissonance.<sup>15</sup> The program does not list the performers, but the dancers confidently remember van Berkel and Johnson performing together, celebrating van Berkel's last shows and subsequent departure from the company to pursue future work as a choreographer.

Brown is one of the few dancers with knowledge of both parts in the duet; she is also the Ballett Frankfurt dancer who has danced the most performances of *Duo*. A video of a selected key performance from March 9, 2000, though of poor resolution, reflects the important partnership developed between Brown and Johnson. This recording is also significant in that Forsythe chose to authorize this video as a reference to stage the piece on CCN – Ballet de Lorraine in 2015. As such, this source signifies a standard reference for transmission of *Duo*—suggesting Forsythe's aesthetic preference to emphasize a more recent version rather than the original rendering of the piece, and to acknowledge the artists who gave the piece a strong and stable identity, rather than those without a longstanding history of interpretation.

There was a respite from performance of *Duo* in both the 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 seasons. In the final two seasons of the Ballett Frankfurt, other dancers also became

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12 The light gray floor was used for the first half of the program of *Six Counter Points* (i.e., *The The, Duo* and *Four Point Counter*). The work *Trio* was not performed.

13 Unfortunately, there are no documents (programs or videos) showing Harper performing the work. The dancers speculate that perhaps because of injury she was unable to perform, or quite possibly a performance record has been lost.

14 This point is developed in section 11.1, Learning *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt.

15 Independent confirmation by David Morrow, interview with the author in Rüsselsheim, July 25, 2017, and Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

involved with *Duo*. These included Cora Bos-Kroese, who had joined the Ballett Frankfurt in 2001 after a career in Nederlands Dans Theater, as well as Italian dancer Roberta Mosca and American dancer Natalie Thomas. In November 2002, *Duo* was revisited with a series of six performances in Frankfurt, with Johnson and Brown performing. Six months later, the piece toured to three cities in Italy, performed by Bos-Kroese, Mosca, and/or Johnson. At this time, a shift occurred in the musical accompaniment. Willems replaced Morrow, performing his own piano score, again modified for the occasion—a role that Willems then kept in later performances. The new program of four works would tour extensively for the next two years before the ultimate closure of Ballett Frankfurt in summer 2004.<sup>16</sup>

One month after the Italian tour, *Duo* was performed in Cologne, with Brown and Mosca together. Brown selected the performance on June 29, 2003 as a key performance. Without the background curtain—used to bring forward the piece to the apron of the stage, as close to the audience as possible—the stage here is much larger than those of previous *Duo* performances. This changes how the dancers move in the space, to cover and project across greater distances. This performance still follows the original sequence of the 1996 version of *Duo*, with agogic stretching according to the musical phrasing particular to Mosca and Brown.

In the final season of the Ballett Frankfurt, *Duo* toured extensively: in the fall to Brooklyn and Montreal, and in early summer to Lille, in France; then Berkeley, Orange County and Washington, DC. In this final tour, Thomas stepped in to perform Brown's role with Johnson.

After the closure of Ballett Frankfurt at the end of the 2003–2004 season, Forsythe continued working with a smaller set of dancers in his subsequent ensemble, The Forsythe Company. The repertoire of the latter did not include *Duo* until 2012.<sup>17</sup> Aside from Roberta Mosca, no other *Duo* dancers had continued from Ballett Frankfurt to The Forsythe Company.

During and after the time of Ballett Frankfurt, there was a diaspora of *Duo*, which was purchased and performed by other dance companies (see Table 3). *Duo* dancers chosen by Forsythe took active part transmitting (a process called 'setting') the work. In the Batsheva Dance Company and Ballet de Lorraine, pairs of male dancers as well as female dancers were chosen as performers. The work was also taught to dance students at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts in 2015 with Brown and Forsythe dancer Cyril Baldy teaching.

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16 This program featured, in order: *The Room As It Was*, *Duo*, *N.N.N.N.*, and *One Flat Thing*, reproduced.

17 One gala performance of *Duo* in 2007 was performed by Ballett Frankfurt *Duo* dancers Jill Johnson and Allison Brown, with the dancers taking responsibility for their own rehearsals.

Table 3. *Duo* performances by companies outside Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company

Company	Date of Acquisition	Ballet Master
Batsheva Dance Company	2000	Johnson
Lyon Opera Ballet	circa 2003	Johnson/Bos-Kroese
Nederlands Dans Theater	circa 2007	Johnson/Bos-Kroese
Gauthier Dance	2009	Bos-Kroese
CCN – Ballet de Lorraine	2015	Baldy

The Forsythe Company repertoire foregrounded new works, often for the entire company. Repertoire evenings with smaller pieces were infrequent. In January 2012, a small group of Forsythe Company dancers participated in initial rehearsals of *Duo* for a program of small works intended to include *The The*, *N.N.N.N.*, in addition to a new piece.<sup>18</sup> Male dancers Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts, and female dancers Roberta Mosca and Parvaneh Scharafali, were chosen and paired by Forsythe to continue to rehearse with Brown in order to further reconstruct the version of *Duo* performed previously by the Ballett Frankfurt.

Scharafali had learned and performed Johnson's role in *Duo* as a dancer in Nederlands Dans Theater, receiving coaching from Johnson and Bos-Kroese and an award for her performance. Mosca was also a *Duo* veteran. The inclusion of male performers was seen as natural and unchallenging to the history of the work. The planned performances of *Duo* in 2012 at Frankfurt's Bockenheimer Depot did not however take place as designated, with Forsythe choosing to change the program.<sup>19</sup>

After this incubation phase of rehearsing *Duo*, partners Watts and Gjoka danced *Duo* for the first time in 2013 in two gala performances.<sup>20</sup> By this time, Mosca had left the company, leaving Scharafali without a partner. Although these performances were far from what Gjoka and Watts would come to understand as "their *Duo*," they were an important occasion of learning.<sup>21</sup> In them, the two dancers interpreted the Ballett Frankfurt structure of *Duo*, wearing their own practice clothes. Aside from Forsythe's choreographic decision to revise the beginning of the piece, Gjoka and Watts perform the choreography they inherited in sequence, albeit with percussive breath and speed that is different from prior versions. Their interpretation is also three minutes shorter.<sup>22</sup> Finding a very different sense of effort, they are faster, vocally louder and more grounded than the prior performers. There is also a refined musical approach, with Willems playing at the piano with exceptional sparseness—the acoustics added only to the rising action of the piece, about two-thirds through the dance.<sup>23</sup>

18 Dancers Cyril Baldy, Brigel Gjoka, Josh Johnson, Roberta Mosca, Parvaneh Scharafali, Yasutake Shimaji and Riley Watts took part in these rehearsals.

19 This critical moment is diagnosed further in section 11.2 Reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company.

20 In Darmstadt and Weimar.

21 Conversation with Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka after a performance, April 2, 2016.

22 See Appendix F, section 3.

23 The Darmstadt performance is without musical accompaniment; here I describe the Weimar gala.



Continuing their experience with *Duo*, Forsythe asked Gjoka and Watts to work with excerpts from the choreography as sources for improvisation within the collage piece *Study#3* (2012). Movement phrases from *Duo* also appear as short points of reference within performances of *The Returns* in The Forsythe Company's 2014–2015 season.

In 2014, Forsythe was asked by renowned ballet dancer Sylvie Guillem<sup>24</sup> to include *Duo* in her international farewell tour titled *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*, sponsored by Sadler's Wells Theatre of London.<sup>25</sup> For this context, Forsythe expanded the Ballet Frankfurt version of *Duo* into a longer work of twenty minutes, which he retitled *DUO2015*. Willems also changed the score, creating a more minimal composition of electronics (without piano). The suspended flageolet tones were recycled from Forsythe and Willem's piece *Sider* (2011), creating a hypnotizing yet suspenseful sonic atmosphere. New costumes were chosen, in which the dancers wore sweatpants and tank tops. Despite the dancers referring chronologically to the version of *Duo* that they had learnt, this adaptation involved more sections of improvisation and solos in which the dancers had greater freedom with *their* choices of sequence and motifs. According to the dancers, Gjoka and Watts found "*their Duo*" in this version and context.<sup>26</sup> They also acquired expertise through extensive performance in 52 cities internationally between April and December 2015. Supported by the infrastructure of Sadler's Wells Theatre of London, this tour took the work beyond Forsythe's institutional structure; the dancers performed for the first time without Forsythe's presence, organizing rehearsals and the presentation themselves.

In the two years following this tour, dancers Watts and Gjoka maintained their connection, despite living on different continents. After eight months apart, they met in Paris in August 2016 to perform *DUO2015* in the church of Saint-Eustache, in the context of the French festival *Quartier d'Été*. They took decisions, in dialogue with Forsythe, about how the audience and sound would be installed in this space. The video I studied of the key performance reflects one of four shows over the course of two nights, which were timed to be performed with the changing of the evening light through the church windows. The chiming of the church bells was spontaneously incorporated into the dancers' musicality, and the staging was modified to address an audience seated on three sides. After these performances, the next month the dancers flew to Philadelphia to perform the piece twice as an installation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, with Forsythe present. Wishing to keep evolving their partnership, the dancers met with me

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24 French ballerina Sylvie Guillem (b. 1965) was celebrating her retirement from the stage with this performance tour at the age of fifty. She had forged a relationship with Forsythe when he created a feature role for her in the piece *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*, made at the Paris Opéra Ballet in 1987.

25 Sadler's Wells Theatre was founded in 1683. Currently it is operating courtesy of fundraising, individual donors, organizations, trusts and foundations. The project *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* was credited as a Sadler's Wells London Production, in co-production with Les Nuits de Fourvière, Shanghai International Arts Festival and Sylvie Guillem. The program featured, in order: *technê* by Akram Khan, *DUO2015* by William Forsythe, *Here & After* by Russell Maliphant, and *Bye* by Mats Ek. Guillem performed in every work except for *DUO2015*.

26 Conversation with Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka after a performance, April 2, 2016.

in October 2017 to teach a *DUO2015* workshop together—at Gjoka's educational program in Bologna (Art Factory International). Gjoka and Watts were given permission by Forsythe to perform *DUO2015* again in April 2018, in an event 'taking over' the communal theater of Bologna.

Most recently, in the summer 2018, dancers Gjoka and Watts met again with Forsythe to prepare *DUO2015* for a second Sadler's Wells tour, *A Quiet Evening of Dance*.<sup>27</sup> Beginning with rehearsals near to his home in Vermont, USA, Forsythe assembled former dancers of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company to build a new program with *Duo* as its keystone. Before the premiere, Forsythe described the evening as "an essay on the baroque," another important exploration of the potential and contemporaneity of ballet.<sup>28</sup> The piece *Duo* was again adjusted. The work was retitled *Dialogue (DUO2015)* to reflect the continuity of the four pieces within the first act. Exploring a new sonic landscape, Willems' music was changed to bird calls; the dancers received new pants and T-shirts (designed by Dorothee Merg) and lighting (designed by Tanja Rühl), both adapted in collaboration with Forsythe. Furthermore, the performers allowed their recent investigation of hip-hop (with cast member Rauf "RubberLegz" Yasit), and ballet (in the final act *Seventeen/Twenty One*) to influence their interpretation. Until the suspension of the tour due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the piece continued as a work in process within this context.

The practitioners understand *Duo* as both a manifestation in the present and a forward-moving journey. *Duo* dancer Brigel Gjoka explains: "So it's the journey. I wanna live the journey. [...] It's something that never stops and it doesn't become like an archive. So, I don't feel with *Duo* it's like an archive and I have to talk about memories."<sup>29</sup> Yet *Duo* also manifests *because of* and *through* its history, without inertia to hold the dancers' creativity back. Each performance of *Duo* manifests the lineage of information passed down, from pair to pair. The dancers have learned the same movements and sequence, and developed a style of dyadic communication particular for their way of interpreting the dance. They invest in Forsythe's curation of short works for each tour, and his new adjustments of the stage elements. Not any duo is *Duo*. Nor will any communication or set of movement principles shared between *Duo* dancers manifest the piece. The dancers are partaking in one adventure and one journey, which is a complicated bundle of people, practices and contexts: an art world.

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Throughout Part I, Howard Becker's perspective has informed my layered approach analyzing the institutional features of Forsythe's ensembles—considering Forsythe's lead-

27 The project *A Quiet Evening of Dance* was credited as a Sadler's Wells London Production, in co-production with Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Théâtre du Châtelet and Festival d'Automne in Paris; Festival Montpellier Danse 2019; Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg; The Shed, New York; Onassis Cultural Center, Athens and deSingel International Arts Campus, Antwerp. The two-act program featured, in order: *Prologue, Catalogue, Epilogue* followed by *Dialogue (DUO2015)*, and in the second act *Seventeen/Twenty One*.

28 See Crompton, "A Different Focus."

29 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2016.

ership, the ensembles' infrastructural conditions, the dancers' practices and the ensemble's teamwork. In this chapter I have arrived at a detailed, chronological analysis of the institutional enmeshment of the *Duo* project, following Becker's question for the art world: "Who is doing what with who that affects the resulting work of art?"<sup>30</sup>

By attending to this question, I have shown that the performances of *Duo* reveal traces of the contexts and cooperation that have produced it. Based upon study of archival documents and interviews with *Duo* dancers, in this chapter I reconstructed the performance history of the *Duo* project from 1996 to 2018—enumerating the touring history (5.1), and analyzing key performances spanning 20 years (5.2). *Duo* is thereby demonstrated to be a plastic work, shifting with the pairs of dancers and contexts of performance, strongly influenced by the constraints of artistic distribution. What becomes evident through this analysis is the richness by which Forsythe's choreographic projects engendered cooperative worlds. Forsythe's choreographic works are not just made and then distributed; rather the distribution process impacts and affords opportunities for the development of these pieces. The choreography of *Duo* emerged longitudinally through a network of people's activities in cooperation, shaped by their contexts of working and histories of working together. The concept of an *art world* helps to illustrate how Forsythe's choreography was an emergent and enduring process, shaped through contextual cooperation.

Following the longitudinal enactment of *Duo* in practice brings new consideration of how choreographic works are extended through history and sustained through cooperative links. This challenges our historiographical process as dance scholars seeking to write their histories. My analysis has highlighted the role of movement and creativity in this longitudinal process. Both warrant further inspection and will be the focus of the following two sections of this manuscript.

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30 Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. 385.

## **PART II - MOVEMENT**



## Introduction to Part II: Movement

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*Duo* has required me to consider human movement in a plural form: to perceive movement—beyond the shape-shifting of one body—as the movement produced when two dancers move *together*. The principal activity of *Duo* dancers' practice is sharing movement, iterating motions passed down from dancer to dancer, reified and performed in pairs. Enacting this movement involves being in motion directly, as well as discussing and reflecting with one's partner and with choreographer William Forsythe. It consists of engaging with traces and recordings of motion, such as handwritten notes in the dancers' notebooks or videos of *Duo* performances. This rich array of movement-related activities is my focus here.<sup>1</sup>

My aim is to make the case study of *Duo* fruitful for dance studies: by turning attention to movement's plurality and demonstrating how movement can be interpreted and analyzed, with relational regard. This means questioning the potential of movement to connect, graft and pass between people. By learning from the *Duo* dancers' practice, I sought to describe and demonstrate the aesthetic and social operation of human movement within a choreographic field. I asked: How is *Duo*'s movement enacted by the dancers in practice? How does this movement define an artwork, with distinct aesthetic properties? What is the dancers' experience of *Duo*'s movement? And how are the artists impacted by performing this movement for others?

To learn about these features and forces of movement, I put on my dance pants and invited the dancers to teach me. As a former Forsythe dancer who has not danced *Duo* upon the stage, I bring a unique *outsider-insider* point of view to this study.<sup>2</sup> Negotiating my encounter with *Duo* as a dancer, scholar and spectator, I was challenged to display intertwining perspectives of the moving self and other. There was no objective or ideal position for reconstructing *Duo*. Even the choreographer's revered perspective, as the author giving intention and direction to the piece, was part of a sea of movement transfers. The impact of *Duo* was defined by various zones of intimacy within the event of dancing together (i.e., partner to partner, dancer to audience, dancer to choreographer,

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1 In this text I use the terms motion and movement interchangeably.

2 The term *outsider-insider* is substantiated in the Introduction, see the section Sources and Methodology.

present reconstructing past and present observing present). When I stopped trying to define *Duo's* movement as the ideal, choreographic synthesis of these positions, and began looking at the dancers' real negotiations and the gaps between their practical understanding, my grasp of the vertiginous reality of the choreographic field started to make more sense.

I was drawn to explore movement in its multiplicity and evoke its power in language. Conducting interviews like dancing this duet—alternating between listening and conversing—I served as a reflection partner to elicit the dancers' understanding of their movement. Their testimonies are cited amply in the writing that follows, without significant editing so that their voices are authentic. I wanted to give their ideas resonance and friction, like they do when dancing *Duo* with one another. While providing the reader with their stories and memories, I curate and analyze these statements; I position them critically within my own review of the traces left by *Duo*, together with some key points within the literature from dance studies, process philosophy and social anthropology.

It is important to note that my references to theory from outside of *Duo* are not intended to explain practice; rather practice and theory are placed in mutual dialogue, as I challenge concepts to adequately decipher empirical observations. The keywords "body," "material," "relation," "entrainment" and "counterpoint" will be developed in this section. Examining these terms will illustrate how an aesthetic event of performing co-movement, "with and for others," deeply hones a transformative intersubjective power.<sup>3</sup> My writing strives to sensually convey the dancers' carnal experience of *Duo*, grappling to name what we miss when we overlook that movement emerges relationally, defining an us: *ourselves*.

Following a way of thinking already substantiated by many dance scholars, the bodies of *Duo* dancers take prominence in this writing. Within dance studies, the body is understood to be a dynamic material entrenching and expressing socio-political forces.<sup>4</sup> Dance scholars have paid close attention to how choreographic aesthetics are tied to dancers' bodily lives, sociality and subjectivities—illustrating the critical interweaving of movement, culture and politics.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in the recent corporeal turn of sociology and anthropology, the body is recognized as an imperative locus to understand culture and sociality; bodies are shown to be in-progress and multiple.<sup>6</sup> Approaches to researching the dancing body, using participant observation and practice-based methods as I do here, are more common in Anglo-American than German dance studies.<sup>7</sup>

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3 See Tamisari, "Dancing with and for Others."

4 See, for example, Desmond, *Meaning in Motion*; Foster, *Reading Dancing*; Thomas, *Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*.

5 See, in particular, Kunst, *Artist at Work*; Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*; Kowal et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*; Siegmund and Hölscher, *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity*.

6 See, in particular, Thomas, *The Body and Everyday Life*; Wacquant, *Body & Soul*; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*; Wulff, "Experiencing the Ballet Body"; Mol, *The Body Multiple*; Blackman, *The Body*.

7 Cf. Giersdorf, "Dance Studies in the International Academy."

My movement analysis strives to rigorously describe and distinguish *Duo's* movement. There are many approaches to movement analysis in dance.<sup>8</sup> One commonly used theory within dance studies, Laban Movement Analysis, has been shown to be fruitful for movement analysis bridging first-person and third-person perspectives, and informs my work here.<sup>9</sup> I will demonstrate a novel manner of interpreting Laban's motion factors relationally. Forsythe's own movement research projects, the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* (1999) and the website *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2009), will also be reviewed in the chapters that follow.<sup>10</sup> These present techniques of the individual body improvising and principles of composing multiple bodies moving together, leaving a gap for further study of the pair—as I explore here.

Existing studies of Forsythe's choreographic movement by dance scholars have concentrated both on the innovative properties of the dancers' movements and their aesthetic significance in performance. Notably, Wibke Hartewig's examination of the Ballet Frankfurt period has worked with Claudia Jeschke's procedure of *Inventarisierung von Bewegung* (Inventory of Movement, IVB); this has given us richly detailed movement profiles of performance excerpts. In concurrence with the work undertaken here, Hartewig demonstrates choreographic movements to be multilayered in meaning: across semiotic and sensory registers, interpreted through the rules of convention, and read within the sequence of composition and the theatrical frame.<sup>11</sup> Both Melanie Bales and Wibke Hartewig have examined the ways that Forsythe transforms the classical ballet genre of the *pas de deux*, creating duets that go beyond narrative tropes into the physics and process of partnering.<sup>12</sup>

In her dissertation, dance scholar Tamara Tomic-Vajagic has analyzed the interpretation of solos in Forsythe's "leotard ballets," using a blended approach that mixes ethnography, dance studies analysis and Laban analysis (motif writing and effort analysis). She finds that the dancer's contribution is influenced by training and the company culture in which they work, which she explores from the perspective of Bourdieu's principle of *habitus*. She also studies the concept of *agency* in interpretation—reminding us that Forsythe has fostered the performers to take liberties beyond their ballet *habitus*, creating an ensemble that, as Roslyn Sulcas observes, "is fundamentally inimical to the usual power relations between dancer and choreographer, and at odds with conventional ballet training."<sup>13</sup> Overall, Tomic-Vajagic argues that studying variation in dif-

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8 For an excellent review of movement analysis process, see Hartewig, "Observation Techniques."

9 Laban Movement Analysis is an analytic framework based upon the work of Austro-Hungarian dancer and dance theorist Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). This approach is explained further in section 9.1.

10 See Forsythe and ZKM, *Improvisation Technologies*; Forsythe and The Ohio State University, *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*.

11 See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 19–32.

12 Bales, "Touchstones of Tradition and Innovation"; see also Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, in particular pp. 176–85.

13 Sulcas, "William Forsythe: Channels for the Desire to Dance," p. 55. On the performer's labor, see also Sulcas, "William Forsythe. The Poetry of Disappearance and the Great Tradition"; Siegmund,



ferent artists' interpretations of the same piece illuminates the attributes of the dance texts and the cultural contexts in which the dancers work.<sup>14</sup>

Building upon the aforementioned studies, the following chapters will examine different scales and registers of *Duo's* movement: from the single movement of *showerhead* to the attributes of the choreographic sequence of *Duo*. I will compare movements across perspectives and times. Showing the complicated manner that dancing with a partner and for an audience defines movement, I aim to shift the conception of movement—as defined predominantly by expression, individualism and ephemerality—showing instead how movement is a quasi-malleable part of the dancers' worlds and bodily corporeality. By caring and attending to movement together, they build a choreographic field with unusual potential.

By the close of this section, the reader should have a richer understanding of the features of *Duo's* movement, and the changes that occur through longstanding practice of this motion cooperatively in rehearsal and performance. Taking the thesis that the extension from two to many dancers (that is, from one, to a couple, to a group) is not a simple matter of addition, the aspiration here is to use *Duo* as a provisional starting point to question the choreography of individuals in movement. When is a movement mine? When is it ours? How does practice lead to dancing together, and produce a choreography, itself in process?

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“William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann”; see also Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” pp. 140–42.

14 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, in particular pp. 285–89.

## Chapter 6: The Movement of Showerhead

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The movement of *Duo* involves the dancers' whole bodies moving—aside from a few notable moments of exception: for example, when the dancers both swing their right arms synchronously like pendulums, the rest of their bodies held upright without visible reverberation. Generally, Forsythe's movement style teaches dancers to investigate the potential to move any part of the body, to any region of space, using the breadth of imagination. The dancers practice refined articulations of movement that, as Forsythe says, can “start from any point.”<sup>1</sup> They master details of invention: joining movements of left calf, right ear, right ring finger, eyes, left ear, penis, pinky, pelvis, etc. If one has not already mastered another dance style or other sport, understanding *what* let alone *how* this coordination is developed is difficult to fathom.

For a Forsythe dancer, even when one part of the body is locally moved, the whole body is globally sensed, in living stasis around that activity. Even when one part moves in a crafted isolation of just what this elbow or this wrist can do—or can do while thinking this, or can do while someone else is doing that—the isolation is immediately in relation to the rest of the body, space, time and other movers. For Forsythe dancers, movement is perceived as passage and relation; movement integrates. Movement is felt as constant variation of qualities of more and less—a shifting texture of bodily (dis)continuities.<sup>2</sup> The *whole of my body* is formed in the articulation of its contributing parts. And in the case of Forsythe's dancers, this partaking is learned, through a rhythm of

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1 This adage from William Forsythe is a cornerstone of his movement philosophy. The preposition “at” or “from” varies among citations. See Whittenburg, “William Forsythe in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg,” p. 2; see Vass-Rhee, “Distributed Dramaturgies,” p. 92. The phrase is cited in the title of Caspersen's essay “It Starts From Any Point” and the subtitle of the volume edited by Steven Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts From Any Point*.

2 With the term (dis)continuities, I wish to emphasize both continuation and difference. In doing so, I draw from the concept of relation as both connecting and dividing, as in anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's formulation: see Strathern, “Kinship as a Relation,” pp. 54–55. I also draw a parallel to Erin Manning's accounts of process, which, after Whitehead, set emphasis: “not on the continuity of becoming, an infinitely open account of process, but on the becoming of continuity: process punctuated.” Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 3.

ballet training followed by creating, rehearsing and performing Forsythe's choreography—through an organism of practices supporting, mimicking, learning and watching one another; and of course, studying the movement of Forsythe, which leads and fuels this system.

To further elucidate the movement expertise of Forsythe dancers for the reader, in this section I hone in on one movement from *Duo*: the first movement, which is nicknamed “showerhead.”<sup>3</sup> In lay terms, this movement can be envisioned as a circular gesture of the right hand. The smooth move lasts one breath and involves an audible inhale and exhale. It's more complex in actuality. As a proliferating gesture, *showerhead* draws the whole body into action. How this propagation takes place will be revealed incrementally as this chapter develops and as I articulate principles and skills. In so doing, I define a particular *logic of practice*. For Pierre Bourdieu, a “logic of practice” is not abstract or external to practice, but a logic constituted within and through activity, “performed directly in bodily gymnastics.”<sup>4</sup>

*Figures 17–18. Video stills illustrating the movement showerhead. Figure 17: The beginning of the movement. Regina van Berkel (left) and Allison Brown (right) dancing Duo in 1997. Figure 18: The end of the movement. Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) dancing DUO2015 in 2015.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

3 The dancers' naming was flexible: “showerhead” “shower” or “head.” Jill Johnson used the term *showerhead* with me in interviews on October 21, 2016; December 6, 2016; and June 28, 2018. Allison Brown on September 22, 2016; and January 23, 2018. Riley Watts on January 11, 2017; May 22, 2018; and in prior work for the publication Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*.” In setting the piece, Cyril Baldy used the term “head” during rehearsals with CCN – Ballet de Lorraine on April 21–22, 2015. Riley Watts referenced the nickname “shower” on April 16, 2015. On naming movement, see section 10.4.3 First Studio Rehearsal: Conceptual Pacts.

4 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 89.



Transferred from generation to generation of *Duo* dancers, the motion *showerhead* refers to an image that has become associated with the movement: the image of twisting a faucet on. What is imagined most explicitly is the surface of the shower wall in front of the body, upon which there is a bulbous dial. The image is associated with a gesture of twisting the water on—a twist of the right hand. This image is helpful for learning the movement, but does not become loaded with meaning in a semiotic sense. The dancers do not aim to convey or communicate the object of the showerhead to anyone. Nor does the movement mimetically reproduce what they do in daily showering. The geometry of the dial, and the fun of moving around it, become a lure for moving with the image.

From discussion with the dancers, I learned that this movement was highly cared for and virtuosic. New dancers practiced it frequently, often in tandem. The movement was also enacted as a short burst of practice for dancers to get ready to dance in rehearsal—similar to the way a singer or a musician might practice a short compositional element before beginning to play the composition chronologically. *Showerhead* became a microcosm within my research and a common referent for asking questions. This helped me to pinpoint defining principles in Forsythe's movement style generally, which have been opaque or isolated in the literature. Dancing *showerhead* revealed how the practice of a movement defined the adventure of becoming a *Duo* dancer, showing how dancers' movement experience produced a choreography with a specific character. For these reasons, *showerhead* merits the close attention that I shall give it here.

## 6.1 Épaulement

### “An épaulement.”

Studio interview with Duo Dancer Jill Johnson, Boston, December 6, 2016.

Duo dancer Jill Johnson is wearing a black sweatshirt with stylish silver zippers at the sides, navy blue loose training pants, and black leather sneakers with white soles. We have met at a studio in Boston to discuss Duo and move together. I ask to make a video on my phone of her informing me about showerhead. The rich interplay of Johnson's language, gesture and movement, show how intertwined these are in her practice—cultivated by her work as a dancer in Ballett Frankfurt, where such studio exchanges were common.

JILL: Thinking of it [the showerhead image], as this surface (*she gestures a flat horizontal surface with her left hand*) and this part of the hand (*she touches the medial surface of her fingers*) is going (*with vocal emphasis*) around the showerhead. The bulbous ones, it's not the handle one (*she shows the different gestures of working with each, and looks at the camera and laughs*) to be specific.<sup>5</sup> And then, you're going along with this part of the hand around it, and then when you go to *tendu* (*she steps back*) it extends very gently, rather than it being (*she does the movement deliberately incorrectly—quickly, with no torso movement and the leg and arm very back*) this way. So, you'll be standing (*she inhales and demonstrates correctly*). If it involves sides of the body [through a series of diagonal or cantilevered alignments] it is most legible, I would say. Because it can easily (*she exaggerates to demonstrate incorrectly, by pulling her right shoulder up towards her ear and showing a unsequential isolation of her arm*) if it's just one side, so it's just this back shoulder *épaulement*. In other words, if I do it without this (*she gestures to her left*) shoulder, it can easily become a hunched-ey thing as opposed to (*she smiles and unfurls her arm*) an *épaulement*.

*Showerhead* orients around tracing the fingertips of the right hand around the imaginary shower dial—especially the medial surface of the pointer finger, the part that you can stoke with your thumb. The pointer finger curves around the shower dial clockwise, from 9:00 p.m., all the way around to 8:00 p.m. (Imagine your fingers tracing along the inside of a bowl, so that the palm turns; now make that movement in front of your ribcage and you've started to *showerhead*.)

While moving, the dancers' hands are loose and alert, fingers as sensitive as if they were moving through water. Their bodies are not locked in an upright posture of accomplishing a hand motion or gesture. Rather, more like how a clarinetist would swirl out a sound, the dancers develop the spiral potential of the circular image, the *showerhead*, through subtle shifts of their reverberating centers.

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5 Through my fieldwork I realized that the dancers used the term *showerhead*, but imagined a round shower dial. This did not confuse them, though it did confuse some exchange partners reading drafts of this manuscript.

“If it involves both sides of the body it is most effective, I would say,” explained Duo dancer Jill Johnson.<sup>6</sup> By including or integrating the left side of the body, the gesture of the right arm is consumed in a movement of the full body. Twisting the torso, the showerhead image begins an interplay called *épaulement*.

*Épaulement*, from the French for shouldering, is a term describing the style of positioning of the upper body in ballet—part of one’s carriage of the arms, or *port de bras*.<sup>7</sup> Forsythe dancer Dana Caspersen explains: “In classical ballet, *épaulement* is the practice of creating specific linked patterns of complex, dynamic relationships between the eyes, head, shoulders, arms, hands, legs, feet and the exterior space, as the torso engages in rotation.” (You can experience *épaulement* yourself by trying the following exercise. Stand and face a wall with a window, in a place where you can move your arms around freely. Lift your chest slightly and grow a few mm taller. Then rotate your waist so that the right shoulder moves forward towards the window; your left shoulder moves back away from it. Then twist the opposite way. Repeat this twisting motion of your torso a couple of times, slowly and smoothly. Add the alertness of your eyes, which may move to look through the window at the scene as you continue to shift your shoulders. If you like, improvise some movement with your hands and arms as you continue to twist and untwist. Beginning a dialogue of internal torsion, vision, space, and rhythms outside the window and within your body, your upper body has started to be in *épaulement*.)

*Épaulement* is a cultivated practice of micro-coordination, expressed in every ballet company as a style. With dance expertise, styles of *épaulement* are easy to differentiate. Generally, *épaulement* is a manner in which twists and counter-twists are coordinated within the body and relate to the space in which ballet is danced. This intuitively the body not as a set of linear elements, but as a system of winding and unwinding sheering force. Forsythe has described *épaulement* as a “perceptually gratifying state” that “synthesizes discrete parts of the body with multiple layers of torqued sensation that leads to the specific sense of a unified but counter-rotated whole.”<sup>8</sup>

As a dancer in The Forsythe Company, I was told by my peers that *épaulement* originated within the performance of imperial ballets in Russia—that deferent ballerinas learned to keep their eyes positioned upon the Czar in performance, who was seated at a special place, in the center loge of the theater. As she moved and turned, this led to angles and shading of her movement.<sup>9</sup> In Ballett Frankfurt, *épaulement* was explored beyond this deference, as an aesthetic, expressive and physically rich *habitus*. This coordinative potential of twisting the body and relating to space, was drawn upon in nearly all

6 Jill Johnson, studio session while dancing in Boston on December 6, 2016. She adds, when the left and right sides of the body dynamically relate, creating “cantilevered” and “diagonal” alignments, the movement becomes clearer. Jill Johnson, email correspondence with the author, September 12, 2020.

7 Caspersen, “What *Épaulement* Also Is,” p. 12.

8 Foster, “Why is There Always Energy for Dancing?,” p. 17. Elsewhere Forsythe explains, “All my teachers actually tried to teach me that dancing was an astounding phenomenon. I think the teachers I had were always fascinated with the complex beauty of dancing. I just happened to have that group of people who said it was a complex form of beauty and it verged somewhat on the ecstatic.” Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” pp. 22–24.

9 Compare to Anderson, *Ballet & Modern Dance*, p. 101.

Forsythe's choreographies. The dancers experimented with sensing, enhancing, grooving, fragmenting and inventing *épaulement*.

As a generator, Forsythe catalyzed movement around him. But *épaulement* would be mistakenly characterized as only a top-down process—of contamination and the reproduction of Forsythe's bodily style. Forsythe also shaped the performance of *épaulement*, as is common in western dance and athletic training, through spoken "collective correction."<sup>10</sup> This shaped concepts and understanding collectively, as people demonstrated and dialogued with their bodies. Additionally, Forsythe's rehearsal assistants and the dancers themselves further cultivated *épaulement* in the dancers' ballet class each morning. In rehearsal, teaching and learning from one another was also fundamental.<sup>11</sup> As a new dancer, I discovered the style, through osmosis and doing. The affective capacity of this sharing was often "ecstatic."<sup>12</sup>

This illustrates how the practice of *épaulement*, a significant aspect of *Duo*, was embedded in an intricate social system and web of professional activities, producing a movement style that was communal. The dancers *shared* this practice. Yet the dancers did not view their custom as homogenization or limiting. No two dancers performed *épaulement* identically, and this in itself was significant. My *épaulement* was part of my signature as a dancer, as well as a sign of my membership within a specific group. Our *épaulement*, as Forsythe dancers, was more extended and shaped differently than that of other ballet companies.<sup>13</sup> We expressed form differently, because of our intersubjectivity through this practice—how we sensed the potential of our own bodies, in relation to others and space. The practice was, to name it clearly, *individual-collective*.

*Épaulement* is one way of manifesting the potential of collective bodies; there are certainly others, as the plethora of dance techniques makes clear. The manner in which Forsythe dancers became expressive through *épaulement* shows how choreography drew

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10 Such "collective corrections" are a part of many physical practices learned in groups. For a fascinating account of training in boxing, see Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 104. In rehearsal with the San Francisco Ballet, for example, Forsythe instructed: "Show me everything you know about *port de bras*." "*Épaulement* is a conversation between your foot and your hands. So make a wonderful conversation." "You are the experts in the room. Show me." See Ross, *San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*, p. 107. These comments however do not reflect the broader and changing modes of dialogue between Forsythe and his ensemble dancers, which varied extensively, based upon context (i.e., during a creation rehearsal, after a performance, outside of rehearsal, etc.). Further examples of how Forsythe spoke to *Duo* dancers are provided in sections 10.4 and 11.2.2.

11 See Vass-Rhee, "Schooling an Ensemble," p. 227. Here Vass-Rhee describes such scaffolded learning in her analysis of the devising process making Forsythe's piece *Whole in the Head* (2010).

12 Caspersen, "What *Épaulement* Also Is," p. 2. Forsythe, "Observing Motion," p. 24.

13 Supporting these claims, *Duo* dancer Allison Brown described: "I think it has to do with the sensing through them, through my arms. Like I'm always, like reaching through them. In my Balanchine-days I was like that (*she places her arms in fifth position, circling above her head*). And then more working with Bill I became more like that (*she changes pose, the stretch becomes more extreme and the quality emphasizes more awareness of the feeling of her body and the space around her*). [...] When there's like a group I can tell which one is me just by how I'm holding my arms. So my arms have kind of always been my how I can find myself." Allison Brown, interview with the author, Bern, January 23, 2017. Forsythe also concurred about the ensemble style: "And we're very arm conscious. I think that's, for us, the key to our style. One *tendu* is perhaps someone else's *tendu*, but our *port de bras* is really indicative of what we do." Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 91.

upon relational practice. This is true in Forsythe's choreographies generally, providing further substantiation for why ballet practice was so central. *Épaulement* was a practice critical to making *Duo*, what Forsythe named as, "the crowning accomplishment of great ballet dancers."<sup>14</sup>

## 6.2 Residual Movement

In *showerhead*, the dancers intuit movement residue around the start of the image—the shower dial. Meaning, *showerhead* is not like the pedestrian motion of twisting a key into a lock, with a posture oriented on getting an action done, an object manipulated, a problem solved: door open! Rather, this movement brings the rest of the body into relation with the twisting of the hand. Forsythe's term for how this takes place is "residual coordination." It can be understood as a movement idea that has a residue that reverberates within one body. The residue is reflexive: a learned and perfected habit. Forsythe explains: "We use the reflexes that we've learned in classical ballet to maintain a kind of residual coordination, which allows the body to acquire elastic surfaces that bounce off one another. This elasticity is derived from the mechanics of torsion inherent in *épaulement*."<sup>15</sup> In *showerhead*, Jill Johnson describes this sensation as "a series of diagonal or cantilevered alignments" smoothing the arm into the contrapuntal interplay of the body's reverb.<sup>16</sup>

Dancer Dana Caspersen calls this expertise not just coordination, but "residual response." With the term response, Caspersen highlights the feeling of the body responding to a proposal, such as the movement evoked in response to the image of a showerhead. Caspersen finds that in working with novices, there is often a "lack of coordinative reaction between the shoulders and the hips" as well as a "lack of shaped response in the upper arms."<sup>17</sup> This is not to say that the idea comes first and the body responds, but rather that the body thinks through its reflexes. The complex skill of residual response accumulates with ample practice.

### 6.2.1 Improvisation Technologies

Developing residual motion is a key aspect conveyed in Forsythe's CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* (1999), an educational tool now online and referred to worldwide.<sup>18</sup> This collaboration with digital artist Paul Kaiser acted upon Forsythe's wish to consolidate the techniques that the Ballett Frankfurt had amassed in their choreographic projects, so that new dancers could catch up more

14 Forsythe in Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

15 Ibid.

16 Jill Johnson, studio session while dancing in Boston on December 6, 2016.

17 Caspersen, "Methodologies."

18 The first version was produced in 1996 for use within Ballett Frankfurt, and titled *Improvisation Technologies (Self Meant to Govern)*. See Vass-Rhee, "Schooling an Ensemble," p. 225, footnote 14. At the time of writing, many of the videos have been uploaded to the internet and are freely accessible. See the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography.



Figure 19. Video still from William Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*.

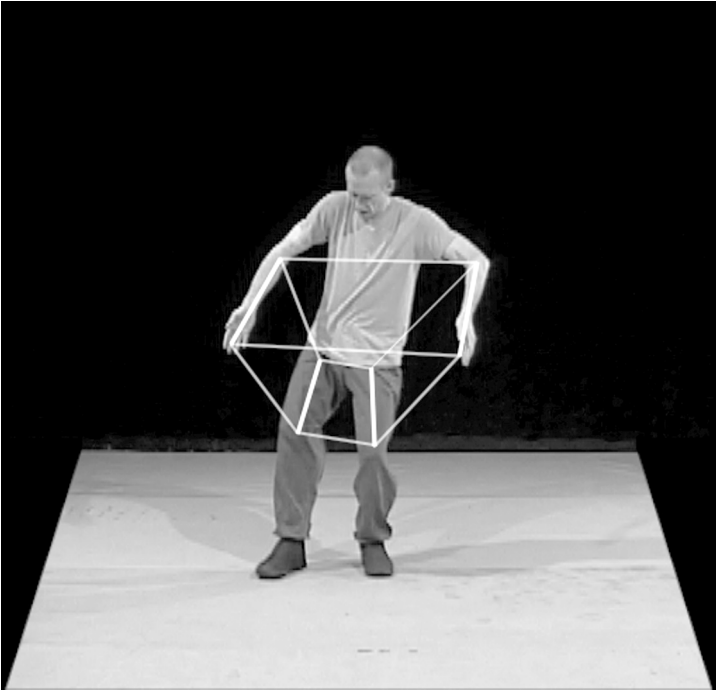


Photo © William Forsythe.

quickly.<sup>19</sup> Though these operations were no longer used explicitly in the choreographic process of The Forsythe Company, and the CD-ROM was no longer present in the studio during rehearsals or brought out to train new dancers, I can testify that most new dancers had encountered the information before arriving—having purchased, borrowed or found the instructional videos online.

Kaiser and Forsythe's project explored the challenge of visualizing choreographic thinking with the aim to help dancers understand what Forsythe was imaging while he was improvising. Kaiser recalls:

I first met choreographer William Forsythe in his kitchen in Frankfurt in 1994. The first thing Bill did was to try to explain how he goes about creating new movements. He started drawing imaginary shapes in the air, and then running his limbs through this complicated and invisible geometry. As a non-dancer, I was completely lost.<sup>20</sup>

19 In practice, these techniques were called "procedures," "operations," and also "modalities." Discussing "operation" and "procedures," see Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," pp. 27–28; and Kaiser, "Dance Geometry," throughout. For references to "modalities," see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 25.

20 Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

To remedy this, they had the idea to animate lectures of Forsythe with white lines superimposed on the video, representing the imagery that was present in Forsythe's phantasmagoria as he improvised movement. The white lines made visible Forsythe's strategies of having ideas while moving. For example, Forsythe imagining a line in the space between his fingertips; extruding, bridging and matching lines with his arms; "writing" in space with every conceivable body part. Forsythe explained:

The CD-ROM is a short lesson in a kind of rigor. It teaches you how to form concrete goals that are geometrically inscriptive. And the reason they are geometrically inscriptive is that I work with ballet dancers. It was easy to represent things this way—thinking in circles and lines and planes and points. That's not so unusual for ballet dancers, this system is basically a manipulation of their existing knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

*Improvisation Technologies* not only developed ballet dancers' "existing knowledge" to imagine the geometries of their bodies. Forsythe was also teaching them strategies to change their *habitus* by enlarging the possible range and dynamics of their movements: to use all parts of their bodies and reach to any place in space and, in particular, to practice the awkward moves of going backwards and down. Unlike other styles of dance in which mimetic and mirroring processes are primary, the improvisation and compositional aspects of Forsythe's movement laboratory meant that dancers had to learn skills for developing their bodily tendencies. The procedures were not routines intended to be repeated verbatim, but rather as Forsythe's description suggested, *A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*. Through training the dancers' analytic and creative competences, Forsythe advanced the speed and quality with which they could invent movement and opened up the tender territory between imagination, flesh and invention.

Residual response is a way of studying the physics of the body moving in the gravitational field and changing one's habits to maintain balance and equilibrium. An "authentic residual response," for Caspersen, allowed "the rest of the body to respond in an accurate way, i.e. with physical mechanics that are functional and not extraneous."<sup>22</sup> Through the practice of residual response, the dialogue between voluntary and involuntary could be felt with increasing intensity. Residual response adds potential to movement following a choreographic design. *Showerhead* progresses through the enabling constraint of the image, and reverberates the potential of movement moving the imaginary.

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21 Forsythe, "Observing Motion," p. 18. Forsythe also explained another aim: "If you're dancing, how do you actually say what happened? The technique is one way of taking mental note of what just happened to you while improvising." *Ibid.*, p. 16.

22 Caspersen, "Methodologies." In addition to the word "authentic," I remember dancers also speaking of natural residual response. Thanks to my education in feminism and cultural studies, both these terms were irritating for me when I was a novice in Ballett Frankfurt. The natural for me was a constructed category. But through my practice in The Forsythe Company, I came to understand something about what my colleagues meant. One had to un-learn a lot of habits for holding the body up, to let the body fall and adjust in the gravitational field—in a residual way.

### 6.2.2 Skills, Strategies and Potential

*Showerhead* is a complex curvilinear motion that relies on practical understanding—sensing movement as it progresses. The movement cultivates its own logic. Forsythe has observed the challenges in moving this way, noting generally: “I think the biggest difficulty in the kind of improvisation we practice is not consciously shaping your body, is actually letting your body fold and to develop a more reactive and a many timed body as opposed to a shaped body.”<sup>23</sup> Sparked by a potent initiation, willed and practiced, the dancers doing *showerhead* must follow the residual movement through their confidence in *épaulement*. In rehearsing, one then judges the passage, and repeats it again; one iterates trying and incorporating feedback into a series of repetitions. Mis-actions are controlled: the dancers remind me “don’t hyperextend your right elbow” and “back your hips up more.”<sup>24</sup> Reflection is not omitted from practice, but interspersed within its pacing.

Though not a ballet movement of the *dance d’école*, the accomplishment of *showerhead* relies on mastery of many ballet skills. Using the affordances of balletic training, the pelvis twists accommodatingly, letting both legs rotate into a turned-out position. Rolling through the feet, the steps are quiet, and the weight transitions are smooth. Moving through a soft bend in the knees, or *plié*, the legs unfold with renewed potential to straighten. The right ankle and toes extend into a balletic stretch, or *tendu*. Dividing the body into multiple efforts, one leg provides support, while the other gestures; one arm reaches, while the other reverberates with residue. Stabilization and mobilization intertwine. *Épaulement* brings the spirals that pull throughout the body into balanced counterpoint. *Showerhead* is a proprioceptive panoply, supported by bodies trained in ballet. To perform this virtuosic movement, extensive ballet training is helpful.

Sensorimotor skills are dancers’ muscle memory—the habits, good and bad, that influence their decisions. Yet in *showerhead* (as well as many other movements of *Duo*), the movement mechanics and style also diverge from ballet, and these divergences must be practiced. For example, take the usage of the “ass.”<sup>25</sup> The ass is rarely named and called upon in classical ballet technique, which focuses more demurely on the hips and the property of turning out. But generally, within the movement style of Ballett Frankfurt, dancers tried out and were encouraged to move their rumps, down and back, finding turn-out with new freedom to maneuver their tails. Pragmatically, this tendency afforded a means of shifting the center of mass away from a gesture. This brought dancers outside the habitual control of the familiar bodily center within ballet, into a realm for experimenting with new ballet tendencies and adaptations. One might call dropping the “ass” a strategy: an invention that cultivates disorientation.

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23 Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” p. 24.

24 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

25 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016. Notably, in my interview with Forsythe Company dancer Riley Watts, he described the “hips” and “pelvis” moving backwards-forwards. Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017. While dancers in both ensembles communicated using rich jargon specific to their knowledge, in The Forsythe Company there was less profanity and sexual slang.

Let's follow the motion again: you start to *showerhead*, unfurling a spiral forward, through the twist of your right hand. You simultaneously step back on the left leg, following the curvature started by your pointer finger. Stepping back gives space for your right arm to extend—letting the spiral develop into a longer arc. Moving backwards-forwards, and reaching the arm: “It’s as if the skin of your right hand could stretch forward” one dancer reminds me.<sup>26</sup> Not naturally, yet easily, the movement unfolds a logic from a cultivated thought.

In *showerhead*, the dancers begin the motion together and then readily bend their knees and softly retract their hips (that is, drop and move their pelvis backwards). Trying the movement with the dancers in the studio, I experience how this action becomes layered with more timings and trajectories—polycentric and polyrhythmic. This polysemy makes one center hard to define. The body dis-places. One singular thing is not happening, but rather multiple processes seem to take over the body. As I negotiate sensing and shifting my body weight, I gain losing control of what transpires—a gain that can be felt as a sort of play. Following the curvature of my arm unfolding its spiral, the ride of weight displacement takes my mind away from a concrete grip on what is happening. In *showerheading*, the dancers’ astute skills of proprioception are challenged: proprioception as the marrow, skin, gush of organ and cellular sense of where a part of the body is in relation to the center or whole.<sup>27</sup>

Polyrhythmic and polycentric, the movement *showerhead* is not merely moving the hand forward, like the voluntary gesture of handing over your keys. It is a gesture involving the whole body—sensing the potential of the entire corpus. As a dancer becomes more experienced and fluent with the movement, control is enacted by sensing and following as shape unfolds. The dancer acts and re-acts, in the “in-act.”<sup>28</sup>

Learning to drop the hips and move backwards are practiced strategies that enable residual movement and *showerheading*. These are strategies throughout Forsythe’s repertoire, not only in *Duo*. In them, the dancers cultivate spatial attitude, neither direct nor indirect, but plural—progressing backward-forward.<sup>29</sup> Recognizing how a contemporary culture of forward action (such as walking forward, driving forward, taking food from the table in front of you, and so on) has choreographed pedestrian action, Forsythe cultivated this backwardness strategically, motivating his dancers to unlearn

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26 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

27 Einav Katan, after British neurologist Charles Scott Sherrington, defines proprioception as “the sensual awareness of movement within the body. As a body sense it is responsible for feeling the relative positions of neighboring body parts, and how their strength and effort are engaged through motion.” See Katan, *Embodied Philosophy in Dance*, p. 54, with relevant discussion pp. 57–59. See also Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 110.

28 The “in-act” of experience is a central component of Manning’s activist philosophy, recognizing experience as in-movement and in-the-making: “variously commingling with the limits of the not-yet and the will-have-been.” See Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 47. Her differentiation of act and in-act is made to emphasize the real processual, relational, ecological and virtual aspects of experience.

29 I take the terms “direct” and “indirect” from attitudes of Laban effort in space. See Maletic, *Dance Dynamics*, pp. 14–15.

their habits. The dancers frequently go-forward-while-going-backwards. In *Improvisation Technologies*, he reminded his dancers to move behind themselves and to have “fun” with this increased range of motion.<sup>30</sup> In rehearsals, he asked dancers to sense the skin on their backs: back of their shoulders, back of their necks. All this is to open up the potential of movement, enabling the dancers to pay attention to kinesthetic response and repattern their habits.

In *showerhead*, the connection of the upper and lower body is also typical of the ensemble style. The body hinges. The fingertips stay nearly where they were in space; the lower body *retracts* back. By stretching the lower body backwards, the right arm is given room—unfolding and addressing the space in front of the body. In Labanotation, this fixation of the hand in space would be notated as a *space hold* if it were more precisely enforced and rigid.<sup>31</sup> But in *Duo*, space is created and felt rather than held. It is addressed three-dimensionally, through a body that is responsively relaxed: subtly alert.

“Moving backwards” and “dropping the hips” are repeated efforts within Forsythe’s movement apparatus, causing refraction of movement, already reverberating and multiple.<sup>32</sup> To choreograph movement is thus to gain access to practices that enable perception of movement’s nuance and micro-variations—to have more experiences at the conscious fringes of movement control. *Duo* dancer Riley Watts names “disorientation” as essential to his process of becoming a dancer in The Forsythe Company—that is, discovering his movement habits and finding new ways of movement by deliberately disorienting himself.<sup>33</sup> While most of *Duo*’s movement is planned and repeated, this does not mean it is without variation, or even disorientation. Disorientation in *Duo* happens in three ways: First, through a sort of attunement to movement which displaces the subject, backgrounding them to movement taking place, emerging relationally. Secondly, the disorientation of following one’s body, not knowing exactly how the movement will unfold. Thirdly, and more broadly in their practice, when the dancers invent and improvise movements, they may deliberately practice disorientation with the hope that this might enable them to find new movements.<sup>34</sup>

Inventing techniques for surpassing habits are part of the work of being a Forsythe dancer. This makes choreography an “entanglement” with organization, not only fixing

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30 On the “back approach” Forsythe says: “So be careful not to limit any of these technologies of sliding and folding and all this to the front of your body, but practice this also moving towards the back. Let it move through the front, but towards the back. So that you get used to feeling what it’s like to move towards these areas. If it is easier for you to move this way, practice moving this way. And dropping things towards the back. Moving towards the back. Very helpful. I think if you can practice that regularly, that the coordination will begin to spread itself out over the whole kinesphere. And you will have more fun.” Forsythe, “Improvisation Technologies: Transcripts of the Forsythe Lectures,” p. 59.

31 On “space hold” and “spot hold” see Guest, *Labanotation*, pp. 398–99.

32 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 20, 2016. Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017. Allison Brown and Cyril Baldy, studio session dancing in Bern, January 24, 2017.

33 Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017.

34 Forsythe is not alone in his choreographic study of habits and development of techniques to “perturb and disrupt” those. On choreographer Wayne McGregor’s approach, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge,” p. 462.

rules but developing potential. Philosopher Alva Noë expounds: “Choreography disorganizes. In doing so it sets the stage for letting us reorganize. Choreography, in this sense, is a reorganizational project.”<sup>35</sup> Approached in this way, we start to see how the dancers’ expertise is *a process itself for learning about practice*, and how to go forward practicing. These remarks give insider clarity to what dance scholar Wibke Hartewig has found from her meticulous analysis of Ballett Frankfurt performances. She finds: “[Forsythe’s] work is not geared towards the presentation of aesthetic elements, but places the process-related movement in the center of attention.”<sup>36</sup>

Forsythe and the dancers’ understanding of dance values the body’s potential to learn and develop. We find striking evidence of this in Forsythe’s own testimony. He comments:

At any given moment, you have to be able to say: what is the potential of this configuration of my body. And at one point, I guess a long way down the line, you know intuitively what it is. And then I would suggest you try the results of that which you don’t know, move on from there, with no idea how it’s going to turn out. For me, that would be a truly successful dance, because then the body would take over and dance at that point where you had no more idea. I see that as an idealized form of dancing: just not knowing and letting the body dance you around.<sup>37</sup>

The potential of one’s body—of oneself—is developed through Forsythe’s *Improvisation Technologies*. Between focusing on one’s body, a dancer learns from and with *other* bodies, both live and mediated. Between letting the body “take over” during improvisation, a dancer discusses and analyzes movement with others. In my interviews, one dancer linked this approach to improvisation to his understanding of Buddhist philosophy, in which, free of expectations, movement could always be discovered—there was always something small, something new, something unexpected to find out.<sup>38</sup>

With time, the dancers’ practice of *showerhead* becomes rich with the potential of micro-variations. The dancers’ expertise enables nuance and sensitivity. This is how a movement can, to an outside eye, become consistent—while to the performers, it becomes rich with the potential to vary. Attunement to potentiality creates a rich set of micro-variations of and between bodies. These minute differences become rich and exciting for the dancers, keeping their practice evolving—a generative sort of doing.

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35 Noë, “Newman’s Note, Entanglement and the Demands of Choreography,” p. 234, p. 230.

36 Translation by the author. Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, p. 184.

37 Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” pp. 24–26. When describing *Duo*, dancer Brigel Gjoka concurs: “I feel like I am in a position where I can go anywhere. When he [Forsythe] says: ‘it starts from any point.’ That is how I feel. Well, I can go from any point. And then, it can start any point, at the same time, and it can start any point, and it can arrive to any point.” Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2017.

38 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2017.

### 6.3 Cultivating Sensation

Dancer Allison Brown took me under her wing in the dance studio to teach me about the practice of *Duo's* movement. Standing next to me, she demonstrated how the dancers would practice the movement of *showerhead* to synchronize time and form. Sometimes they would stand nearly touching, almost hip to hip. In this close proximity, Brown recounts, they had time for comparing and contemplating, shifting the fingers so that your and your partner's hands look identical, "you looking at your hand and your partner's hand."<sup>39</sup> This began to equate a kinesthetic sense of one's own body moving with the visual attention to another body: a feedback loop. I felt that my body and Brown's were being superimposed—not just imitation or mimicry, but a feeling of being fused. For Brown this is an unusual type of vision: "this seeing each other with other senses and other body parts than the eyes."<sup>40</sup> Sensing fused with relation and kinesthesia.

#### 6.3.1 Sensation in *Showerhead*

Enacting *showerhead* in performance, one does not look directly upon the right hand, as if contemplating one's gesture.<sup>41</sup> Rather *Duo* dancers typically keep the environment—the black of the stage space, the audience, and other dancers—in their visual field, placing their own body in the visual periphery. During *showerhead*, the vision is broad, the hand peripheral. Dancer Riley Watts explains that he has the wish to catch a glimpse of his partner in his peripheral vision—as the first movement is usually performed at a distance, with one's partner in indirect, rather than direct, sight. Given the absence of scenery in *Duo*, the black background provides little for the dancers to focus upon. Despite the audience members near the stage being visible to the performers, the audience is predominantly heard and felt. The dancers are not coached by Forsythe to visually address the audience with their eyes. Watts explains that he knows a performance is going well when he sees a video and he and his partner's heads are turning to watch one another. They do this, he explains, to stay in-sync.<sup>42</sup>

Thus far I have described the movement of *showerhead* holistically, as both a movement of the body and a movement of thought. Now I wish to add that the movement is also a way of awakening the senses—attuning to one's partner, one's body and the audience. Vision—"hawk-eyed" on one's partner—combines with listening for the sound of one's partner's breathing movement.<sup>43</sup>

The dancers described the richness of this experience: Combined with breath, one hears one's own and one's partner's body, inhaling and exhaling. One feels the heat of the stage lights, the texture of one's clothes or costume. One feels the temperature of the air. One sees one's own body peripherally and kinesthetically feels movement

39 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 20, 2016.

40 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

41 In Forsythe's work generally, a dancer rarely looks at their own body moving, but keeps their focus externalized in space.

42 Riley Watts, interviews with the author, Bern, January 11–15, 2017. See also our co-authored publication: Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*."

43 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

passing. Once the spiral of the right arm is nearly extended, the hand is not stared upon. Instead, one looks beyond one's hand, taking an external focus that includes the arm movement in peripheral vision. This panoply of sensation moves beyond the classic five-sense model by involving heat, skin, balance, breath and proprioception. Generally in *Duo*, sensations overlap and relay between modes, mixing into the feeling of moving and being moved.<sup>44</sup>

In *Duo* rehearsals, the visual appearance of the movement was not unimportant, as the dancers know that how they appear is critical for the spectators. Despite this, they cared for and nurtured the *experience* of movement, through the process of dancing the movement together and for an audience. The dancers remember rarely using the mirror in the studio, as is common for ballet dancers, to evaluate and correct their posture. Rather the vision of how the movement should appear was reinforced through seeing one's partner more than oneself. Later generation *Duo* dancer Riley Watts concurs: "the big thing was to understand, to appeal to what does this [movement] feel like, not only what does it look like."<sup>45</sup> By the dancers employing comparisons of feeling and appearing, thus began the entanglement of bodies critical to *Duo*.

### 6.3.2 The Hand and the Skin

Writing about Forsythe's work in the Ballett Frankfurt, Sabine Huschka has observed: "Instead of an intensified experience, Forsythe's choreographies seek to create a difference and to make perception perceptible."<sup>46</sup> Such refinement, even "hypersensitivity," is cultivated throughout Forsythe's repertoire, requiring dancers to acquire perceptual acumen. Observing the interaction in a duet from Forsythe's *The Room As It Was* (2002), Hartewig observes interaction similar to that in *Duo*:

The partners do not exchange [...] primarily through application of touch and force: communication takes place on a visual and acoustic level, through the same dynamic and rhythmic sensation and through a hypersensitive body perception, with which the other body can be felt even when it has disappeared from view.<sup>47</sup>

As in the example described by Hartewig, the relays of sensation in dancing *Duo* go beyond the five-sense model and entwine sensations of oneself and the other. How does this come about?

One answer is that the sensation of hands and skin are cultivated. Given the amount of nerve endings and dexterity of the hand, Forsythe believes that it is a keystone to train the whole body. For instructing ballet dancers, who have often laid more emphasis on training their feet than their hands, a Forsythe adage is "the shape of the foot is the

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44 Caroline Potter, in her ethnographic research of a contemporary dance education institution in London, similarly finds the five-sense model inadequate for describing dancers' experience. See Potter, "Sense of Motion, Senses of Self."

45 Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, February 25, 2015.

46 Translation by the author. See Huschka, "Verlöschen als ästhetischer Fluchtpunkt oder 'Du musst dich selbst wahrnehmend machen,'" p. 106.

47 Translation by the author. See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, p. 172, footnote 71.



shape of the hand.”<sup>48</sup> This instructs dancers to articulate their hands as if they had the same cultivated capacity of their highly trained feet. Forsythe encouraged the dancers: “*Épaulement* is a conversation between your foot and your hands. So make a wonderful conversation.”<sup>49</sup>

In Forsythe’s ensembles, the hand was studied not in isolation, but in relation: the hand in relation to the shoulder, moved from the back, reflected in the hip, and supported in the feet and knees. The hand was a keystone linking the body—a transducer of sensations. Though *showerhead* is explained as a movement initiated by the fingers of the right hand, the action is that of an arm in relation to the entire body; an energetic whole of sinews feeling twist, stretch, reach, and unfurling.

The integrated quality of movement was also developed through sensual attention to the borders of the body: through the skin. Sensitivity to skin is nurtured in Forsythe’s choreography by directing attention to all the delicate surfaces of the hand and its relation to the stretch of the skin in the arms, neck, and back. This skin sensation produces an intensity of movement that differs from daily life, where such awareness is often not refined. *Duo* dancer Riley Watts described skin sensation as a way to register form.<sup>50</sup> Feeling light, heat, temperature, tension and release, the skin also seems to register movement around the body, through a sensation of moving with and for others—a quality of excitement.

### “The sensation of form.”

**Email from Riley Watts to the author, March 3, 2013, RE: How did you learn *Duo*?**

It’s kind of hard to describe the sensation of form without showing it ... In some moments we were told to use the sensation of “hanging” by a single point in the elbow, to be light in our feet like crystal (in my own words, I chose this to mean sharp and slightly ahead of a comfortable, even, and heavy musicality), to use the curvature of the arms as extended descriptions of the rest of our bodies and potential space, but without being overly tense.

In the very beginning my partner and I were both doing it with quite a lot of muscle tension and we found it exhausting and musically predictable. We were told we were working too hard and that we needed to *plié* less and spend more time off the ground with the crystalline *ballon* I mentioned earlier.

The *épaulement* and torquing of the spine can be uncomfortable and dangerous when done with too much muscle tension and we found it necessary to simply relax more while dancing. Another sensation we used was to pay attention to what Bill [Forsythe] describes as the stretching of the skin. When I am extending my arm behind me there is a particular sensation of the skin stretching across chest and down my arm to my

48 Forsythe, personal memory of the author of rehearsals in The Forsythe Company.

49 See Ross, *San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*, p. 107. Caspersen also foregrounds teaching dancers’ hands in her writing about dance practice. See Caspersen, “Methodologies.”

50 Riley Watts, email to the author, March 3, 2018.

hand. I could show you this movement and you could copy it easily, but without you paying attention to the sensation of stretching that I described, we both would be experiencing something slightly different.

The email cited above, written during Watts' process of learning *Duo*, gives a first-hand account of many kinesthetic sensations, and catalogues the different images and feelings he encountered in his learning process. Watts, as a later generation *Duo* dancer, used the word *sensation*, describing *Duo* as "a process of attention to sensations that the dancers are experiencing simultaneously."<sup>51</sup> Not only having sensations, but considering and comparing them, *Duo* dancers build a common reserve of understanding.

### 6.3.3 Breathing-Movement in *Duo*

The last quality of sensation that I would like to focus on is the sensation of breath. Over the course of *showerhead*, the dancers phase through inhale and exhale—typically inhaling through the nose, with a light and long sniff, and exhaling through the chest, the mouth and lips slightly open. The more tired the dancers are from prior exertion, the more this might sound like a sigh. Unlike singers, who have extensive breathing training, the dancers breathe *implicitly* with their movement, learning by doing—without breathing concepts or training techniques. *Duo's* breath is a logic of practice. It is a subtle and functional layer of the choreography, helping to create the right movement quality (delicate and precise) and sustain synchronization with one's partner. One dancer told me, "We synchronize breathing, not the steps."<sup>52</sup> Forsythe concurred: "*Duo* is finally, for me, a breath score that has choreography that generates it."<sup>53</sup>

The names denoting this practice varied from: "breath score" to "breath opera," "breath song" or simply the breath.<sup>54</sup> Neither Forsythe nor the dancers considered *Duo's* "breath score" to be extraneous or outside the choreography—like the unprescribed sound of musicians' breath and motions, when playing classical music. Rather, it was part of the choreography of *Duo*. Forsythe agreed: "The breathing in *Duo* is so specific. It really is the common dimension on which everything operates."<sup>55</sup>

I have chosen to name this practice *breathing-movement*, to emphasize the way it is a hybrid medium of movement, sound and sensation. The dancers would typically use inhales as upbeats and rises in actions, and exhales for lowering actions and other forms of exertions (such as the end points of twists or swings). For example, in *showerhead*, following inhale and exhale, respectively, the weight of the body rises and descends. The dancers also used the breath communicatively, to signal timing via cues.<sup>56</sup>

51 Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 9.

52 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

53 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

54 On Forsythe's term "breath score" see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, in particular pp. 232–56; on "breath opera" see Eckert, "Taking a Look at *Duo*"; on Riley Watts' term "breath song" see Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," pp. 10–11.

55 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

56 For further discussion of these cues, see section 9.2.3 Counterpoint Model.

Ordinarily, breathing is an involuntary motion, intimately associated with the border between life and death. In *Duo's* breathing-movement, the involuntary and voluntary become entangled. In this way, the prescribed choreographic organization of movements goes even deeper into the internal organs of the body and the neurological mechanisms for enacting movement. Biomechanically, the muscle of breath—the diaphragm—creates an inner unit with the pelvic floor, directly shaping the internal support of the motion around the organs, wrapped in the abdominals. Awareness of one's breathing, while listening to one's partner, also produces a feedback loop, tethering connection—visceral, communicative and meditative. Breathing-movement sutures the becoming as repeatable: becoming learned, becoming controlled with the becoming new, becoming present and becoming expressive. The intimate and subtle integration of breath in *Duo* changes action, from an “I do” state to a “being” state, a change in effort from “I act” to “I am with you.”<sup>57</sup>

Though it is difficult to reconstruct the sounds of *Duo* from the archival videos because of the poor audio quality, by moving with the dancers I learned about breathing-movement. The practice extends across much of the repertoire in The Forsythe Company, which I myself had performed; works such as the first act of *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *Decreation* (2003), *The Room As It Was* (2002) and *N.N.N.N.* (2002). In *Duo*, breathing-movement was cultivated implicitly through practice, with pairs finding their own style of communication. In the Ballett Frankfurt it was rarely explicitly worked on or acoustically directed. In The Forsythe Company however, Forsythe gave more directive and explicit feedback about breathing-movement—suggesting that he could hear the togetherness through how the dancers' breathed.<sup>58</sup> After this feedback, one dancer noticed that he had to avoid making an effort to synchronize his breath (which sounded to him affected). Rather, he wished to find a way for the breath to operate functionally through sensitive attention to his partner. Listening, more than breathing, was the substance of alignment.

Breathing associated with a movement, or movement phrase, may change from performance to performance. *Duo* dancer Brigel Gjoka (Watt's partner) demonstrates this with me while dancing in his kitchen, vocalizing “eee-ahhh” or “and,” changing pitch and tone melodically. His breath interlaces with his voice; this musical language defines a specific style of breathing-movement.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, performer Regina van Berkel (who originated the role that Gjoka dances) also used her sonorous voice melodically in breathing-movement, though never forcing her breath or deliberately trying to sing.<sup>60</sup> Her partner, Jill Johnson, used her nasal passages more than her throat, but was there to whisper words as needed: such as “new beginning” and “Almost there!”<sup>61</sup>

Late generation *Duo* dancers—male dancers Watts and Gjoka—breathed more loudly than early generation *Duo* dancers. Despite this, no *Duo* dancer viewed the breathing practice as gendered. Rather, the shift in practice of later generation *Duo*

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57 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 5–6, 2016.

58 Riley Watts, videoconference interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing, January 14, 2014.

59 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

60 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

61 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

dancers reflects the greater emphasis on acoustic elements in the work of The Forsythe Company, in parallel to Forsythe's increasingly explicit interest in the "exploration of the visuo-sonic affordances of movement and its presentation in performance."<sup>62</sup> The breathing practice was never "ornamental" for the dancers.<sup>63</sup> Their quality of breathing-movement was a sign of their relational bond.

The dancers remarked on the difficulty of teaching the breathing of *Duo* to students or to dancers in other companies. Dancers with considerable ballet training enforce that they silence their breath—dancing without making any noise at all. Such dancers had to cultivate the freedom to acoustically release this breathing-movement. Moreover, it was not an expressive line of one-voice, but a result of shared experience. Breathing together was produced through ample experience and practice together. *Duo's* breathing-practice composed the dancers' subjectivity at a deep level, at the cusp where dancing meets music, communication and sociality.

### 6.3.4 "Perceptual Performativity" of Forsythe's Ensembles: Freya Vass-Rhee

Dance scholar Freya Vass-Rhee, writing with insight as a dramaturg working with The Forsythe Company, identified "perceptual performativity" in Forsythe's oeuvre. By this, she draws attention to a chief aspect of Forsythe's aesthetic: the composition of the sensual proclivities of the dancers and spectators, comprising unusual degrees and combinations of sensation.<sup>64</sup> Concurring with my own arguments, Vass-Rhee has described how the dancers distribute and scaffold learning cooperatively; she has also analyzed how teamwork extended co-perception between the dancers to the larger team that included Forsythe, the technicians and the musical performers.<sup>65</sup> Building upon Vass-Rhee's writing, in which *Duo* has been analyzed only briefly in terms of its sonic properties,<sup>66</sup> here I contribute the dancers' own review of their sensual panoply, and analyze how such perception is *practiced*.

I find the term *practice* helps to show what Vass-Rhee has already emphasized with the word performativity: subjectivity shaped through perception, in the context of choreographic labor. In Vass-Rhee's words:

[...] the construction of the subject can also be illuminated by a different perspective on performance, one which addresses a more fundamental level: the subject as a *perceiving agent* immersed in and interacting with a world of sensory information which, in the case of performance, is composed in ways intended to elicit specific effects and affect.<sup>67</sup>

62 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 1.

63 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 15, 2017.

64 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, in particular pp. 120–61. Vass-Rhee frames her study within Hans Thies-Lehmann's diagnosis of the perceptual composition in postdramatic theatre; see *ibid.*, pp. 129–34.

65 See Vass-Rhee, "Dancing Music"; "Distributed Dramaturgies"; "Schooling an Ensemble."

66 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 240–44.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 128 (italics in the original).

*Duo* dancers' testimonies concur regarding the importance of constituted perception as a layer of *habitus*. The agency of *Duo* dancers is complexly immersed in an organizational array of activities—cooperatively constituted. Unlike approaches of movement analysis, which focus solely on form and first-person experience of one's body, co-movement merges sensation and action in complex feedback loops. Implicit attention to sensation by dancers in Ballett Frankfurt is made explicit in The Forsythe Company—reflecting Vass-Rhee's participation in shaping the discourse upon this layer of choreographic process.<sup>68</sup> Further exploration of these matters will arc through this manuscript, illustrating how sensory perception is complexly instituted and choreographed, and how the practice of choreography retains multiple views and contours of emergence.

### 6.3.4 Bodies

Figure 20. Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) performing *Dialogue* (DUO2015) in 2018.



Photo © Bill Cooper.

68 Additionally, this could be an effect of dominant discourse seeping into rehearsal, as suggested by the research of Kleinschmidt. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 157–58. In my dialogues with the dancers, sensation was a pivotal concept to later generation (Forsythe Company) dancers' understanding of *Duo*. While it was described in my interviews with Ballett Frankfurt dancers, with vivid accounts of their sensorium, few dancers used the words sensation or perception. I believe Vass-Rhee is entirely correct that perception is an essential aspect of Forsythe's choreographic craft, and that this is true across Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. The manner by which this became explicit in The Forsythe Company reflects Forsythe's, as well as wider discursive interest in this topic; from Vass-Rhee as well as visiting philosophers Alva Noë and Erin Manning.

One of the central notions within this chapter is the way dancing together emerges through bodies *individual-collective*: through bodies with individual histories and proclivities, who collectively fabricate and negotiate their choreographic project of *Duo*.<sup>69</sup> One final example from my fieldwork is intended to bring this argument into focus. What dancer Riley Watts described to me as one of the fundamental essences of *Duo* is a way that he senses himself reaching and twisting with his upper body. While shaped by the collective training in *épaulement*, this practice is also something that he adapts to fit his personal style of moving—going a bit beyond what dancers in *Duo* have done before him, due to his particular flexibility (see Fig. 20). Watts tells me these differences also reside in individual particularities of what bodies can do: “Part of that is just the way your body’s built. My rib cage is just weird like that.”<sup>70</sup> Yet Watts also shared a picture with me that he had made (see Fig. 5), in which he had digitally superimposed his body onto an image of his partner’s—telling me that this feeling of togetherness, of becoming one body, was central to *Duo*. Through Watts, and from other stories throughout this manuscript, we learn how intimately dancers come to define themselves by the knowledge and sensations of *their* bodies and *other* bodies. We also see how this is begotten by one’s particular body aptitude, while also changing in accordance with the communities in which the dancers move and the dyad of their *Duo* partnership. In this, bodies are individual and collective: developing what they can do, with potential for extensive transformation.

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The movement of *showerhead* opens up a world. Splashing the reader with this movement has been my strategy to introduce the dancers’ *logic of practice*. By examining the dancers’ testimonies and attempting to make sense of this movement using my own body, I have staged an encounter in writing that strives to animate the reader off his or her chair.

The movement *showerhead* is a significant constitutive element of *Duo*. Working with the imagery of a shower dial, *showerhead* reverberates the dancers’ bodies, holistically connecting body parts into an integrated whole. *Showerheading* undermines dualities of conscious/unconscious, voluntary/involuntary, body/mind, my/our, formal/informal and theory/practice. The choreographic movement is not representative, rule-based, normative and static; rather, it is built up, negotiated, individual-collective, with micro-variations of complexity.

Most significantly, what *showerhead* has shown us is how a dance company’s style of movement is honed through bodily techniques that are the “work of individual and collective practical reason.”<sup>71</sup> In this chapter, I have argued that we view choreographic movements like *showerhead* as the community achieving movement based upon the ensemble’s history of practice. The dancers not only magnified and reverberated *Forsythe’s* gestures, but also manufactured movement through exchanges with one another. The precise movement emerged through phases of doing and reflecting, rehearsing and

69 Compare to Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, pp. 17–18.

70 Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017.

71 Marcel Mauss cited in Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 17, translation by Wacquant.

performing, observing and being observed. The bodily practice of *showerhead* thus combined “doings and sayings” and was based upon the dancers’ shared investment in the *Duo* project and in one another.<sup>72</sup>

The terms that the dancers and Forsythe used to describe their movement, (I have highlighted *épaulement*, residual movement and sensation) and their strategies for doing so (going backwards-forwards, dropping the hips, breathing-movement) give insight into their process. This terminology helps as well to highlight how the movement practice of *showerhead* enmeshed different modes of intentionality (thinking, sensing, feeling) and phases of moving-thinking. When examined longitudinally, *showerhead*, like most of the movements in *Duo*, went cooperatively beyond one person—or even couple—rehearsing and practicing the piece—linking the dancers in recurring activity. In other words, the dancers’ logic of *showerheading* relied heavily on individual coordination and sensorimotor skills, amassed through histories of relational interaction.<sup>73</sup> Though each dancer’s body was unique, through moving together, they fused.

*Showerhead* has given us an indication of *Duo*’s movement, but a limited one, based upon one movement. In the following chapters I will broaden this depiction, to decipher the arrangement and dynamic variance of movements within this choreography. In the next section I begin this by foregrounding the concepts of movement *material* and movement *relation*.

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72 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 73.

73 Tacitly, later generation *Duo* dancers profited from the research conducted by the ensemble prior to their arrival. Both Ballett Frankfurt dancers and Forsythe Company dancers shared the term *épaulement*. While the practice of residual motion was shared by all *Duo* dancers, the term *residual* was not: Ballett Frankfurt *Duo* dancers used this terminology, but Forsythe Company *Duo* dancers did not. Conversely, while all *Duo* dancers described the sensation of *Duo*’s movement richly, Forsythe Company *Duo* dancers used the term *sensation* whereas Ballett Frankfurt dancers did not.

## Chapter 7: Movement Material & Relations

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### 7.1 Movement “Material”

My conversations with the dancers about the choreography of *Duo* often involved dialogue about the “material.” As could be substantiated by the evidence of multiple field notes and interview transcripts, *material* is a common way that both Forsythe and the dancers described choreographed movement: that is, inventing material, learning material and performing that material as choreography. They also used the word to define, more broadly, the elements at the focus of their choreographic process—whether ideas, themes, physical objects or movement itself. At a later phase of my research process, I took notice of these remarks and began to study them systematically, trying to learn what the materialization of *Duo* had to do with dancers’ labor and the reality of their practice.<sup>1</sup>

A key moment of my fieldwork helps to introduce this: While reviewing a performance video with a *Duo* dancer, I asked her a question about an instance in the choreography when the dancers, who were previously performing different movements, arrive strikingly in a synchronous pose. I wished to understand how the dancers gauged their time to arrive together so seamlessly. Part of the dancer’s pragmatic answer was that they rely on their practice, knowing the length of the individual sequences in time. They do not demand that this time be perfectly equal, but equable. She explained that her partner, “always has more *material* there.”<sup>2</sup> Another dancer described the structure of *Duo* as an alternation of different phases—durations when one was occupied, fulfilling the movement, followed by phases when one had more availability to attune to one’s

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1 The word “material” occurred 178 times in my fieldwork notes and interview transcripts. Talking about movement material is not specific to *Duo*, but common in Forsythe’s ensembles and across many contemporary dance practices. For example, considering the work of British choreographer Wayne McGregor, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”

2 Allison Brown, videoconference interview with the author, May 8, 2016, emphasis mine. Because she knew her partner was busy with a longer sequence to perform, Brown could catch a glimpse, and pay extra attention to her, making the alignment work out. Her partner in that performance confirmed the same.



partner.<sup>3</sup> Supporting this, a third described it as “coming together” to dance in unison and then “going apart” performing in counterpoint.<sup>4</sup> This give and take of being busy and attuning, based on knowledge of the movement material and prior practice of performing together, makes *Duo* distinctive. Realizing the subtle way that movement materialized for the dancers—becoming concrete, lasting and real—helped me to better understand their sense of the choreographic.

By exchanging or concatenating the words movement and material, the dancers demonstrated movement to be the opposite of ephemeral. The movement material was not an ideal or consensus about the ideal of the choreography, nor was it the actual movement when the dancers enacted *Duo*. By saying *material*, or *movement material*, the dancers displayed their proficiency in gauging the duration of movement, based upon an abstract sense garnered from repetition and knowledge that the movement is precisely unique, in actuality. The material reflects this enmeshment, across labor, abstraction and actuality. When movement is described as material, it indicates the way the artists understand *how* they work with it, in a teleological activity of making and performing choreography. In this, movement is mutable, sharable, teachable, transmittable, edit-able, improvable, even lose-able. There are a “bundle” of practices associated with it.<sup>5</sup>

Movement material and bodily material are interweaving substances. Forsythe dancers often reference movement in association with a person—typically the person who invented or first performed the movement (for example, in *Duo*: “Jill’s material” or “Allison’s material”).<sup>6</sup> When the dancers had learned movement material well, they described it as “in my body” (singular) or “in our body” (plural).<sup>7</sup> “In my body” meant memorized and danceable. To embody someone else’s movement material, a dancer might incorporate aspects of the other person (their coordination, intention, rhythm, and so on). Yet in this transfer there were also gaps, which could allow for freedom

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3 Roberta Mosca, videoconference interview with the author, April 27, 2018. See Chapter 9.

4 Riley Watts, see Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 8.

5 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 71. Schatzki defines practice as a “bundle” of activities and “an organized nexus of actions,” a view that considers activity and organization as two interdependent dimensions of practice. With the term “bundle” Schatzki recognizes that human practices are not coherent domains but are a “nexus” of activities (which he defines as “bodily doings and sayings”) and organizations (i.e., an “organized constellation of actions”). Thus, while some scholars define practices as a domain of activity, Schatzki differentiates his view that these domains are subdivided: composed of “integral blocks” and “particular packages” which are “temporarily unfolding.” In their unfolding, they are “open” to new actions. The bundles therein take different scale and scope, for example aggregating different activities within “tasks” or “projects.” See *ibid.*, pp. 71–73. My view takes Schatzki’s metaphor of bundles more in a string-like direction, looking at how activities (as threads and chains) may interlace, tangle, untangle and separate, as they extend in time. For example, *showerheading*, *épaulement*, dancing *umpadump*, doing *Duo*, taking ballet class, and warming up, are all activities of different scope that interweave. By discussing movement material in this section, I explore how conceptualization and abstraction are part of the array of movement activities, often interlacing physical practice.

6 In setting the piece on dancers of CCN – Ballet de Lorraine, Cyril Baldy used these terms during rehearsals on April 21–22, 2015.

7 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

of incorporation, especially when the bodies and persons were markedly different.<sup>8</sup> When describing such a transfer between Francesca Harper and Dana Caspersen, one of the tallest to one of the smallest women in the company, Harper recounted:

He [Forsythe] was interested in seeing what chemistry each couple would propose. We learned [*Duo*] from Regina [van Berkel] and Allison [Brown], so we were very aware that it would be different. I was once second cast of Dana [Caspersen]. I remember we had to change a lot. (*laugh*) I know, exactly! I'm the complete opposite of Dana. He loved that experiment and he could trust me.

The dancers seem to possess movement, not in terms of ownership but in the sense of giving it life—through passage within and between changing bodies, building trust between dancers and with the choreographer. The dancers rarely spoke of *Duo's* movement as Forsythe's. Instead, they commonly referenced their teacher or the previous pair's material. One dancer said poignantly, “the work itself emerges through the dancer, through their material; it is not imposed on them by the material.”<sup>9</sup>

During the span of a dancer's professional career working in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company, one would invent and learn many peoples' movement material. Reference to the *original* material described a returning to the origin of a dance—how the movement was performed in the early versions of the piece, before forgetting, adaptation and editing set in. The dancers admitted occasionally forgetting—being unable to recall material, months or years later, when a piece had been taken out of the repertory. Cognizant of this, dancers in the Ballett Frankfurt used personal notebooks to capture material so that there could be a reference for reconstruction. Rather than having a rehearsal director responsible for knowing all parts, each dancer held responsibility to preserve and remember the roles that they had invented and performed. Forsythe also employed an archivist who made rehearsal and performance videos for study.<sup>10</sup>

Accounts of movement material anticipate, or are spoken within, a choreographic process as a form of construction. The first phase was the making or gathering of material. Here dancers used the term *material* for not only movement but anything that came up: movement, ideas, textual sources, and so on. Forsythe did not have one recipe for making movement material.<sup>11</sup> In the case of *Duo*, Forsythe improvised movement phrases that were recorded and reconstructed from video.<sup>12</sup> Forsythe dancers believed that movement material withheld traces of the first people who danced it and the context and labor in which it was made. They also recognized that movement changed and carried traces from the passage of material between one dancer and another. These important aspects will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters.<sup>13</sup>

8 Klein also highlights the importance of these gaps, naming them as processes of “translation.” See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, in particular pp. 148–49.

9 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018.

10 Nicholas Champion, see section 10.1, footnote 4.

11 For a comparable ethnographic study also considering movement material, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”

12 This is substantiated in section 10.4 The Chronology of Making *Duo*.

13 See Chapter 11.

In one way, movement material changed movement into something common, sharable, repeatable, usable—that is, something for use within the choreographic realm of making performances. In another way, Forsythe’s creative process set movement material in a contingency in which the dancers no longer could control what would take place. “Forget that—anyway forget that with Billy” one *Duo* dancer reminded me. After the first rehearsal of *Duo*, “the material had entered her, but there was no way to control how it would be developed.”<sup>14</sup>

The practice of the movement of *Duo* is thus to be regarded as a special materialism. Movement material is produced through bodily exchange; movement is constituted along with concepts, theory and talk that shape it. To understand this materialism, I argue, does not warrant a phenomenological approach, valuing “bracketing or putting out of gear any and all preconceptions about whatever it is one is investigating such that one experiences the phenomenon as if for the first time.”<sup>15</sup> Rather, it requires participant observation of practice, trying to understand the interlacing ways that movement is called upon and put to work.

Movement material is distinguished from dance. It describes, to Forsythe dancers, what the dancing is made from: the choreographed steps, tasks or other anchors that enable the dancers to practice. Movement material is the ‘thing’ that the subjects work on, physically and cognitively, in phases that may foreground different modes between thought and perception. One can differentiate this, along the vectors of dance and choreography. The dance of movement is what resists its objectification; the choreography of movement material is what gives it potential to be reflected upon, manipulated, observed, constructed, planned, structured and organized. These observations about Forsythe dancers’ movement practices concur with what Rudi Laermans has defined as choreography: “the virtual space in which in principle repeatable (series of) movements or non-movements are both recorded and rationalized.”<sup>16</sup>

What I wish to convey within this section is that the dancers’ enactment of movement in the context of *Duo* involved many sorts of practices, which were shaped by the labor of a choreographic workplace. While the dancers ‘highest’—in the sense of the most respected and coveted—form of movement practice was the presence of performing *Duo*, many cognitive and teleological movement-related activities were vital for the constitution of choreography.<sup>17</sup> We learn about movement when we consider its ability to transform in and out of a material useful within a choreographic workplace. Movement is not just a body changing position or an action with a preconceived goal. Nor is human movement experienced purely through the sense modality of kinesthesia, inarticulately and without theory. Rather, movements are processes—they are practices entwined with other practices. And as processes, they range from the ephemeral and singular (dance) to those resilient and enduring (choreography).

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14 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

15 Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, p. xxiv.

16 See Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 29. Cf. Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” p. 120.

17 This is not to say that choreography is purely a teleological project, or a means to a designed end. The dancers also described choreographic process as explorative, playful, wandering and open-ended.

As a choreographer interacts with dancers, proposing various methods to make movement, their bodies leave traces upon the process. Observing the working process of choreographer Wayne McGregor, social anthropologist James Leach and dance scholar Scott deLahunta observe: “What is *interesting* in that movement, the *substance* or material that emerges in the generation, has something to do with the quality of the body’s relationality, its presence eliciting feeling response and movement in others.”<sup>18</sup> In the next section these relations and their impact on *Duo* will take focus.

## 7.2 Erin Manning: “Relational Movement”

The interaction that happens between dancers in *Duo* involves bodies that are not pre-given matters, producing a relation that does not change them, but is constituted through moving in relation—or so is my preliminary thesis. To further describe this, in this section I draw from Erin Manning’s writing on bodies and *relational movement*.<sup>19</sup> Relations are becoming increasingly cited concepts within dance studies.<sup>20</sup> This momentum may come from the impact of art critic Nicolas Bourriaud’s pivotal book, *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)—a text written to grasp experimental visual art in the 1990s, in which artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija and Félix González-Torres foregrounded new sorts of material presences and participatory encounters with artistic spectators.<sup>21</sup>

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18 See Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge,” p. 465 (italics in the original).

19 For orientation see Manning, *Relationscapes*, Chapter 2, pp. 29–42. Erin Manning was philosopher-in-residence in The Forsythe Company in fall 2010. This view of relation has aspects in common with Karen Barad’s concept of “intra-actions”; see Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” in particular p. 817.

20 Approaches within this vary. Pirkko Husemann, drawing initially from Nicolas Bourriaud, then further defining her concept of relationality through Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, examines how the choreographies of Xavier Le Roy and Thomas Lehmen handle such a view of relational art through “making their cultural field an object and simultaneously bringing producers and recipients closer to one another.” Translation by the author, Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*, p. 19. Petra Sabisch has also foregrounded the category of relation in her writings, drawing on a different approach influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of assemblage, as well as the radical empiricism of William James. The relations Sabisch foregrounds are those made during performance with the audience: “relations to objects, to music, to bodies, relations between bodies, relations of visibility, relations between forces, relations of movement and rest, etc.” See Sabisch, *Choreographing Relations*, p. 7. On William Forsythe’s later work, since 2003—developed with particular regard to relations within and between bodies and space—dance scholar Kirsten Maar draws together many theoretical sources (phenomenology, Deleuze, architectural and spatial theory), see Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*. As a final example, anthropologist James Leach and dance scholar Scott deLahunta take an anthropological approach and focus on the work of choreographer Wayne McGregor. In doing so, they consider an interesting example: What it would take to manifest the sort of interaction between dancers and the choreographer in dance-making, through digital technology? Their solution: a body. See Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”

21 Bourriaud’s text, drawing from theorists such as Louis Althusser and Félix Guattari, places intersubjectivity at the center of artistic production: “an art form where the substrate is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the ‘encounter’ between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning.” Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 15.

Noting the obvious contradiction between these projects and modern art, Bourriaud defined relational art as: “A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”<sup>22</sup> While my intention here is not to categorize *Duo* as a work of relational art in Bourriaud’s sense, a few further connections between relational art and shifts in Forsythe’s aesthetic are worth clarifying.

Already in this manuscript (sections 2.3–2.4) I have shown that the change of Forsythe’s working context from the Ballett Frankfurt to The Forsythe Company corresponded with performances foregrounding new proximities, materiality and sensory experiences by the performers and the audience. Additionally, after the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe increasingly produced and situated artworks within multiple markets: in the economies of dance (ballet and contemporary dance) as well as within visual art. Investigating Forsythe’s performances, art objects, and installations two-fold in contexts of dance and visual art since 2003, dance scholar Kirsten Maar has designated relationality as a key aspect of Forsythe’s aesthetic, observing a continuity between the relations of space and moving bodies between performers in the stage works, and what participants co-existing with one of Forsythe’s “choreographic objects” might experience in a visual art context.<sup>23</sup> In my view, relationality is not seeping into the stage works from Forsythe’s foray into visual art; rather this relationality emerges from his history as a choreographer who works within a team and makes artworks perceived by a mass of spectators. In my view, choreography is a preminent relational art because the sorts of movement and media organization it produces are socially implemented and anchored. By introducing the term *relation* at this point in my study, I hope to further clarify a concept that I believe helps to articulate the *Duo* dancers’ experience of enacting *Duo*—though admittedly not perfectly. To do so, here I draw upon the relational philosophy of Erin Manning, in which she considers dancing together and the experience of bodies in relation.

As a process philosopher, Erin Manning doubts that individuals precede their relations. As an anti-nominalist, she also believes that collectivity “does not emerge from a group of individuals but precedes the very concept of individuality.”<sup>24</sup> Manning also doubts that the dancer’s body is a natural or expressive matter, moved by the will and volition of a single subject or self. Rather, her philosophy is defined on a mobile concept of the body as a verb, as a process of bodying: “bodies-in-the-making” and a “becoming-body.”<sup>25</sup> Her philosophy also celebrates the blending of thought, sensation and movement as modes of articulation. By stressing the flux of a body, and the manner that bodies interweave, Manning softens the borders of *a* body and thereby challenges the western construct of the individual. Bodies, for Manning, are a matter of continual process or passage. They are also social and plural: “always more than one.”<sup>26</sup>

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22 Ibid., p. 113.

23 Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*. On Forsythe’s term “choreographic object,” see Forsythe, “Choreographic Objects.”

24 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 22.

25 Ibid., p. 6.

26 Ibid., p. 13; see also Manning, *Always More Than One*. Manning’s concept of relational movement is, in my view, a culturally cultivated means of perceiving movement, other dancers and things. It is in-

One *Duo* dancer to whom I described the concept of bodies in relational movement (as best I could) wrinkled her eyebrows and responded that *her* body was *hers*. She found *Duo* was *personal*, not defined by a relation that backgrounded the personal or made her body less her own. She added that dance students need to learn how to use *their* bodies and love their bodies, because that was what they would work with over their entire career and life.<sup>27</sup> But she also explained that *Duo* happened because of something that only her partner could ‘do’ to her, something that was brought out through their relationship—something through their bodies yet also beyond them. The agency they took in dancing was not control of one’s flesh or another’s flesh. Rather, it was a sort of merging and affecting and relating with the other. *Duo* is, I would tentatively suggest, both a choreography *produced* by persons and a choreography *producing* personhood—in the sense of a nexus of practices that organize and constitute dancing subjects, through making the intersubjective differently cared for than was common within their lived histories as western dancers. Because of the element of partnership, *Duo* relationships were also more intimate and co-dependent than in the other relational group works by Forsythe for his ensemble.

In *Relationscapes* (2009), Manning draws upon many examples of dance and art, including her own practice as a tango dancer, to illuminate relational movement. I wish to examine these to further appraise *Duo* dancers’ description of partnering. Manning, who can both lead and follow in the tango writes: “I move not you but the interval out of which our movement emerges. We move time relationally as we create space: we move space as we create time.”<sup>28</sup> Rather than viewing a tango duet as the movement of two people who manipulate each other’s bodies, Manning senses in tango a creative engagement in space and time in which a “we” emerges. This we moves without concern for their external image or form—foregrounding decision through experience. They improvise together, feeling the potential based upon their shared experience of codes of the practice. They linger in the elasticity and pleasure of inventing movement.

Tango, unlike *Duo*, is a dance with touch and physical contact. It is also improvised, rather than based on a prescribed sequence. Yet the co-movement in tango bears similarities to the way that the *Duo* dancers attune to one another to connect from step to step. In both, synchronizing movement is important. Dance scholar André Lepecki,

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teresting that Manning does not cite anthropological literature about personhood. Summarizing this literature, Fowler explores how personhood can operate other than the western concept of individuality (as personal uniqueness and the constant sense of being “unitary, totalized and indivisible”), for example within the realm of *dividuals* and *dividuality* (in which “the person is recognized as composite and multiply-authored”). Relational movement is a way of *dividuation* in which people “are composed of social relations with others to the degree that they owe parts of themselves to others.” Both Fowler and Manning’s writing seek to recognize “features of personhood undervalued in the west.” See Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, pp. 7–9, pp. 11–22; citations p. 8, p. 21. Published after *Relationscapes*, Manning’s *Always More Than One*, takes the problem of individuation more head-on, drawing extensively from Simondon, Deleuze, Guattari and Whitehead.

27 Importantly, not all *Duo* dancers were confused by my attempts to link *Duo* and Manning’s philosophy of relational movement. Two informants were eager to discuss this. They had read parts of Erin Manning’s text, *The Minor Gesture*, after I left a pile of books in the studio, curious to see which texts the dancers would choose to read, without instruction or pressure.

28 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 17.

drawing from his reading of Manning, calls the manner of moving without a prescribed leader and follower “leadingfollowing.”<sup>29</sup> This involves the dancers’ cooperative attunement to one another and to time, sharing responsibility for the progress of the dance. When people dance in this way, Manning suggests that the “I” and “other” dissolve as individual subjects. The movement does not emerge from the leader and get communicated to the follower, but comes from the *betweenness* captured in her concept of the “interval.” Manning specifies that while the interval is imperceptible in itself, it becomes perceptible in the actual step getting made. In tango, this might be the feeling of a step finishing or landing on the ground. Manning presents the interval as the linking that enables experience: “The interval is the metastable quality through which the relation is felt.”<sup>30</sup>

With her concept of relational movement, Manning describes not one body moving another body, but sensing the relational unfolding between bodies in the movement—writing theory that draws strongly from Deleuze and Guattari, Whitehead and Bergson. Bodies become: “This becoming-body (connecting, always) becomes-toward, always with.”<sup>31</sup> Manning insists on examining movement as incipency, rather than displacement towards a position, placing emphasis on the “preacceleration” of movement, rather than the ending.<sup>32</sup> Becoming and changing, movement is always on the “verge of expression.”<sup>33</sup>

Relational movement is movement with a highly generative virtual component. The virtual is felt as intensity burgeoning in movement—in which movement is creative. It is an intensity that is real. For Manning, it is typically ineffable because it is a process of gesture or expression coming to the fore, not finalizing.<sup>34</sup> For Forsythe dancers experienced in improvisation and the negotiation of various procedures of planning movement as choreography, they become masters in feeling the different ways that relations unfold. These experienced dancers follow *becoming*, feeling movement rich with micro-tendencies that bring it in and out of the habitual.

The virtual component of movement is hard to identify (from the outside) through studying a photograph or a movement-still. It is perceived most easily in its felt effects—felt by the dancers and (I suggest) many spectators. As a dancer-scholar studying *Duo*, I attempted to learn about this sort of sensing in two ways: first, by dancing with the dancers and second, by taking a longitudinal view and observing how movement shifts with potential, from night to night, in the performances of *Duo* documented on archival video. This topographic view of the choreography shifting (see section 9.2), convinced me of the plasticity of this practice, in part because of coveting potential.

Not all movement is relational; nor is all relational movement dance. Without stressing the distinction, Manning clarifies that relational movement is different from cus-

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29 Drawing from Manning, see Lepecki, “From Partaking to Initiating,” p. 34.

30 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 17; see discussion pp. 16–19.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

32 “Preacceleration: a movement of the not-yet that composes the more-than-one that is my body: Call it incipient action.” *Ibid.*, p. 13.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

34 *Ibid.*, in particular p. 42.

tomary motions in daily life (such as office work, or walking, or cooking) in which one moves, without awareness, through habit. For Manning, relational movement is a sort of dance—a dance that does not emphasize form and position. When dance is relational movement, virtual components become active, affective factors. But, for Manning, not all choreographed movements are relational. In cases of reproduction of movement, she observes the relational qualities prove challenging: “Relation must be reinvented. To dance relationally is not to *represent* movement but to *create* it.”<sup>35</sup> When choreography engenders relational movement, that involves: “bringing to expression the patterning of incipient activity toward the definition of a movement event.”<sup>36</sup> Choreography for Manning is not an organization of bodies in space and time—as the knowing ahead and prescriptive disciplining of outcomes and rules—but the speculation and activism that dynamically fields incipient movement, potentializing action.

What is the experience of relational movement like? Tango dancers, embraced on the cusp between movement-making and perishing, may feel the potential of movement being made. They feel the “elasticity” of movement becoming. Manning writes: “To remain in the elasticity for as long as possible is the goal—but remaining on the edge of virtuality is a challenging task.”<sup>37</sup> Outside of the tango, she adds: “Even a simple walk can feel elastic when the movement carries us, when the goal is not the first thing on our mind.” Manning concludes: “What relational movement can do is make this elasticity felt, actualize it in an almost-form that takes shape in its incipient deformation.”<sup>38</sup> *Duo* dancer Riley Watts had described *Duo* similarly as comprising stretching of time: an exploration “of moving together in its many permutations, performing the art of *elastic* temporal integrity.”<sup>39</sup> In *Duo*, elasticity is found in the choreography plastically shifting with the dancers’ attunement. It stretches through the reverberation of residual response, the pliancy of breathing-movement, the feeling of being “Almost there!”<sup>40</sup> Rhythms shift dynamically between sections as cues well up with intensity, as the dancers feel themselves coming and going in alignment. A dance of relation, in which the two partners invest extensive time to learn how to co-navigate the motion, *Duo* builds movement potential cooperatively.

When bodies are understood to be always in-process and movement regarded not as that which is produced by singular bodies but kinesthetically elicited through and between bodies, bodily-movement is more readily understood as a singular-plural process. Relational movement joins bodies in processes that are individual-collective. Indeed, singular bodies do linger; they are enduring, as the *Duo* dancers know. But with

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35 Ibid., p. 26 (italics in the original).

36 Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. 76.

37 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 37.

38 Ibid., p. 41. Manning’s use of the term “elasticity” to describe the pliancy of the moment, draws from Leibniz and Deleuze to express the curving potential of matter. Not intellectual, elasticity is a quality of relation not always expressed, but always possible. Manning places elasticity in the plane of the ineffable—the plane of coming to articulation, gesturing, being in movement—the plane of emergent modes of meaning. She writes: “Moving the relation is a striving toward the ineffable experience of the elasticity of the almost.” Ibid., p. 42.

39 Riley Watts cited in Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 8, emphasis mine.

40 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.



the concept of relational movement, Manning wishes to point out a collectivity that is different from the western norm. She writes: "When articulation becomes collective, a politics is made palpable whereby what is produced is the potential for divergent series of movements."<sup>41</sup> This focus on movement, not as a representational medium but rather as a creative one, suggests for Manning its political force. Relational movement creates potential for change. It is experienced through collective attunement to this potentiality, feeling the edges—the elasticity—of movement invention.

In her entire oeuvre, Manning writes critically about identity politics and theories that stake the individual as sacrosanct.<sup>42</sup> Manning shares with practice scholars the view that the human body is a central locus of politics, and that acts are complexly shared socially and constituted historically. Her theories acknowledge that movement composes through the finite variation of what has been, through historicized becoming. Manning's expansive writing desists from locating or bounding the singular body, "de-centering the subject" like many practice theorists.<sup>43</sup> Without prioritizing the human or theorizing identity, form or social order, Manning's theories however differ from Bourdieu's emphasis on positioning, limitations and competition, and the scarcity of values defined as forms of capital; instead Manning emphasizes movement, relation and creative surplus. Her theories also do not juxtapose with Judith Butler's concept of performativity, foregrounding the force of norms and the processes of iterative rehearsal, where change occurs through "a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style."<sup>44</sup> Instead of iteration and foregrounding the power of speech acts, Manning examines process and the diverse kinesthetic-sensory modes of coming to articulation. While concerned with the disciplinary and the discursive, Manning's writing is less a critique and analysis of power than an activist advocacy for new powers (celebrating the autistic, the artist, the animal, etc.).

Manning's emphasis on process and relational movement makes creativity one of the central issues of her philosophy. This is what I will take forward in part III, when

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41 Manning, *Relationescapes*, p. 27.

42 See in particular *ibid.*, pp. 10–11, p. 27; cf. Manning, *Always More Than One*. Through her fluid concept of the body and its obfuscation of subject-object constructs, Manning writes identity into a process at odds with relational movement. Identity's temporality is fleeting and ephemeral, like movement. If anything, identity is a process of collective becoming, as "conrescence" (Whitehead) and "infra-individuation." Manning, *Relationescapes*, pp. 22–28.

43 Translation by the author. Reckwitz cited in Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, p. 96.

44 See Butler, "Performative Acts and Gendered Constitution," p. 524. In her introduction to *Bodies That Matter*, she writes: "It is not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never really complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law." Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. xii. A closer account of these similarities is beyond my scope here. This could involve the discussion of practice and performance theory in Klein and Göbel, *Performance und Praxis* and then bridge to close readings from Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Butler, *Performative Acts and Gendered Constitution*; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Foucault, *The Subject and Power*.

I examine *creation* in *Duo*. The sphere of politics for Manning is relational—that is, ontogenetic and creative, through bringing diverse people into contact. It is this sense of relationality as political and creative that I believe is insightful for understanding *Duo*: a concept of togetherness based on mutual negotiation of the virtual. *Duo* dancers submit themselves to a relational *togetherness* that lets them feel power as a sort of creative potential in becoming rather than as discipline. They find a manner of thinking through their bodies together, which not only is limited to their bodies but to their connection to the presence of the audience. This almost superhuman *togetherness* is a peaceful and sensitive alternative, a fluid substitute to the styles of subjectivity that were learned in their competitive dance training. For Manning: “This is what dance makes clear: it is not the displacement as such that makes the difference, but the quality of becoming of the micromovements and microperceptions that pass through not just the composing body but also the vibrating space of thought.”<sup>45</sup> In the next chapter, I will turn to these micromovements and microperceptions concretely, offering another term for *Duo* dancers’ *relational movement*.

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Chapter 7 has explored *Duo*’s movement with regard to the concepts of *material* and *relation*. Section 7.1 analyzed my fieldwork activities in view of the dancers’ special materialism, in which movement material is produced by bodily exchange, as well as through concepts, representations and medial capture. This has informed us about the way *Duo* dancers understand *how* they work with movement, in a teleological activity of making and performing choreography. Movement is illustrated to be mutable, sharable, teachable, transmittable, edit-able, improvable, even lose-able. There is a “bundle” of practices associated with it.<sup>46</sup> Rather than epitomizing the ephemeral presence of movement, I have argued that looking across the array of movement-oriented activities helps us to better understand the relevance of movement as a constructive potential for human subjects.

Section 7.2 has considered the growing literature concerning relationality written by dance scholars, engaging in close reading of artist-philosopher Erin Manning’s writing on *relational movement*. By observing the convergences between Manning’s theory and the dancers’ experience of relation, and problematizing divergences, I critically explored the experiences (plural) of identity and subjectivity brought out in *Duo*. I also addressed a paradox: that the dancers were both western individuals experiencing their unique body and pairs relationally constituted. Overall, im/materiality and relationality are demonstrated to be entwining aspects of the reality of *Duo*.

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45 Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. 15.

46 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 71.



## Chapter 8: Entrainment

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The “dissonance, the dephasing, the complementarity of the between” is made palpable during an exercise at a workshop for dance scholars with *Duo* dancer Allison Brown.<sup>1</sup> I have invited Brown to teach us something from her practice of *Duo*, something without virtuosic movement so that my fellow scholars can join in. Brown asks us to find a partner. She gives the small group of dancers and scholars the task: “You go, I go, we go.” Without music, she asks us to improvise movement together accordingly, while moving from one side of the room to another. She lets us negotiate the transitions, some speaking, others sensing.<sup>2</sup>

The instructions render aspects of dancing William Forsythe’s duet *Duo* palpable to those outside it and inexperienced in moving with others. True to the experience conveyed by Brown’s assignment, *Duo* is a choreography that foregrounds the interplay of commitment to synchrony—not of timing mandated by an outside force but timing negotiated between people. In an interview with me, Brown described her memories of dancing *Duo* onstage as a continual interactional stream: “meeting, arising and coming to each other and being in unison and being out of unison, in aligning and dis-aligning but staying together, and this seeing each other with other senses and other body parts than the eyes.”<sup>3</sup> This process of sensing betweenness and passing in and out of phase is the focus of this chapter, which explores how this practice is cultivated and asks how it produces subjects in relation. The concept given to name and explore this is *entrainment*: “the process that occurs when two or more people become engaged in each other’s rhythms, when they synchronize.”<sup>4</sup>

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1 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 61.

2 Allison Brown, workshop at the *Dancing Together* conference at the University of Bern, October 25, 2018.

3 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

4 William Condon, referenced in Hall, *The Dance of Life*, p. 177; see also Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” pp. 142–43. Most dance and music are forms of entrainment. Entrainment may also feature in spectators’ expectations of dance and lead to frustration when this is not met. For a discussion of the reception of *Jérôme Bel* (1995), see Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 2.

Steven Spier has named *entrainment* as one of four factors important to Forsythe's work: "counterpoint, proprioception, entrainment, and authenticity."<sup>5</sup> For Forsythe, proprioception is about experiencing oneself, whereas entrainment is about experiencing relation, a sort of empathetic kinesis of one's own and another's body. My aim in this chapter is to analyze my fieldwork studies for accounts of entrainment and to use these to reflect on how dancers experience time and order in choreographic process.

## 8.1 Synchronizing the First Step of *Duo*

The first movement of *Duo*, the movement called *showerhead*, is a delicate threshold in which synchronization takes place. The dancers begin the piece by performing this movement in unison. To do so, in the shift from backstage to onstage, the dancers increase their sensitivity to their bodies, time and their awareness of one another. They rely on their "spidey sense," dancer Jill Johnson joked with me, referring to the superhero Spider-Man's endurance, agility and the power to sense incoming motion and react before his body comes in harm's way. Another term for this, Johnson proposes, is *entrainment*, which she describes as a rhythmical acuity, based on longstanding practice, interaction and care.<sup>6</sup>

During the minutes before *Duo* begins, the dancers are separated backstage in the wings, waiting on either side of the stage.<sup>7</sup> After the first piece on the program, the dancers would receive a signal from the stage manager, waving her flashlight to tell them to enter the stage and start. In the blackout, they would walk quietly through the darkness onstage to their starting position. Then the stage manager would cue the technicians to turn the fluorescent stage lights on. Cut: the lights come up and the audience sees the two dancers standing at the front of an empty stage, their arms resting at their sides. The women wait, with neutral expressions, focusing straight ahead. They listen. Since they face the same oblique angle and are separated by more than half the width of the stage, they cannot see each other's faces. They have to rely on other senses than their eyes in order to start the first movement together. After a consequent pause they inhale and begin the motion *showerhead*.

*Duo* starts by tuning into the virtual: the potential to synchronize, the process of *entrainment*. Listening, the sound of the dancers' mutual inhale pulls them into action. Aside from this little breath, there is no external musical cue to start. They entrain to one another, while also tuning into the audience: waiting for the audience to adjust to the new lighting conditions and become hushed. *Duo* dancer Allison Brown remembered this vividly:

[I remember] going out on stage in the dark. Trying to find your glow-in-the-dark mark on the floor and hoping that it's good, that we're in good alignment and we're ready. And the audience taking us in and us taking the audience in and this first moment,

5 Spier, "Engendering and Composing Movement," p. 135.

6 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

7 I speak here of the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* (1996–2004), not *DUO2015*.

standing naked there basically. And yeah, I remember the whole thing actually, in lots of different places, and lots of different times, and in lots of different bodies.<sup>8</sup>

Bodies on the move and changing, fragile to others through their visibility. Brown gets in a rhythmic narrative groove remembering the multiplicity of enacting *Duo*, nakedly, across bodies and time.

Movement complicates the triad of volition, intentionality and agency, writes philosopher and dancer Erin Manning. She proposes: “experience cannot be reduced to individual volition. It is collective—ecological—at its very core.”<sup>9</sup> *Showerheading* demonstrates that the dancers’ sensitivity to the audience was enacted through their first decision: when and how to start moving. How was this decision made and by whom? Studying different video records of this history of beginnings, I watch variations: more or less synchronous starting movements, bigger and smaller stages, more or less light, quieter versus more animated audiences. In my interviews with the dancers, I learn that some pairs planned which dancer would initiate. Others did not designate a leader; instead the togetherness was intuitively mutual. Some told of an unspoken hierarchy of letting the more experienced dancer take initiative, and the insecurity involved in working to get things right. In just a few seconds, in a moment of pregnant anticipation, togetherness was already at issue.

### 8.1.1 Stretching Moments

The audience’s attention *precipitates* the dancers’ delicate motion. The dancers’ testimony, such as Johnson’s below, illustrates that even when one dancer was designated to start, the process was collective and ecological (that is, tuning into the space of performing and the signs of the audience’s mutual attention). Drawing upon the terminology of performance scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Duo* dancers sense the audience as a resonator of attention, as “co-presence.” The spectators’ sounds and motions provide a “feedback loop” to the envelope of interaction on stage.<sup>10</sup> In *Duo*, these reactions are amplified because the environment is so quiet. Like the tiny sounds in the middle of the night, the audience’s little shifts in their chairs and vocalizations (sniffs, coughs, whispers with a neighbor) are very audible.<sup>11</sup> Though the spectators do not share the longstanding history of the co-performers in *Duo*, they may still become caught up in the time-making sensitivity and the intensity of motion anticipation, entraining with them. They may participate, with their breath, their focus, and attention. They might also decide to participate *differently* than the artists. Catcalls, the dancers remember, also occurred, voicing male spectators’ response to women in “diaphanous” costumes,

8 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

9 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p.117.

10 Fischer-Lichte provides a historic overview of how these practices of participation have shifted in western theater, from the deliberate suppression of spectators’ response in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, to experiments in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century seeking to organize and compose this “feedback loop.” See Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, in particular pp. 38–41.

11 Music scholar Ian Biddle’s study of tiny sounds shows that they are a rich and politically strong realm of affectation. See Biddle, “Quiet Sounds and Intimate Listening,” in particular pp. 206–7.

showing much of their bodies, including their breasts.<sup>12</sup> This was part of the risk each night and the dancers' vulnerability. The attunement of entrainment made this tangible from the first second of the dance. Entrainment as the tuning into the emergence of organization in time.

**"I gave that cue."**

**Videoconference interview with *Duo* Dancer Jill Johnson, June 28, 2018.**

LIZ: When you are on stage and about to begin motion. Was there a cue for that?

JILL: I gave that cue. And it was to spend some real time—in other words, not choreographed time, not the two of us getting to our first places and waiting for two [musical] eights, before we started. It was ... we waited for the audience: for the two of us to settle and kind of feel each other. But also, there was always a response from the audience, in part because we were so close to them, and they weren't necessarily expecting that. There was always a bit of like (*she vocalizes, similar to a sigh*) "ahm." In Frankfurt, with our home audience, they were like "oh, ok." And it settled pretty quickly. In Orange County [Los Angeles, a tour in 2003] for example, where we were (*pause*) restricted because there was quote "nudity"—it was a conservative bubble ... there was all kind of (*she vocalizes*) "flaahflahflahhh" and we had a heckler, you know? So it varied, with where we were. But a time when we could really feel that it settled. And then a borderline, not pushing the audience, but let's see how far we can (*pause*) have this moment be ... just being with each other (*she inhales, starting showerhead*) and then start. [...] You would feel the audience finally in real time settle, and then you take a real long second or five and then start.

*Duo* dancer Jill Johnson's stunningly detailed reflection upon cueing the start of *Duo* shows how pregnant one moment can be. Like a conductor, Johnson describes her role modulating communal attention. The process involves acuity in listening to the audience's settling, and then an extra nudge—a trust in prolonging that time. Johnson's perception illustrates that time is in this way "real" and shared at the beginning, in search of a sort of "being."<sup>13</sup> Her mastery of negotiating time intimately, through detailed somatic attention, shows the way that time in *Duo* is much more than just skill or discipline. Rather, it is a way of negotiating expectations and intimacies of sharing time with the audience and then modulating these intensities and qualities. Johnson also describes how this varies on tour, suggesting it is based to some degree on shared experience and history. The "home" audience of Frankfurt could more quickly settle

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12 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016. Allison Brown, video elicitation in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016. Johnson reflected further: "To my mind, a see-through, black, fine-mesh top is different than being bare-breasted. It could be said that the issue at hand here is that the diaphanous costumes which showed much of our bodies (including breasts, torso, arms and legs) were often seen through a sexist focus on breasts and the shock/offense/sexualization of women's breasts." Johnson, email to the author, September 14, 2020.

13 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

with them; conversely, it was more difficult when the audience became uncomfortable because of their closeness and nakedness.

Some dancers found the first moments of *Duo* challenging: the neon lights were harsh and at times one's heart was fluttering in anticipation of performance.<sup>14</sup> The bare costume might make one feel vulnerable. Also, one is very far away from one's partner (over ten meters), a separation at odds with the intimacy of the piece. In his first few performances dancing *Duo*, Watts—who inherited Johnson's role and took responsibility for initiating the first cue—focused more on his partner than the audience. He explains his approach:

I know Brigel [Gjoka, my partner] is listening to my cue, and from a distance I have to feel that he is ready to begin. It is our job to imagine the connection between us, and sometimes I would imagine a phantom limb connecting us between our shoulders. I try to imagine, what does [he] feel like right now? What does his body look like? Can I feel what his body feels like? Only when I feel that we are sufficiently connected do I audibly exhale and begin the first movement.<sup>15</sup>

In our interviews, Watts used the terms entrainment, connection and rhythmic connection interchangeably. Once he spoke about “telepathy”—entrainment as the “superpower” to communicate at a distance, as if they could read what one another were thinking, another term for Johnson's “spidey sense.”<sup>16</sup>

While Watts learned the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo*, which begins by synchronizing *showerhead*, the version of *Duo* that the dancers toured extensively (*DUO2015*) was modified with a new beginning. Instead of starting *showerhead* together out of silence and stillness, they began by building connection through an open improvisation.<sup>17</sup> The curtain rose in the middle of this process, showing the dancers already moving without music. Though their improvisation varied from performance to performance, they generally moved with light gestures, predominantly of the upper body and arms. They performed side-to-side, sometimes while walking or shifting place—playing with similar rhythmic movements of their arms, precise directions of gaze (on ‘my’ body, on ‘your’ body, in the space forward, below, up and back), as if grooving together on common themes and sharing some common music. This window of improvisation progressed for a few minutes until a commonly designated alignment, precipitating unison. The game, a way into the material through their rhythmic connection in play, was also a practice of *entrainment*.

In my conversations with the *Duo* dancers I asked: What enabled them to entrain? When did their synchronization begin? And what supported or harmed it? Jill Johnson

14 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

15 Riley Watts, videoconference interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing, January 14, 2014.

16 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2017. Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

17 This is described in the opening passage of my Introduction. By open improvisation I mean an improvisation without a defined task. Forsythe initially asked the dancers to mark the movement, meaning to perform the movement at a smaller scale, with less force and energy. While Forsythe occasionally gives open improvisations to his dancers, in my experience as a dancer, the majority were task or proposal based.



explained to me that, in her view, the opening movement in *showerhead* was not the start of entrainment. Rather: “The entire trajectory of the piece [*Duo*] stems from the intimacy and entrainment between the dancers from preparations prior to the piece, to the moment we would walk on stage in the dark, dance the piece together and even beyond the bows and finishing the piece.”<sup>18</sup> What this suggests is that the entrainment of movement is based on more longstanding shared experiences—histories of practice and shared understanding.

## 8.2 The Scientific Discourse of Entrainment

Entrainment in music frequently involves play, groove and pleasure—although few musicians use the scientific term of entrainment. Musicologist and jazz scholar Charles Keil writes of musicians: “We use this word/concept ‘groove’ because it is used in common parlance to name the broad range of phenomena we want to understand well enough to foster. ‘Entrainment’ is a technical term from physics favored by some ethnomusicologists who may be uncomfortable using African American slang, but why burden an organic life process with a physical mechanical model?”<sup>19</sup>

The gap between the theory and practice of human entrainment is a large one. The phenomenon is studied across a wide range of fields, reflecting a history of the concept migrating from physics to the biological sciences, systems theory and most recently sociology and ethnomusicology.<sup>20</sup> Entrainment has come to name the phenomenon whereby independent, coupled rhythmical oscillators interact and stabilize—producing synchronized or rhythmically related activity.<sup>21</sup> Beyond the groove of jazz musicians or dancers, entrainment is taking place, for example, when humans synchronize their biological clocks to day and night, when fireflies blink simultaneously and cicadas pulsate rhythmically; even, intriguingly, when pendulums, hanging from a common beam, synchronize their swing.<sup>22</sup> The common element here is order and organization, perceived by a human.<sup>23</sup> Entrainment is not one common mechanism, especially one occurring

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18 Jill Johnson, email to the author, June 28, 2017.

19 Keil, “Defining ‘Groove,’” p. 1.

20 Reviewing this literature across disciplines, including the limited literature on entrainment in dance, see my writing in Waterhouse, “In-Sync.” The verb ‘to entrain,’ from the French *entraîner* (16<sup>th</sup> century), means to drag away from oneself, or to draw as an accompaniment or consequence. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the word was used colloquially to describe entering a railway train. Source: *The Oxford English Dictionary of English Etymology*, p. 317 and *The Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 303. Today, in contemporary French, the word *entraînement* means to train oneself, such as the movements that one might perform in the gym.

21 The first recorded observation of this phenomenon is traced to Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), who described this in a letter to the Royal Society of London (1665) as the “odd kind of sympathy” between two pendulums suspended on the same beam. Huygens, cited in Czolczynski et al., “Huygens’ odd sympathy experiment revisited,” p. 1.

22 Clayton, “What Is Entrainment?,” p. 49.

23 Massumi and Manning consider a spectrum of experience between entrainment and entertainment, advocating respect for neurodiversity. They associate entrainment with Whitehead’s “causal efficacy” noting how neurotypical western persons can target affordances and punctually use,

ideally in humans; rather, it designates a suite of things that humans find similar across biological and mechanical systems: when coupled systems appear to sync up.<sup>24</sup> It is a term that we use to name what we describe as “coordinated rhythmic movement.”<sup>25</sup>

Occasionally, experimental research into human entrainment has disregarded factors of history and culture—identifying the social as just what passes between people, as lacking its complexity of formation, context and material. Frequently this coincides with valiant though constraining empirical methodology, intended to measure events of synchronization for the purpose of refining a hypothesis. By contrast, within the pioneering work in ethnomusicology, the term has helped to differentiate approaches to timing in music across genres and cultures.<sup>26</sup> Some of this work has been notably interdisciplinary,<sup>27</sup> overcoming the tendency to think about sociality and bodies as rhythmic signals and receivers, involving power plays of *Zeitgeber* (time-givers) controlling time-perceivers.

My fieldwork examining *Duo* has taught me that entrainment, as distinct from the apparent perfection of being co-timed, is a thick maelstrom of living bodies—bodies that are processual, with ambiguities of inside and outside, and betweenness—all aspects central in dance science and the humanities. Thus, rather than trying to further enter and build upon the entrainment literature, as I attempted in previous publications,<sup>28</sup> in this chapter I venture a fresh approach, studying entrainment inductively by investigating the dancers’ testimonies. In doing so, I think of entrainment as “an ecology of practices,” to borrow a concept from philosopher Isabelle Stengers. This implies:

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mount and speak. Entertainment they understand through Whitehead’s “presentational immediacy” which is relational in its inframodal dreaming: “the relational quality of a welling environment that dynamically appears in a jointness of experience.” Manning and Massumi, “Coming Alive in a World of Texture,” pp. 7–8; see also *ibid.*, footnote 12 pp. 155–56. My understanding of entrainment in *Duo* considers it as a fusion of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy, so that relational components come to the fore.

- 24 Clayton specifies that entrainment is a process in which independent rhythmical systems interact and stabilize. Their interaction occurs through coupling (i.e., a material connection or perception causing a feedback loop). When entrained systems are perturbed they return to rhythmical relation. The mathematics of systems theory models this definition. Clayton, “What Is Entrainment?,” p. 49.
- 25 Phillips-Silver et al., “The Ecology of Entrainment,” p. 3.
- 26 See Clayton et al., “In Time with the Music.”
- 27 Wonderful examples using blended methodology are: Doffman’s study of jazz musicians’ experience of groove, hybridizing ethnographic and psychologically informed empiricism; Clayton’s critical exploration of scientific methods of timing measurement and ethnography; Hahn and Jordan’s research, which also blends ethnographic methods and cognitive neuroscience to propose a multi-scale view of entrainment within Japanese dance pedagogy; lastly Ancona and Waller’s ethnographic study of software teams’ working activities as a dance of rhythmical enmeshment to shifting paces of different sorts. See Doffman, *Feeling the Groove*; Clayton, “Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction”; Hahn and Jordan, “Anticipation and Embodied Knowledge”; and Ancona and Waller, “The Dance of Entrainment.”
- 28 Waterhouse, “In-Sync”; Waterhouse, “Entrainment und das zeitgenössische Ballett von William Forsythe”; Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*.”

[...] the demand that no practice be defined as ‘like any other’, just as no living species is like any other. Approaching a practice then means approaching it as it diverges, that is, feeling its borders, experimenting with the questions which practitioners may accept as relevant, even if they are not their own questions, rather than posing insulting questions that would lead them to mobilise and transform the border into a defence against their outside.<sup>29</sup>

To explore these layers, I now clarify how the *Duo* dancers’ practice of entrainment is situated in the ecology of the dancers’ activities and histories with ballet.

### 8.3 The Conventions of Entrainment in Ballet

In the studio, western dancers use the term *unison* to describe dancing the same movements at the same time, usually to music supporting that synchrony.<sup>30</sup> Ballet dancers regularly perform in unison while facing the same direction, at times with symmetric variations (as a group, some dancers facing right and some to the left, etc.); they strive for exactness in this practice, which is achieved through rehearsal and is supported by listening to the music.

Ballet dancers master dancing in unison. Balletic unison is part of the performance aesthetic, featuring spatial formations of dancers performing as one body, as well as a pedagogical strategy lingering in the daily technique of training (that is, exercises perfected all together in groups). The spatial patterns of dancers in ballet choreographies are derived from European court dances. The co-joining of bodies in harmonious movements and symmetric formations was later named the *corps de ballet*, literally the body of the ballet, like the *corps d’armée* (from the 16<sup>th</sup> century). As a dance form produced through the body-politic of French king Louis XIV, his staging of ballets required the participation of his court. To rectify the imperfections of courtiers and gain control over competition, in 1662 Louis XIV established a Royal Academy of Dancing. Dance scholar Mark Franko describes this as when ballet was established a “discipline,” what Michel Foucault defines as methods making “possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility.”<sup>31</sup> Not only did the institution, according to Franko, “strike at unwanted or offensive movement potentials,” but through the schooling of ballet, dancers formed themselves into useful, masterful and obedient movers.<sup>32</sup> Ballet was thereby linked with the power to rule, and the power to define what was proper and improper—and to make this visible in performance. Aesthetic perfection and discipline were entwined. Synchronization *subjected* bodies.

29 Stengers, “Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices,” p. 184.

30 The word presumably has been adapted from the field of music, with origins in the Middle French *unisson* (16<sup>th</sup> century) or Medieval Latin *unisonus*: “of the same sound as something else.” *The Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 75.

31 Franko, “Archaeological Choreographic Practices,” p. 98; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 137; see also Franko, *Dance as Text*, pp. 108–12.

32 Franko, *Dance as Text*, p. 111.

Over 300 years later, one might question the extent to which such history is relevant to dancers in *Duo*—how it comes to be passed down, in techniques of training and performance, now distant from their historic origins. It is my thesis that the heritage of balletic synchronicity and its alignment with discipline and the hierarchy of imperial rule remained important, both to the aesthetic appearance of synchronization in Forsythe's choreographies, and the dancers' real lives in this work. To develop my argument, I will now consider an example: the well-known ballet *Swan Lake*.

### 8.3.1 Entrainment in *Swan Lake*

Classical ballets manifest virtuosic patterns of coordinated grace, inspiring what William Forsythe has called, “the joy of the evident.”<sup>33</sup> The quintessential example of *Swan Lake* is a staple of ballet companies internationally.<sup>34</sup> Performing this ballet involves contributions from dancers partitioned by rank—the *corps de ballet* dancing mostly in unison and the stars shown as individuals and partners. The female *corps de ballet* of the swans has become integral to the aesthetic look and training of ballet, in which female dancers wear identical white tutus and perform movements in unison—also holding long poses. All the dancers entrain to the music, their movement a visual manifestation of the rhythmic patterns it contains. The protagonists of the ballet, Princess Odette (transformed into a swan) and Prince Siegfried who falls in love with her, frequently stand out in relief against this mobile landscape of women—a constellation that echoes and frames the soloists' action. They also explore their partnership, dancing the *pas de deux*. Touching one another, the man assists the women to bend, float and rise off the ground.<sup>35</sup> The female villain, a black swan Odile (performed by the same dancer who plays Odette), moves—unlike the harmony of the graceful swans—with dynamism, rhythm and vigor. Here the fable is quite clearly narrated through entrainment modes: defining casts of animals, persons and royalty, dynamics of male and female, and morals of good and evil. Intertwining cultural codes, beauty is constructed by entrainment of dance to music and a highly ordered cosmos of participants.

Contemporary European dance, including the work of Ballett Frankfurt, has taken issue with norms of dancers courteously synchronizing to choreography and music, staging many experiments with choreographic form and presentation. Across Forsythe's repertoire there is investigation of and through entrainment. Forsythe has taken the sensorimotor proclivities of dancers who have learned to entrain in their ballet education, together with the conventions of entrainment in classical ballet, and staged a new and critical range of synchronizing and de-synchronizing dynamics. These become a compositional field: entrainment varies in scale (within the one body,

33 Forsythe speaking in Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 10:55–11:05.

34 With choreography usually referring back to the imperial version of 1885, choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanovich Ivanov, which was performed at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

35 A short synopsis of this “sexual division of labor,” which Novack rightly categorizes as guiding, supporting, carrying and manipulating the women, is found in Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, pp. 125–32; citation p. 128.

dyadic, group or between groups), rhythmic complexity (unison rhythms versus hierarchical or polyrhythmic relations, symmetric versus asymmetric), synchronizing mediums (sound, light, movement), and ranges from planned to improvised.<sup>36</sup> I agree with dance scholar Heidi Gilpin: “Rather than retrieving and reproducing classical balletic forms that are fixed entries in the roster of movement, Forsythe bursts open these forms so that previously hidden moments in balletic movements are made plainly visible. In doing so, not only are movement and form given a new life and a new set of possibilities, but so is ballet in general.”<sup>37</sup>

### 8.3.2 Individualization in the Hierarchy of Ballet

Ballett Frankfurt’s repertoire explored a range, or ecology, of synchronizing and desynchronizing. This involved many links of cooperation: relations between dancers, between dancers and musicians, between the dancers and moving elements of the set, between dancers and changing lights, and between all of these and the audience. The dancers entrained through touching, listening, watching, breathing-sounding, speaking and moving rhythmically. Entrainment congealed alignments between movement, light, material and sound—producing “relationscapes” of emergent experience.<sup>38</sup> The entire team working on the performance had to synchronize their efforts to modulate light, sound and space *together*. The audience attuned to this vacillating field of emergent organization, perceiving rhythmically, expectantly with the unfolding performance.

Entrainment in these works is an aesthetic *process*—not only producing artistic works but a manner of being artful and explorative, with unusual bundles of perception, signs, communication and sense. Entrainment *may* be beautiful; but such tastes are complex and culturally constructed, based upon much common understanding about their meaning. What the scientific literature has largely missed is how entrainment is a spectrum of manifestations of force and power. Forsythe’s choreographies recognize and stage this critically.

Working with harmony and causing chaos, Forsythe has been accused of ruining or critiquing the norms of classical ballet—including the notion that pleasing harmony or synchrony is beautiful and good and should thus be visible, whereas chaos and irregularity are vulgar and should be hidden.<sup>39</sup> The Ballett Frankfurt’s work also decentered ballet, from the symmetry and axis of organization controlled by one person, to or-

36 For further exploration of this argument via a consideration of dancers’ experiences of entrainment in Forsythe’s choreographies *Artifact* and *Eidos: Telos*, see Waterhouse, “Entrainment und das zeitgenössische Ballett von William Forsythe,” pp. 199–200. On these categories of entrainment, see Clayton, “What Is Entrainment?,” pp. 50–52; Phillips-Silver and Keller, “Searching for Roots of Entrainment and Joint Action in Early Music Interactions,” p. 3; see also Waterhouse, “In-Sync,” pp. 66–67.

37 Gilpin, “Aberrations of Gravity,” p. 122.

38 I take the term “relationscapes” from Erin Manning, which she uses when exploring various ways that movement, material, sensation, thought and dreaming enmesh. See Manning, *Relationscapes*, pp. 153–83.

39 Cf. Nugent, “Seeking Order and Finding Chaos in the Choreography of William Forsythe.”

ganization produced with many personal and spatial centers, through collaboration.<sup>40</sup> By doing this, Forsythe's team explicitly critiqued the hierarchical framework of the classical ballet ensemble and the entire promotion system framed around de-synchronization in the form of soloist parts. In contrast, their work revealed dancers in complex constellations of interaction, and often in mutual partnerships, as in *Duo*. Forsythe has described the last decade of his projects as work that "tries to make the audience aware of its own attention."<sup>41</sup> Instead of entertainment, as the "the joy of the evident,"<sup>42</sup> the audience is included or provoked into the process of deciphering: what is going on here? In this way, Forsythe's choreographies reinvent their own heritage, exploring the potential of entrainment as *relation*.

When I exposed a draft of this argument to some peers from The Forsythe Company,<sup>43</sup> my ideas resonated in particular with Italian *Duo* dancer Roberta Mosca. She responded that in the ballet company of Teatro alla Scala in Milan, a *corps de ballet* dancer contractually has no opportunity to dance as a soloist—to make his or her movements individual or to desynchronize from the others. From her remarks, I was reminded that my argument needed to further emphasize that entrainment is not only a representative matter in performance, but part of the dancers' professional culture and careers. De-synchrony figures in promotion: the career of a successful ballet dancer involves the hope for individualization, through exiting the communal *corps de ballet*. Via de-phasing, standing out from the others, an individual ballet dancer becomes highlighted and recognized. Thus, ballet dancers are trained paradoxically, both to conform (as rules require) and also to stand out (as promotion lures). Rehearsal of the *corps de ballet* involves a director telling each individual how to better fulfill the common form of unison, often requiring the dancer to look at him or herself in the mirror to diagnostically conform to their peers. For ballet-trained members of Forsythe's companies, this history is part of their bodies, their disposition and tendencies, and their sense of right and wrong (as such, their *habitus*). The group-subject of the *corps de ballet* is devalued compared to the individualization of the star—who is more respected, dances more and earns a greater salary. This is why *Duo's* staging of entrainment is so critical: performing movement with mutual and not hierarchical entrainment.

Complementary ethnographic fieldwork has added credence to my observation that entrainment features strongly in dancers' *habitus* and daily work. In her fieldwork exploring the contribution of the dancer, Tomic-Vajagic assesses the challenges of setting Forsythe's ballets within other companies, observing the differences of ballet ensembles' occupational cultures. She finds: "The manner of negotiating the mutual space with a

40 Spier, "Engendering and Composing Movement," pp. 140–41.

41 Tusa, "Interview with William Forsythe." In an interview from 2001, Forsythe explains similarly: "[...] if you're looking at something very hard, if you're trying to watch very carefully because it's somewhat obscured, you tend to be a more careful viewer, to ask 'what are we doing there?' Are we teaching people the aesthetics at hand? No, we're teaching them about watching, about being a viewer. I'm not trying to refine someone's taste, I would like to make people who watch dancing better dance viewers." Forsythe cited in Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 146.

42 Forsythe speaking in Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 10:55–11:05.

43 Thank you to PACT Zollverein for the opportunity to give a presentation of this text during a HOOD residency, April 26, 2017.

larger group on stage is not so typical for the soloists in the hierarchical construct within international repertory ballet companies.”<sup>44</sup> Substantiating this view is her interview with principal dancer Zdenek Konvalina of the National Ballet of Canada about his role in Forsythe’s *the second detail*. Konvalina recounted:

And so, I think I always wanted to be part of that group-movement and make sure that I’m on the same music, on the same rhythm as the other people ... Being a soloist, usually you don’t have to be with anyone ... So, I feel that there is a double challenge here—in a way you want to stand out because you are supposedly a principal, you should be better. But in some way, it’s a challenge saying, “no, you know, I can do that—I can be a part of the group” ... so I think *the second detail* was more about community, and how to be a part of that.<sup>45</sup>

The argument that I would like to draw from this examination of ballet’s aesthetics of entrainment and hierarchal working modes more generally, is that Forsythe’s choreography challenges the proclivities of his ballet-trained dancers to reference, surpass and reinvent synchronization as *relation*. Forsythe and the dancers believe that contemporary performance of unison must evolve and achieve a new expression of its classical principles—requiring investigation of the obedience of individuals in-concert and the consumption of this product by spectators. When entrainment was called upon, it explored not a “docile” utility but an active pact of taking part—even and especially when the dancers performed in unison.<sup>46</sup>

## 8.4 The Dancers’ Entrainment

Within the changing manifestations of *Duo* across the project’s history from 1996–2019, each new set of partners has nurtured their manner of intimate listening as they dialogue about the movement sequence that they have inherited. Entrainment remains essential, though its appearance and sound may change. Each *Duo* pair has found their way of being musical with one another, negotiating the timing of complex twists and turns of the choreographic material. This is visible and audible in their rhythmic signatures of breathing-movement: common phrasing, preferred places to accelerate or decelerate and flexibility to prolong or shorten movements in order to surprise one another. Nervousness was cited as a block to connection and entrainment—as was holding one’s breath or fixing one’s head on the spine, limiting the acuity needed to turn and attune to one’s partner.

Though dancing in unison was a significant part of the dancers’ learning practice, the majority of the piece is not performed in unison.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the dancers move

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44 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer’s Contribution*, p. 184.

45 Ibid., p. 185.

46 Foucault cited in Franko, “Archaeological Choreographic Practices,” p. 101.

47 Unison accounts for approximately a third to a half of the choreography. See section 9.2 Charting the History of *Duo*.

rhythmically, have solos, turn-take and pause. These are all modes of entrainment, sutured together to make a complex structure. Entrainment in *Duo* involves learning how to measure and forecast this rhythmical material, so that dancers come in and out of alignment at the right time. The structure of *Duo* devises intensities of relation, connecting and then distancing the performers—not only literally in space, but through their shared attention to co-movement and breath.<sup>48</sup> Underscoring the nuance of this co-performance, dancer Riley Watts has described *Duo* as pertaining to “the art of elastic temporal integrity,” in which the pair plays elastically with these coming and goings of relation.<sup>49</sup> His partner, dancer Brigel Gjoka, explained entrainment pointedly in the French sense of training and practice as “a form of progressive work, reaching a level of interrogation on how connections, composition, rule-breaking and listening can create a dialogue between individuals.”<sup>50</sup> When Watts and Gjoka teach *Duo* they let students self-direct rehearsal and develop their partnership, to achieve these dialogic timings.<sup>51</sup>

Unlike the hierarchical precision of rhythms enforced within the ideology of ballet, the dancers’ testimonies taught me that *Duo*’s entrainment is pliant and filled with the liveness of indeterminacy. It emerges ecologically, with the audience and with (rather than to) the music. Rather than being perfectly in-sync, what was important for the dancers was what was “done with synchronicity.”<sup>52</sup> Attempting to dance only with identical tempo and rhythm to one’s partner would remove the elastic temporal integrity and delight of dancing *Duo*. Instead, the partners engaged holistically: challenging and pushing one another, enjoying moments of lilt and surprise.<sup>53</sup>

Particularly in *DUO2015*, the dancers’ interpretation allows for considerable liberty. Not only are there more passages of improvisation, but both the phrasing and the position of the dancers on stage can be adapted spontaneously during performance—leading to subtle variations of the choreography in which the performers may accelerate through a passage, skip a beat, make a variation upon a movement, pause suddenly or change their facing. This is done in order to surprise the other, knowing that the surprises will ideally elicit a reaction and enliven the play. The tools the dancers use for this are similar to those of jazz musicians: “to push,’ ‘to cook,’ ‘to lock up’ or ‘interlock,’

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48 Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern observes, echoing my remarks on *Duo*, that in some cultures relations are felt as connection in the polarity of connecting/linking/merging as well as splitting/separating/dividing, see Strathern, “Kinship as a Relation,” in particular pp. 47–48.

49 Riley Watts, interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing on January 14, 2014. See also Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 8.

50 Gjoka, “Workshop *DUO2015*.”

51 Fieldwork observation, *DUO2015* Workshop in Bologna, October 23–27, 2017.

52 Riley Watts, email to the author, May 9, 2013.

53 Mark Doffman and Charles Keil have also noted the importance of imperfections for jazz musicians. Keil calls them “participatory discrepancies,” the millisecond differences in time between attack and release: See Keil, “Defining ‘Groove,’” p. 3. Doffman also reports of “anecdotal experiences of jazz musicians who often speak of a certain elasticity in the timing between players for the music to work.” Doffman, *Feeling the Groove*, p. 64. As described previously, elasticity is central to Manning’s understanding of relational movement: “The in and of movement folds. Elastic, we feel the becoming-form of movement’s shape. In the amodal tactility of elasticity, force is stored and then released. Elasticity acts on the movement.” Manning, *Relationescapes*, p. 34; see the prior discussion in section 7.2.



‘to take it higher,’ ‘to get down,’ ‘to funk it up,’ ‘to get down on it.’<sup>54</sup> By comparison, the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* involves far less funk and much more sustaining of alignment through “spidey” sensing: intuiting, supporting, observing and listening. The dancers remembered: “I’m there for you,” “I hear you,” “I will wait for you,” “I see you,” “I feel you,” “I’m with you,” “I change it with you,” “I answer you.”<sup>55</sup> In both cases, the dancers engage relationally with the virtual potential to co-create—perceiving micro-variations and nuances.

Tuning to the collaborative, what Rudi Laermans defines as “the always contextually embedded, at once partially realized and still virtual potential to co-create,” entrainment became stretchy, consensual, and dialogic.<sup>56</sup> The dancers in *Duo* understand that they could never be perfectly identical. More important than achieving perfect unison is how the dancers choose to play or engage time, using dynamic musical strategies based on their collaborative duet relationship. Beyond just sharing the intention to synchronize, the dancers work toward the more complex shared goal of enjoying their interaction and communicating, based upon their shared knowledge of the choreography—as *play*.

The consent of togetherness is a series of agreements. It is a process of affirmative dialogue: a succession of cues and negotiations, embedded within a posture of listening. Rather than imagining entrainment (in *Duo*) as rhythmic synthesis, I view it as an ongoing synthesizing. The dancers’ entrainment has a forward momentum and a thickening, to borrow metaphors from Richard Sennett.<sup>57</sup> The dancers’ practice of sustaining consent is one in which the productive friction of difference is generative. Consent and listening must thereby be preserved through continual attunement. Processing entrainment in *Duo* shows a stability of synchronization through a flexible maintenance of attention and care. It is active, even when the dancers’ practice enables it to feel light and even effortless; it is active because it requires listening.

Viewing any single performance of *Duo* might preclude perceiving how entraining both holds the piece together and allows it to vary through the choreography’s becoming. This overview reveals elasticity, an agency of inventing around the margins of attunement. Ethics and novelty are at stake here: the ethics of making sure it is satisfying and playful for both dancers, and the novelty of letting iterations continually reimagine the old. The word that I would like to suggest for this is *virtuosity*: both in the sense of virtue and of excellence. Serial or chronological analysis of multiple performances could potentially grasp this virtuous choreographic multiplicity. It would show the structures holding the work together, as well as the variation. Dance scholar Kirsten Maar understands, as I do, that Forsythe’s composition of entrainment: “seeks to develop not a formed but a dynamic multiplicity of (re)acting bodies.”<sup>58</sup> From my study of entrainment in *Duo*, I have clarified how order does not come from the outside; rather structure

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54 See Keil, “Defining ‘Groove,’” p. 2.

55 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

56 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 387 (italics in the original).

57 Here I draw from Richard Sennett’s illuminating discussion of dialectic and dialogic conversations, see Sennett, *Together*, pp. 18–20.

58 Maar, “Uncanny Connections,” p. 257.

emerges dynamically through interaction and agonisms—through feeling entrainment burgeon—a feeling of relational betweenness.

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Having developed the thesis that *Duo* dancers' movement was constituted relationally, through practice richly explorative of one's individual (historicized, embodied, changing) self in mutual dialogue with one's partner, this chapter turned to the aspect of *entrainment*—the time- and rhythm-sensitive aspects of moving together. Entrainment can be provisionally understood as processes sustaining synchronization and rhythmical relation. Section 8.1 relied on ethnographic analysis to describe the dancers' accounts of entraining in the first movement of *Duo*: the movement *showerhead*, which was the focus of chapter 6. Section 8.2 positioned the discussion within the entrainment discourse. Section 8.3 outlined the conventions of entrainment in ballet through analysis of the example of *Swan Lake*. Turning back to *Duo*, section 8.4 analyzed the forms of entrainment manifested in *Duo's* choreography, outlining how entrainment entwines skill, dispositions and subjectivity.



## Chapter 9: Movement Profile of *Duo*

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**“You relate through a sequence, more than to a person.”**  
Videoconference interview with Roberta Mosca, April 27, 2018.

ROBERTA: [*Duo*] is hard, but very beautiful. I have a great memory of this. And I love this music. [...] What timings we are using ... no, not what timings, but how it was built. It is extremely complex. When is one doing something in relation to the other? The steps are the same and it is choreographed for both, but we are not doing the same thing at the same time. Somehow, this produces a complexity. You don't know. You just can focus on what you are doing. [...] It's all you have. 'Cause you're exhausted. It's complex 'cause you're kind of doing the same [as your partner] but not. There is a total coherence, but at the same time, you don't know how to figure out how ... what's happening, really. This is very in much *Duo*, I think. I don't know if I experienced it in other pieces. This sensation of: you're together with someone, and you're so linked into something, but you're so overwhelmed by what you are doing that you just only pay attention to what you are doing, but what the other person is doing ... it also linked to what you are doing, but you can't even see it (*pause*) except some little breaths of moments when it opens up. And then you're like “Ok, you are there.” (*pause*) “And I'm here.” Those moments are so important [...] This is a concentrated, like, tunneling. You deal with space and relations different than in other pieces, like [Forsythe's] *Quintett* [1993]. The relationship is out of these exact timings, and (*pause*) the sequence. You relate through a sequence, more than to a person (*she laughs*). It's much more abstract. It's on the realm of the physics, somehow with gravity and timings and repetitions, and then back and forth, back and forth, so you lose the sense of where you are. Did you do this again, or not?

This rich testimony of being moved by *Duo* points to an intensity of moments and streams of interaction, as dancer Roberta Mosca processes the choreography and discusses her relationship to it. This is a relationship *with* and *through* dance. It is an affective relationship. The dancer notes her happiness in taking part in the hard work of making something beautiful.

During this interview with Mosca, we are speaking as she watches a video of herself dancing *Duo*. Because of her sensitivity to coming in and out of sync, she remembers *Duo* as a complex arrangement of steps—producing relations of timings, space and persons. I have considered these under the rubric of entrainment in the previous chapter. But pocketed in Mosca’s memories are not only discussions of time, but recollections of the existential struggle she experienced in performance, fighting exhaustion and feeling the vacillation between straining and regaining energy. Her testimony, both in content and in its narrative form, describes dilating from long streams of individual focus to brilliant bursts of joint attention. She focuses on herself, but always resurfaces to a world where she knows where she and her partner are working together.

One important theme within Mosca’s testimony gives direction to this chapter. The topic of “sequence” is frequent in this interview, pointing to something that I have hitherto refrained from discussing: the importance of the *order* of the movements. The sequence of *Duo*—that is, the series of movements in time—according to Mosca, enables relation and gives the choreography a body. At another point in this conversation, Mosca refers to *Duo*’s “anatomy of sequence,” which I understand as a knowledge of *where* things are located and *how* they fit together to form a whole. Common knowledge of this anatomy (shared with her partner) is what makes relation possible, as Mosca lives through the physical reality of gravity, body and balance. In this section, I will consider the sequence of *Duo* in greater detail to understand what this stringing along and between movement does and is comprised of—giving it terms and noting its potential.

Gaining insight into the dancers’ experience of *Duo*, as I have attempted in the previous chapters, has reconstructed an array of activities and concepts involved in dancers’ movement practices. It has shown how the dancers’ movement skills accumulate collectively, through shared practice and investment in their project. I wished to know how *Duo*’s movement came about and explain the key features through detailed review of seminal movements, such as *showerhead*. Yet I also aimed to describe the piece’s particular movement style and aesthetic, and how this had been arranged in a compositional structure (specifically, the sequence). The very nature of *Duo* made writing about it particularly difficult: How was I to specify this, when the dancers themselves admitted that the choreography was in-process and changing? Was this a choreography progressing from the first version? Or was it more open, and complex in its multiplicity?

This chapter provides two proposals for consideration of these issues: The first part (9.1) provides a catalog of movement principles found in *Duo*—the sort of list I hope might prove useful for dance educators developing a practice-based *Duo* curriculum. The second (9.2), titled *Charting the History of Duo*, presents graphics that visualize change in *Duo* longitudinally, continuing in the vein of Forsythe’s digital projects. After observing the potential of *Duo* as a reserve of renewable ideas and inspiration, I concur with Brian Massumi: “Reality is not fundamentally objective. Before and after it becomes an object, it is an inexhaustible reserve of surprise. The real is the snowballing *process* that makes a certainty of *change*.”<sup>1</sup> To find out about this “snowballing,” I reconstructed *Duo*’s anatomy, attempting to find out about the momentum that keeps the force of choreography alive—like a body itself.

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1 Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 214.

## 9.1 Core Movement Values

Many dancers have asked me how this research around *Duo* could impact the teaching of dance practice. Responding to this concern, this section offers an overview of the movement principles that describe the movement style and choreography of *Duo* generally, providing a *Duo* curriculum. Developed after dance scholar Cynthia Novack's synopsis of the "core movement values" of the dance form contact improvisation,<sup>2</sup> the profile has been formulated by bringing the lens of Laban Movement Analysis into my ethnographic fieldwork and study of video sources. In doing this, I blend first-person and third-person perspectives of movement—that is, the experience of dancing and the experience of watching the dance—as is common with a Laban approach. Uncommonly, I foreground properties of moving *together*, showing how dynamics are cooperated upon. My emphasis on *Duo*'s shared and common attention to dynamics suggests how a Laban approach, which typically emerges through attention to the individual body, has the potential to be extended to look at co-movement.<sup>3</sup>

The core movement values of the *Duo* project can be categorized as follows:

**Relational Movement:** In *Duo*'s relational movement, the movement emerges contingently through mutual attunement of the dancers to one another, the context of performing, the audience and the ambient musical score. Connection is forged through practice. This involves listening to one's partner while dancing—neither dominating nor following passively—retaining at all times an awareness of the other. The connectivity between people, through mobile bodies, is an active component of *Duo*'s movement, as well as the source of variation within the choreography.

**Shared Intentionality:** *Duo* can be described as an instance of "shared intentionality," that is, when two people share experience of moving and breathing together, while *knowing* that they are doing this.<sup>4</sup> The dancers describe the movement as a common "language"

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2 Cynthia Novack takes this term from the movement analyst Billie Frances Lepczyk. See Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, p. 115. Contact improvisation is an international dance practice of improvisation that is practiced predominantly in pairs, in contexts outside of performance, i.e., not as a stage art. The form emerged through experimentation by American dancers in the late 1960s and early 70s, and was named in 1972 by Steve Paxton. Cf. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, pp. 114–49.

3 Laban Movement Analysis is an analytic frame based upon the work of Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). I draw predominantly from Laban's study of dynamics, known as *Eukinetics* and *Effort*. This approach to studying motion regards the emphasis the mover lays upon four factors, which blend mental and physical intention: weight, space, time and flow. An additional regard is shape, or the architecture of the body. In my approach, I reconsider the single-body effort of an individual mover, which is the basis of the Laban System (i.e., one person's attitude toward the motion factors) to consider the joint efforts that emerge in *Duo*. For further background on Dance Dynamics and the interrelation of these with Laban's notation and *Choreutics*, see Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 65–73; see also the textbook Maletic, *Dance Dynamics*.

4 American Psychologist Michael Tomasello has described shared intentionality as a form of collaboration in which humans share goals, plans and knowledge to complete something together. This involves sharing of psychological states, affects and experience, and is different from the

between them, enabling them to stay in dialogue.<sup>5</sup> They rely on their shared histories of cultivated movement intention: involving joint practice; shared movement concepts, images and names; and cultivated sensation of their bodies, other bodies and movement.

**Common Sequence:** The movement of *Duo* follows a choreographic sequence that has been handed down from pair to pair. The partners practice this succession of movement until they can remember it easily. The structure involves phrases of unison movement, deftly synchronized, as well as solos and segments where the dancers perform different actions. Repetitions and variations of movement within the structure create loops, in which the dancers must pay attention in order not to get lost. Part of the skill-building and musicality of *Duo* comes through sharing the feel for these comings and goings of synchrony and assisting one another through the loops.

**Improvisation:** The dancers' practice of improvisation within *Duo* has changed over its history. In the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* there was less improvisation. Only one section of the choreography involved an improvisation task: the dancers lay on the floor and intermittently slid their limbs into transpositions of standing movements from elsewhere in the choreographic sequence (see Fig. 10). In *DUO2015* this floor section has been cut. Yet overall there is much more task-based improvisation and dancers' cooperative adaptation—such as marking, referencing and phrasing the sequence.<sup>6</sup>

**Breathing-Movement:** *Duo* dancers share an implicit practice of audibly breathing together with the movement. This is done for the purpose of sensing the movement internally and progressing simultaneously through the sequence. The dancers use explicit breath cues to guide their timings. Forsythe names these acoustic aspects of the composition *Duo's* "breath score."<sup>7</sup>

**Balletic Tendencies:** The movement constituting *Duo* is closely related to ballet steps and the general proclivities and aptitudes of ballet-trained bodies—such as the vertical alignment of the spine, turnout, the ability to shift weight seamlessly, the maintenance of balance, the skill to move lightly, extending the limbs with balanced tensegrity<sup>8</sup> and cross-lateral connection. In particular, the practice of *épaulement* gives *Duo's* movement distinct torsional properties. The degree of turnout and leg work in *Duo* is one aspect

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chance occurrences of synchrony because the participants are *aware* of their sharing of plans. See Tomasello and Carpenter, "Shared Intentionality"; Tomasello, "Joint Attention as Social Cognition."

5 Dancer Brigel Gjoka specifies, a "language in permanent change and development." Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author in Dresden, March 6, 2016.

6 For greater elaboration on the different modes of improvisation longitudinally in *Duo* sketched here, see section 9.2.3 Counterpoint Model.

7 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019. Cf. Vass-Rhee, *Audio Visual Stress*, pp. 240–44.

8 Tensegrity, a term from Buckminster Fuller, is a structural property of systems in which tensions distribute sheering force throughout, making them resilient.

that has changed over the course of its history; the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* stresses turnout and legwork more than does *DUO2015*.

*Figures 21-28. Duo rehearsal with Brigel Gjoka (black training clothes) and Riley Watts (blue and yellow training clothes) in 2013.*

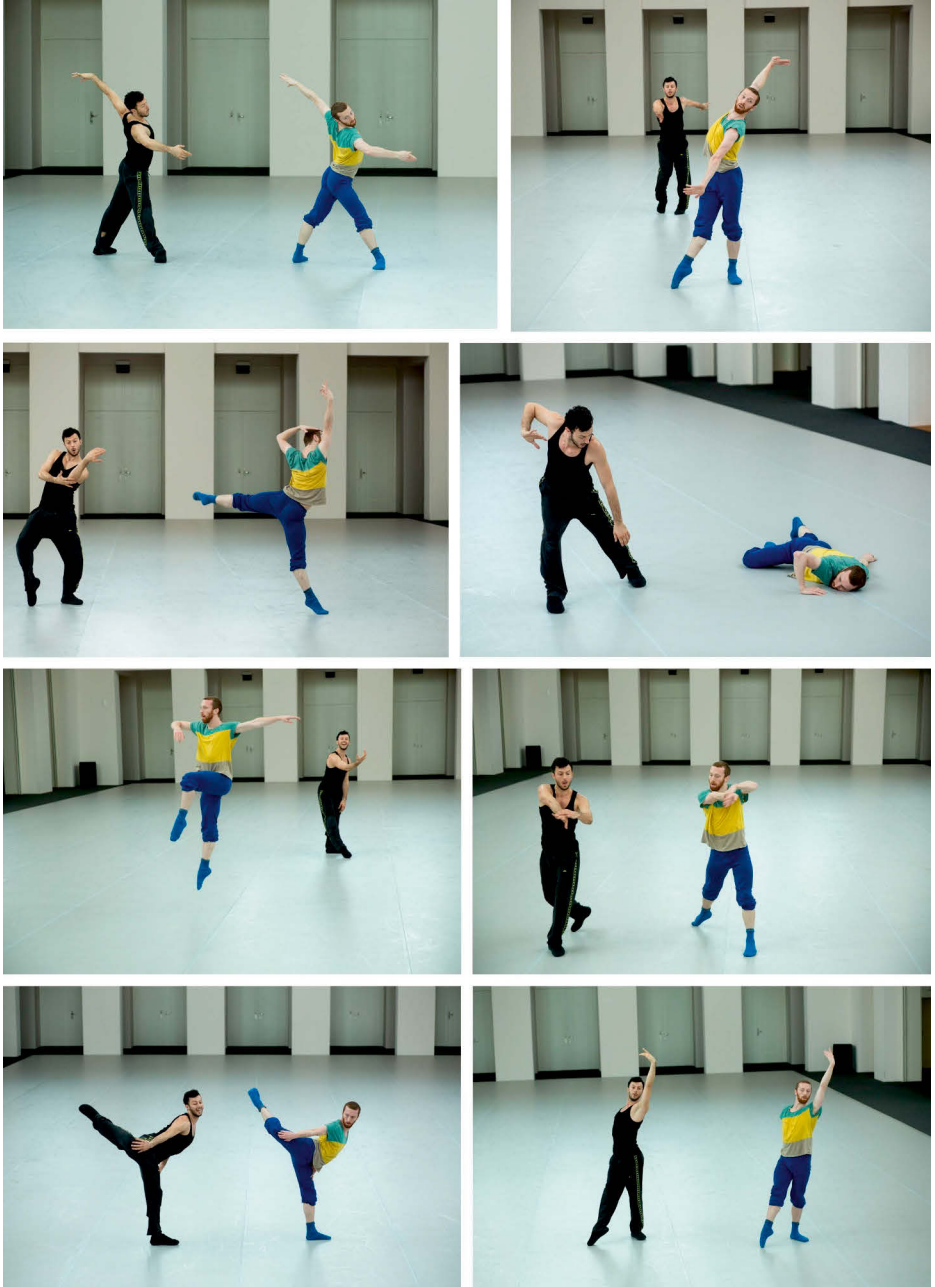


Photo © Dominik Mentzos.



**Sharing Space:** The movement of *Duo* is rich in its exploration of the full range of space within each dancer's reach (see Figs. 21–28), termed by Laban the “kinesphere.”<sup>9</sup> The dancers perform frequently side-by-side, shifting between facing toward and away from the audience. The proxemics of their nearness are sensed but not referenced; the dancers rarely make gestures that reach toward one another. Limbs activate complex relations towards multiple directions, instead of moving with simple gestures that are confined to one direction. Episodes of low-level movement on the floor are part of the introduction of the Ballet Frankfurt version of *Duo* (see Fig. 10) and solo elements of *DUO2015* (see Fig. 20).

**Cross-Lateral Connectivity:** The movement of *Duo* explores “cross-lateral connectivity”; that is, coordination between opposite sides of the body. Peggy Hackney defines this as “a sensation of connection along a diagonal pathway through the body's core between the body's four quadrants.”<sup>10</sup> These contralateral chains often involve rotation as the dancers stretch and reach, following of arcs and curves within the body, in dialogue with pushing and pulling motion out of the floor. Cross-lateral connectivity brings the upper and lower body into an interplay, from fingertips to toes. Forsythe achieves this by coaching the dancers to articulate the feet and hands simultaneously.

**Sharing Shape:** Shapes of the body in *Duo* are dynamic, reaching and expressive, not angular and bound; the dancers' arms and legs articulate curves and lines. The dancers' active sense of proprioception enables them to know and sense the shapes through which they pass.<sup>11</sup> They perceive the shape of their bodies both individually and together, at times as an “echo” of their partner (see Figs. 6–9).<sup>12</sup>

**Complex Coordination:** The complexity of *Duo's* movement is designed by: (a) amplified range of motion of the hips and shoulders, (b) usage of torsions and spirals, (c) spreading motion throughout the kinesphere, not just easy-to-reach places, (d) cultivating multiple rhythmic layers. As opposed to simple actions—such as isolations of one body part or the body following its own momentum around the center of mass—the complex movements of *Duo* often involve sending the hips in the opposite directions from the limbs, making biomechanics that appear complexly jointed.

**Polyvalence and polyrhythm:** As in dances of the African diaspora, in *Duo* there are multiple centers of the body (polycentrism), moving together rhythmically (polyrhythm).<sup>13</sup> In *Duo* these do not produce jointed, angular articulations but complex curvilinear chains.

9 See Laban, *The Language of Movement*, p. 10; Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 71–73.

10 Peggy Hackney uses this term to emphasize the connection, as opposed to opposition, i.e., contralateral. Movements can be contralateral without investigating connectivity. See Hackney, *Making Connections*, pp. 194–95. The prevalence of cross-lateral connectivity in Forsythe's oeuvre is a key signature of his style as well as ballet technique; it is less present in contact improvisation and other styles of contemporary dance, such as *Gaga* technique.

11 On proprioception see Section 6.2.2, footnote 27.

12 Jill Johnson, studio session dancing in Boston, December 6, 2016.

13 See Asante, *African Dance*, pp. 212–19.

Forsythe has described this generally in his movement style as “a many timed body as opposed to a shaped body.”<sup>14</sup> Such interrelations of the body are a form of intra-entrainment: the rhythmical interaction and coordination between parts.<sup>15</sup> These rhythms are co-produced between pairs, independently of the musical score.

**Sharing Time/Mutual Entrainment:** The dancers’ attention to aligning their movement and sound, when moving synchronously but also when performing different movements in counterpoint, makes *Duo* an example of mutual entrainment: that is, a process of interaction in which rhythms, in motion and sound production, are mutually attended to by partners. The partners share time in a nonhierarchical way without a leader. Together they push and play with time. The dancers strive to generate musical and novel timings as they reiterate the movement sequence.

**Dynamic Equilibrium:** Rather than posing or balancing in fixed positions (static equilibrium), *Duo* dancers delicately negotiate movement equilibrium dynamically and together. In *Duo*, the dancers perceive the shift and sound of *their* weight and *their* balance, and together search for lightness and sustainability, rather than heaviness, exhibitions of strength or explosive use of force. This is frequently combined with listening, as the sound of their bodies touching the floor and their breath reflect their effort towards moving their mass.

**Sharing Flow:** *Duo* dancers experience flow—the feeling of the “progression” or “continuity” of movement—most strongly when they perform unison movements at the same time, especially when they move through the space together.<sup>16</sup>

**Shifting Dynamics:** *Duo* is composed of scenes that foreground different dynamics. *DUO2015* has a “denser structure” than the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo*, with greater range in dynamics and phrasing.<sup>17</sup> Dancers of *Duo* participate in the modulations together, motivating each other for energetic passages.

**Active Cooperative Phrasing:** The movement of *Duo* has lulls, stops, resets, accelerations and decelerations that are produced by the dancers’ attention to interpretation of the choreographic sequence.<sup>18</sup> They practice modulating their tempo and energetic level. This highly musical phrasing follows the logic of the couple’s breathing-movement more than Willems’ music. The phrasing and tempo are shaped and motivated by Forsythe’s

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14 Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” p. 24.

15 Clayton, “What is Entrainment?,” p. 51.

16 Maletic, *Dance Dynamics*, p. 20. Here, I mean flow in Laban’s sense, not like Csikszentmihalyi as “the feeling when things were going well as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness.” See Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, p. 110.

17 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

18 I use the term phrasing in a similar way to Maletic as “the manner of execution or the way in which energy is distributed in the execution of a movement or a series of movements.” See Maletic, *Dance Dynamics*, p. 57.

coaching; he wishes for the choreography to remain interesting and not feel “lugubrious.”<sup>19</sup> The range of phrasing, and especially the frequency of impacts, accents and sudden movements, has increased between 1996 and the present; it is a source of the distinct differences between *Duo* versions.

**Sensorial Attunement:** The dancers’ practice of *Duo* activates a rich sensorium as they experience their bodily motion in relation to their partner and the environment. In doing so, they perceive across many modes: peripheral and direct vision, sound location and timbre, the body’s orientation in relation to gravity, proprioception (sensing the location of one’s limbs in space), the intensity of skin sensation and stretch, the visceral sense of internal organs, the sensation of breath, the temperature of the room, the warmth and direction of theatrical light, the sensation of one’s clothes and the contact with the floor.

**Listening Expressions:** The dancers’ facial expressions are typically one of pleasant concentration while conducting inner listening to their bodies and outer listening to the sounds in the space (see Figs. 21–28). The dancers do not look at or address the audience until the very last motion of the piece when they end *en face*—that is, directly facing the audience. The degree to which the dancers look directly at one another changes over the course of *Duo*’s history—with much more direct visual exchange, even expressions of joy and smiling, since 2013.

## 9.2 Charting the History of *Duo*

“I gave that cue,” explained dancer Jill Johnson while reviewing an archival video of herself dancing the premiere of *Duo*.<sup>20</sup> Though the digitized video was grainy, Johnson could still decipher the pixelated moves of herself and her partner. Based on interview encounters like these in which I reviewed performances with the dancers, in this section I describe my endeavor to ‘chart’ the movement of *Duo*—graphically producing understanding in collaboration with a team of programming artists.<sup>21</sup> Working in an interdisciplinary framework between dance studies and creative coding, we developed a digital archive of the *Duo* dancers’ and my own observations about their performances, systematized this vocabulary, and then mined these annotations through computer code, visualizing the outcomes. This was a highly constructed and cooperative practice of knowledge production, highlighting the multiple narratives and views of the *Duo* project. Here I delve into my research basis and findings; the important particulars of the innovative technical methodology and coding cooperation are highlighted elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

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19 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

20 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018. Archival video of *Duo*’s premiere in the Ballett Frankfurt, January 20, 1996.

21 Florian Jenett, Mark Coniglio and Monika Hager.

22 See Waterhouse et al., “I Gave That Cue.”

The choreographic movement analysis presented in this chapter—though unusual in its digital mediation—builds theoretically and methodologically upon the precedent case study examining Forsythe’s piece *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000). This short work often toured on the same program as *Duo*, serving as the finale. Forsythe likened the elaborate composition to “baroque machinery.”<sup>23</sup> Wearing practice clothes of diverse colors, a group of dancers maneuver dangerously and deftly: swarming like bees upon a rectangular grid of 16 shiny metal tables. The choreography organizes movement within this highly structured space. Over time, the patterns accumulate: approximately two dozen movement themes and motifs—ordered roughly from simple to complex—before a development section and a high-pitched conclusion. The performers manifest these complex constellations of interaction by cueing and aligning with one another. They swerve around sharp corners, heave one another over the gleaming table surfaces and duck through the shadow underneath—regulating their timings independently of Thom Willems’ industrial sound score of crashes and whistles. The dancers, according to Rosyln Sulcas, perform “an almost mathematical construction of complexity.”<sup>24</sup> Dancing this work is a carnal and relational thrill, providing some of my strongest memories of teamwork in The Forsythe Company.

*Duo* is of course a more intimate and subdued example of relational movement, yet its choreographic expression of *counterpoint* has much in common with this virtuosic table dance. While *One Flat Thing, reproduced* is outstanding in its complexity, the *Duo* project is exemplary because of its nuance. Forsythe chose *One Flat Thing, reproduced* as the keystone of his second medial research project in part because the organizational complexity made the constructive principles elusive—even after multiple viewings. The piece thus warranted and rewarded close study, making order emerge from disorder. The website *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2009) (hereafter, *Synchronous Objects*) presents animations that make these organizational principles legible, rendering graphics upon a high definition film of the piece made by Thierry De Mey in 2005 (see Fig. 29).<sup>25</sup> The website presents a multifaceted performance archive in which many people’s interpretations are merged and reflected upon: documenting observations *and* observation processes. The website also included a *counterpoint tool* in addition to further graphical visualizations of the data, exploring Forsythe’s generative questions: “What else might this dance look like?” and “What else, besides the body, might physical thinking look like?”<sup>26</sup> As a member of the dancer cast and the project team, this research precipitated my investigation of the archival videos of *Duo*: seeding

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23 Forsythe, unpublished interview with Thierry De Mey in Frankfurt, April 13, 2006. Transcribed by the author as part of the research for *Synchronous Objects*.

24 Sulcas, “Watching the Ballett Frankfurt, 1988–2009,” p. 15.

25 The resulting website is available online, see <https://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/>. Since 2021 however the Flash based content is no longer operational. The project was developed at The Ohio State University. See Huschka, “Mediale Transformationen Choreographischen Wissens”; Groves et al., “Talking About Scores”; Shaw, “Synchronous Objects, Choreographic Objects, and the Translation of Dancing Ideas”; Manning, *Always More Than One*, pp. 99–123.

26 Shaw, “Synchronous Objects”; “Synchronous Objects, Choreographic Objects, and the Translation of Dancing Ideas,” p. 208; see also Manning, *Always More Than One*, pp. 99–110.

how I could imagine linking dancer interviews and analytic video study of performance to come to an understanding of choreographic structure.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 29. Screenshot of the website *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing*, reproduced.



The website *Synchronous Objects* models *counterpoint* in *One Flat Thing, reproduced* as three interlocking systems: movement material, cues and alignments. Through this research collaboration, Forsythe developed his understanding of counterpoint, from the provisional definition of “kinds of alignments in time,” to “a field of action in which the intermittent and irregular coincidence of attributes between organizational elements produces an ordered interplay.”<sup>28</sup> By further exploring how counterpoint manifests in the case study of *Duo*, and how this changes longitudinally, I will show the importance of creative components—highlighting the role of practice and process.

*Synchronous Objects* was pioneering in many ways—in particular regarding how the project team integrated interview methods with procedures of digital design and computational analysis. The empiricism that I embraced to chart the history of *Duo* drew on the approach of *Synchronous Objects* in deriving “data” from a dance: defining observable features in the choreography, which were systematically catalogued and then studied through new means of linking and comparing these instances in the dance.<sup>29</sup> As in “mixed methods” research, I espoused this pursuit as a process of triangulation,

27 As a dancer consultant for the project *Synchronous Objects*, I made ethnographic field notes as I rehearsed and performed the piece, transcribed interviews with Forsythe and the dancers and helped the team to brainstorm how to visualize counterpoint. I also recorded interviews with the dancers about their roles, as they watched the video footage, providing the content that the animators then encoded and animated.

28 William Forsythe cited in Sulcas, “Watching the Ballett Frankfurt, 1988–2009,” p. 15; Forsythe and Shaw, “Introduction: The Dance.” On *counterpoint*, see section 1.1.2 Choreography, Dance and Counterpoint.

29 See Shaw, “Introduction: The Data”; see also Palazzi, “Introduction: The Objects.”

with qualitative and quantitative methods on equal terms.<sup>30</sup> Rather than focusing on Forsythe's observations, I took my own and those of the dancers as seminal.

My aim was to study the structure and change in *Duo* longitudinally by systematically making annotations—what I could observe, based upon my interviews with the dancers, about what the dancers *do in practice*. From this practice-view of what the dancers are doing in performance, as well as their testimony about what else they could have done, or how the performance could have been different, I began to decipher this choreographic logic—suggesting the importance of entrainment within the choreography and the manner in which dancer interpretation leads to variation.

### 9.2.1 Hypotheses and Questions

To study change and structure in *Duo* longitudinally, I focused on three clusters of questions and hypotheses, centering on the topics of the different *versions* of *Duo*, the *variability* of the work, and the role of *entrainment* therein.

**Versions:** Based upon my fieldwork with the dancers and preliminary study of the archival videos of performances, I had observed two primary choreographic structures of *Duo*—that is, the Ballett Frankfurt version, performed from 1996 to 2004, and the *DUO2015* version since 2015—with an intermediary version during the reconstruction in 2013. Through video annotation, I aimed to become more precise about how these versions related—namely, the extent to which they shared common movement, approaches to interpretation, and so on.

**Variability:** My fieldwork suggested that while *Duo* was variable, aspects endured that constituted the choreography specifically. I predicted that performances would change or adapt as new dancers entered and partnerships shifted. I also expected that the interpretive practice might shift between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. It seemed that the process of *Duo* developing over time was not a linear evolution—but one vacillating with the dancers and touring contexts of production. Through systematic consideration of video records, I hoped to refine these observations.

**Entrainment:** A third hypothesis was that modes of entrainment featured strongly in *Duo's* composition. This is because mutual entrainment—or the sustained attunement to synchronize or rhythmically relate motion and sound production through each other in the setting of dancing—permeated the dancers' testimony of their practice. I predicted that the following matrix of entrainment modes would apply to *Duo*: unison, turn-taking, concurrent motion, solos and breaks. I was uncertain what proportions these modes would take and the extent to which they would vary longitudinally. I aimed to use video annotation to explore this further.

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30 See Johnson et al., "Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research."

### 9.2.2 Procedures

To address these hypotheses, a cross section of archival videos of *key performances* of *Duo* were analyzed, spanning the history of the piece longitudinally (from 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2013, 2015 and 2016).<sup>31</sup> These videos were annotated by myself according to a system of observable properties defined in the following section. Different than a choreographic notation that inscribes the movement of the dancers for the purpose of analysis and preservation, I use the term *annotation* to designate inscription of my observations of select aspects of *Duo's* choreographic structure, as in the secondary annotations of a primary text.<sup>32</sup> My annotations focused on three categories of markings: (1) modes of entrainment, (2) movement material and (3) transitions.

Each key performance was annotated completely using encodings of the terminology (see Appendix J). The data was recorded in a spreadsheet and transferred to a Piece-maker 2 server, allowing for filtering, sorting and visualization (see Fig. 30).<sup>33</sup> To improve accuracy, approximately fifty troublesome data points were error checked with the dancers—through discussions about them. Our work, analyzing and improving this data, is available online.<sup>34</sup>

### 9.2.3 Counterpoint Model

#### Modes of Entrainment

Dance scholar Roslyn Sulcas has observed: “Alignment is in fact a fundamental principle of Forsythe’s work; it is one of the ways that complex—even chaotic—activities on stage are rendered subtly comprehensible.” She defines alignments, after Forsythe, as “moments when the dancers’ movements echo one another in shape, direction, or dynamic.”<sup>35</sup>

Agreeing with the emphasis laid by Sulcas, in my research I explored a model of counterpoint (for *Duo*) foregrounding alignment based on *entrainment modes*. I observed that not only is movement aligned when dancing *Duo*, but there are also rhythmic structuring of movement-breaks: durations of inertia, holding a pose or when the dancers briefly exit the stage. Importantly, the dancer might not rest in the sense of recuperate, as some still-acts may be strenuous to hold.<sup>36</sup> In my model, I explored counterpoint as the general set of permutations of two dancers performing movement and movement-

31 See the Introduction, in the section Key Performances, for explanation of the criteria of the selection process. See also Appendix F, section 2. A cross section method was used, because study of the entire video record was too labor intensive. Complete annotation of the choreography from start to finish was desired and not analysis of excerpts. The quality of the data relied on my expertise as a Forsythe dancer, and could not be automated or distributed to assistants.

32 On dance notation, see the informative introduction: Guest, *Labanotation*, pp. 1–4. Reflecting on annotation process, see Rittershaus et al., “Recording Effect.”

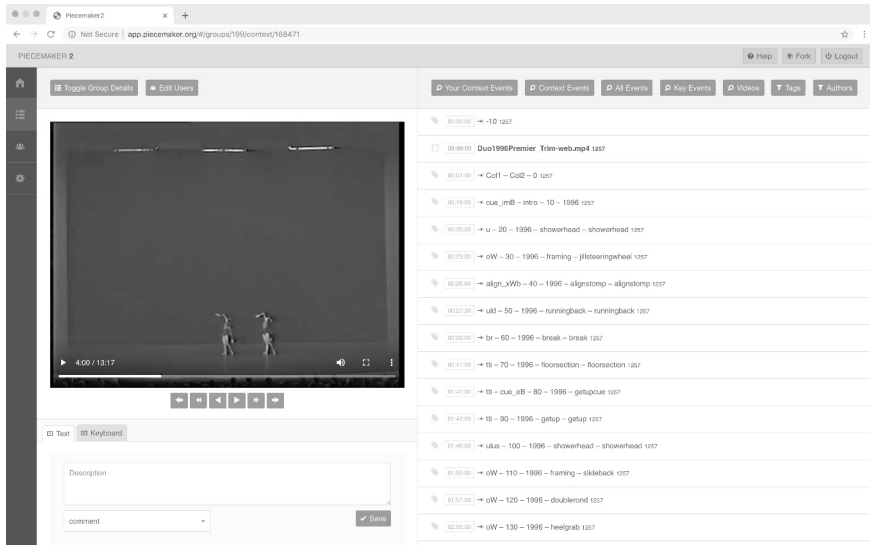
33 On these software developments, see Waterhouse, “I Gave That Cue.”

34 See <https://duo.motionbank.org/>.

35 Sulcas, “Watching the Ballett Frankfurt, 1988–2009,” p. 15.

36 Throughout, I use the term movement and motion interchangeably.

Figure 30. Screenshot of the Piecemaker 2 archive of *Duo* annotations, showing the 1996 key performance and the encoded markings.



breaks in relation to one another at the same time. These permutations are modes of entrainment, spanning:

- Unison:** Dancers performing the same movement synchronously.
- Concurrent motion:** Dancers performing different or related movement at the same time, while attuning to one another's rhythms.<sup>37</sup>
- Solo:** One dancer moves, while the other takes a movement-break or frames the foregrounded mover.
- Break:** Both dancers perform a movement-break.
- Intermittent motion/turn-taking:** The dancers perform intermittent movement—alternating movement and rest, taking-turns. These movements may be identical, related or different.
- Other:** A mode not fitting the above categories.<sup>38</sup>

For the purpose of assessing the validity of how well these categories apply to *Duo*, the additional category named *other* was included. This enabled marking instances of the choreography that did not fall into the categories named above.

37 Forsythe and the dancers call this *counterpoint*.

38 Rhythms superimposed by chance, without the dancers' interaction, would have been in this category. This is a feature of Forsythe's practice of counterpoint more generally, but as I shall show, not pertinent for *Duo*.



### Movement Material

The choreographic structure of *Duo* involves a prescribed sequence of interactions, including passages of structured improvisation. To understand the longitudinal change of this sequence, the movement material was parsed into small units (between 1–10 seconds) and then annotated.<sup>39</sup> The analysis yielded 116 movement ‘building blocks’ in the first 1996 key performance. The subsequent key performances were then annotated chronologically, noting the changes to the existing building blocks and additional elements. This enabled tracking of the genesis of the original elements and the addition of new material chronologically.

The dancers’ practical approach to interpreting the prescribed sequences in each performance was also annotated—subtleties of *how* they enacted the choreography. I named these categories of movement transformation. These features were discovered through studying the videos *with* the dancers.<sup>40</sup> Through this, the following subtypes of transformation were defined:

- Set:** A planned sequence of movements/steps that performers reproduce as accurately as possible in performance.
- Modified:** A sequence in which one movement/step is briefly altered, while preserving the sequence order—that is, a deliberate change made to adjust balance or one aspect of the movement form. These did not affect entrainment between partners and were usually made by one dancer. Some modifications were due to injury.
- Adapted:** A sequence in which many seconds of movements/steps are adjusted while preserving the sequence order—such as changing the movement facing, dynamic, scale, body parts, fragmentation, and so on. Apart from adaptation of solo material, these required interactive negotiation.
- Improvised:** Invention of movement (based upon a task) or an open improvisation inventing movement (without a task or a sequence referent).

Each building block was assessed according to the above scheme, individually for each dancer.

### Transitions: Cues, Prompts, Alignments

Transitions between modes of entrainment are important parts of the choreographic structure of *Duo*. Metaphorically speaking, if you think of the choreography of *Duo* as composed from sections of fabric, then the modes of entrainment describe the different

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39 For this purpose, it was not necessary to divide the sequence into singular movements—chunks or short phrases sufficed. Initially, I named the building blocks using a consistent labeling scheme that mixed the dancers’ and my own terms (such as *goldfinger* and *umpadump*). In the end, this was replaced with numerical identifiers, to enable computational comparison of the elements.

40 For example, watching the key performance from 2015, dancer Riley Watts noted the flexibility of the choreography. Referencing one instance in the archival video, he noted: “Those were always, like playful moments that were improvised. We’re just playing with where it comes from. Like expansions on the material.” At another point, he cautioned: “We never transformed that.” This indicated an Alignment that stayed more regular. Such statements proved insightful to the regularities of practice. Video elicitation with Riley Watts, January 11, 2017.

elastic weaves of the fabric, and the transitions form the seams between the different fabrics. Three forms of transitions were cataloged: *cues*, *prompts*, *Alignment* (short instances of Alignment I designate using the capitalized form of the word to distinguish this from the ongoing process of aligning via entrainment). One could also describe these transitions as choreographed modulations of the performers' intention and attention, on which the choreographic structure relies to take form.

**Cue:** This term is used by Forsythe and the dancers to describe timing signals: usually practiced strategies of communicating timing information in order to initiate moving together. Cues interweave practice, communication, action and ethics. Many, but not all cues are perceivable to a public. To discern these transitions, I relied heavily upon video elicitation with the *Duo* dancers.

Along with annotating when the cues took place, I noted their different mediums: audible breath, stomps, vocalized short phrases and movement itself. I also observed how they vary in their "leadingfollowing," specifically who attunes to whom, or whether the attunement is mutual or hierarchical.<sup>41</sup> In the annotation of cues in *Duo*, it was found that cues may be doubled or have more than one medium; for example, a cue that is both an inhale of breath and movement. It was also possible that two cues are given simultaneously, by both partners. The annotation system was flexible enough to encode these complex instances. Ambiguous cues were also marked, such as when a voice was heard giving a verbal cue, but the speaker could not be identified.

**Prompt:** This term was introduced to name instances when the dancers spoke to each other on stage. These exchanges, which were intended for one's partner and not the audience, were reminders of where one was (such as "new beginning," "first," "snakedress") and sometimes included supportive words (such as "Almost there!").<sup>42</sup> Prompts functioned in a similar way to cues but might be uttered in the midst of *doing* as opposed to a causal signal, as previously distinguished.

**Alignment:** This term is used by Forsythe and the dancers to describe particular instances of aligning. An Alignment is a specific transitional instance of movement that helps the dancers to bind their time and transition entrainment modes: for example, when the *Duo* dancers are performing different movements and then arrive in the same pose, this is recognized as an Alignment. Forsythe and Shaw have described Alignments as "short instances of synchronization between dancers in which their actions share some, but not necessarily all, attributes" such as "analogous shapes, related timings, or corresponding directional flows."<sup>43</sup> In contrast to cues and prompts, which are typically audible communication, Alignments are movements or poses. To use a metaphor, they

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41 Drawing on terminology from Erin Manning, see Lepecki, "From Partaking to Initiating," p. 34.

42 Citations of the dancers: Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018. Riley Watts, videoconference interviews with the author, May 22, 2018. Allison Brown, videoconference interview with the author, May 8, 2018.

43 Forsythe and Shaw, "Introduction: The Dance."

function like joints in carpentry. The design is purposeful but also may take on an aesthetic quality (such as can be seen in the beauty of a dovetail joint). A ‘good’ Alignment, the dancers noted, was often surprising; when it was unexpected to the dancers, they believed it would also be surprising to the audience.<sup>44</sup>

Subcategories of Alignments were also cataloged, distinguishing their form and partner relation. Alignments took the form of taking on the same or related poses, performing the same or related movements, such as stopping or tapping the floor together or in call and response. Their partner relation varied: sometimes they were achieved together; other times one partner or the other would take lead. It was found that for certain tricky Alignments, pre-Alignments were built into the choreography—key information preceding an Alignment, used to synchronize the action. These pre-Alignments can be metaphorically understood as signposts. In *Duo*, pre-Alignments take the form of attention—listening to rhythms preceding the Alignment—to arrive in-sync.

### 9.2.4 Analysis

Two approaches were taken to analyze the annotation markings. First, employing a statistical method, the data was mined to compute the cumulative duration for each annotation category’s markings and graph this information; for example, to answer: How much unison was there? or: How many cues? This also enabled study of the relative proportions, namely: What percentage of the performance was in unison? We gained understanding from this an overview of change and continuity (Tables 4 & 5 and Figs. 31 & 32).

The second approach looked chronologically at the dis/continuity of the annotations, taking a graphical approach. Given the expanse of information we were considering, the online interactive view generally proves more insightful than the limits of the page.<sup>45</sup> For this book, we have included two overviews of this material (Figs. 33 & 34). In these, each staff shows the movement building blocks (numbered dots) vertically, progressing from the beginning of the *Duo* (top) to the end (bottom); some of these components had annotations rich with sub-information, which are marked with double dots.<sup>46</sup> Horizontal lines were added to show continuity and change: rendering continuities (solid line), adjustments (dashed line), and omissions in the order of these elements visible. An adjustment was defined as when a movement element or transition was repeated with variation—such as a unison section being changed to concurrent motion, or a cue delivered in a new way. These markings of discontinuity were made using a computer algorithm, programmed to compare my annotations chronologically and thus come to a more precise state of assessment.

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44 Riley Watts, video elicitation, January 11, 2017.

45 See <https://duo.motionbank.org/>.

46 Note, the time scale is not preserved in this rendering (pertaining to the duration of the segment), just a sequential relation (order).

Table 4. Entrainment modes (percent) of Duo key performances

	1996	1997	2000	2003	2013	2015	2016
<b>Unison</b>	42.5	44.7	46.9	47.6	53.5	34.1	46.0
<b>Concurrent</b>	17.0	16.7	17.0	18.5	22.4	35.1	28.5
<b>Turn taking</b>	22.0	22.7	18.1	16.4	0.7	1.4	2.03
<b>Solo</b>	11.6	9.6	10.2	12.3	13.0	24.6	21.9
<b>Break</b>	5.2	4.6	5.39	3.4	6.1	0.4	0.6
<b>Other</b>	1.8	1.6	2.36	1.75	4.3	4.33	1.04

Table 5. Number of cues, Alignments and prompts of Duo key performances

	1996	1997	2000	2003	2013	2015	2016
<b>Cues</b>	12	15	12	13	19	5	15
<b>Alignments</b>	29	35	30	33	27	34	35
<b>Prompts</b>	1	0	0	1	3	4	1
<b>Total</b>	41	40	42	47	49	43	51

Figure 31. Graph showing relative proportion of entrainment modes in Duo longitudinally.

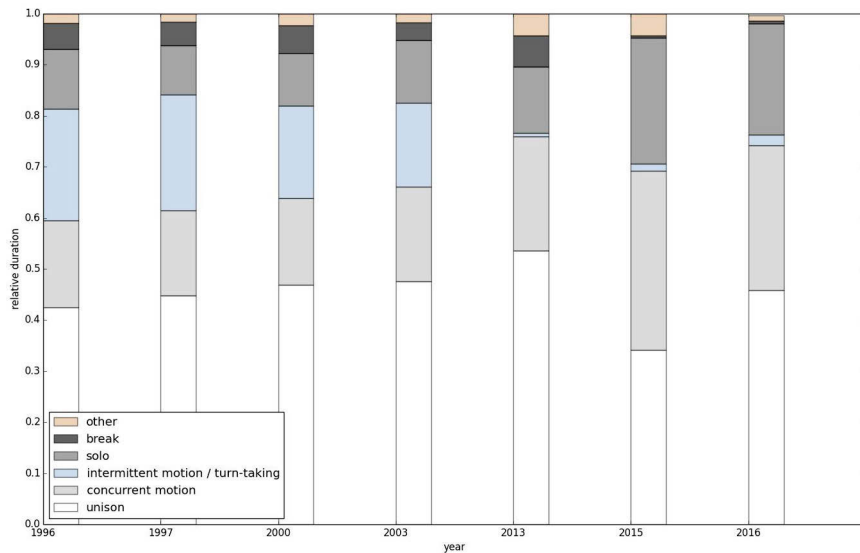
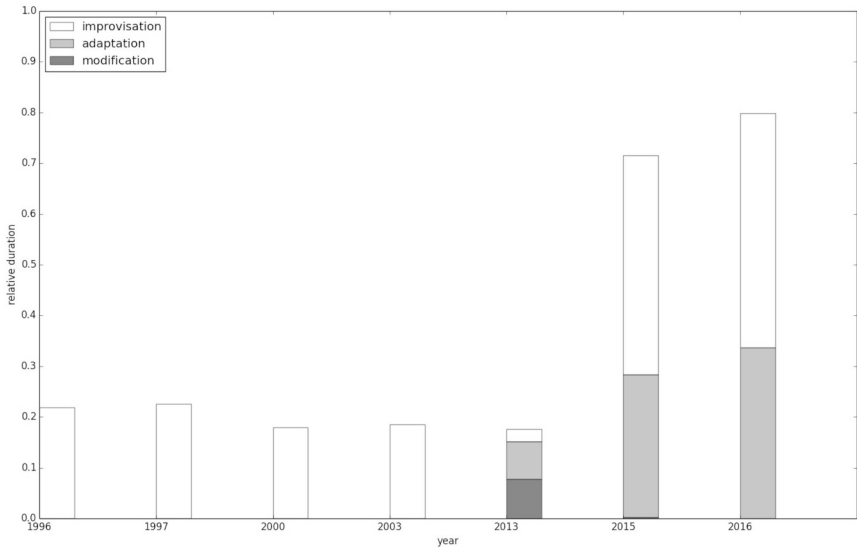


Figure 32. Graph showing duration of movement transformation in *Duo* longitudinally.



### 9.2.5 Conclusions

The statistical and graphical analysis of the annotations, as well as the process of making the annotations themselves, provides an unprecedented inspection of a choreography's longitudinal history, showing *Duo*'s vicissitudes of (dis)continuity. Returning to the clusters of questions and hypotheses regarding *Duo* versions, variability and entrainment, the following conclusions can be emphasized:

**Versions:** The analysis confirmed that despite some dancers' testimony to the contrary, I observed two predominant versions of *Duo*—the Ballett Frankfurt version (1996–2004) and the *DUO2015* version (2015–2016)—with the reconstruction in 2013 serving as an intermediary. Most dancers viewed these versions not as gendered styles but as different interpretations. In my view, they exhibited distinctions between the artistic practices of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company; these are found to modulate with general shifts in Forsythe's work and contemporary dance aesthetics, as discussed below.

The dancers, depending on how and when they participated in *Duo*, had a different assessment of the project overall. Johnson—who was part of the original *Duo* pair and observed Watts/Gjoka performing in 2018—is particularly well positioned to make judgements. In her view:

There aren't eras in this work. Only ongoing explorations that continually connect the infinite possibilities of the ideas within it. It's so clear that these experiences are all

mapped onto each other, in concentric circles and networks of shared embodied ideas across time.<sup>47</sup>

Here Johnson models *Duo* not as a vector, but as a complex of ideas in networking, circular time. Supporting Johnson's view, one of the most surprising findings within my research was that there was more continuity than expected in *Duo*'s movement sequence. The annotation process, and in particular the data shown in Figures 33 & 34, revealed that throughout the different versions of the *Duo* project, the pairs still essentially referenced a commonly agreed upon sequence of interactions with their partner—one that has been passed down from pair to pair. Across its history, this makes *Duo* much more about negotiation and agreement upon a shared movement sequence than I had expected. In other words, an important aspect of the choreography itself is how the dyads *agree* to interpret unison sections and timing choices *together*. In performance, this is discernable in how pairs use signals to communicate and modulate their attunement. Though some strategies of signaling are passed on from pair to pair, these also vary pertaining to each pair's particular language of communication and practiced tactics.

Thus, a surprising finding was that, even though the choreography of *Duo* and *DUO2015* versions may—to outsiders—appear and sound different (with distinctive phrasing, emphasis on ballet technique, rhythm and style of breathing-movement), the dancers are in fact referring to much of the same, inherited unison movement sequence and Alignments. My ethnographic interviews also confirmed that the dancers share a great deal of common information about the movement—even with naming variation and increased explicit focus on sensation within The Forsythe Company. This shows that the *processing of choreography* by the partners (specifically, interpretation of what they have inherited) is a significant part of the development of the piece.

**Variability.** Change in *Duo* varied in degree and kind. The small changes within performance took place in part because of their 'liveness'; as *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson explained: how the structure will “play out on any given night is never the same.”<sup>48</sup> This is because the dancers' bodies are always transforming; additionally, the audience contributes to the performance with their attention and micro-movements. Notably, the context of performance varies, leading to adaptation of the dancers' movement according to the various sizes of stages. The practice of entering into performance is never a perfect routine. In addition to all these elements, variability was also introduced because the dancers valued creativity within their practice of interpretation.

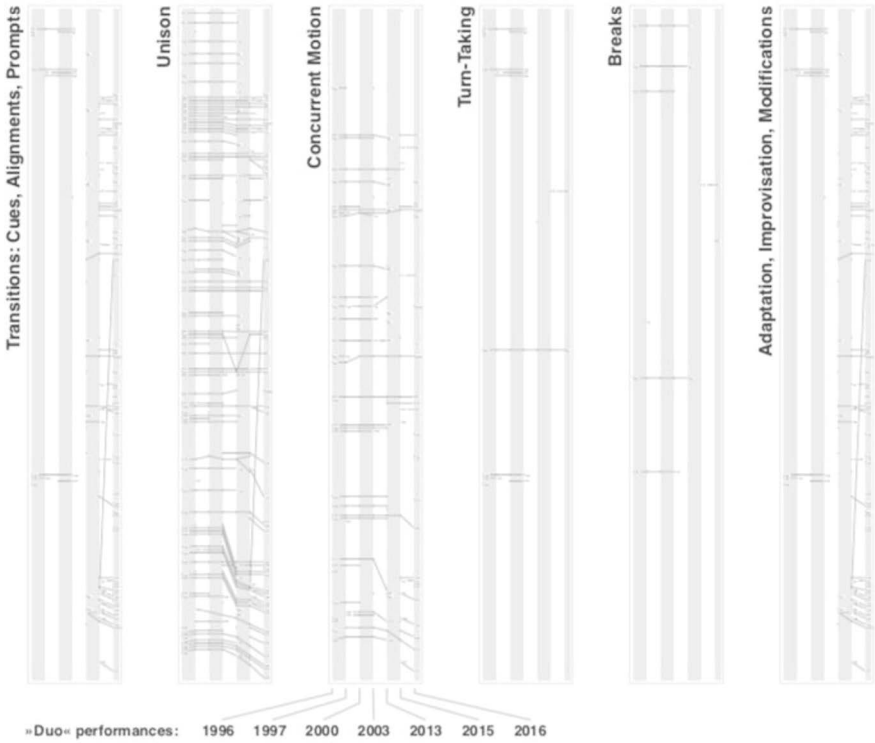
With regard to *Duo*'s variability, the dancers' changing practice of interpretation is particularly salient. The amount of flexible material (that is, modified, adapted and improvised) in *Duo* increased longitudinally: from approximately 20 percent, to almost 80 percent (see Fig. 32). In *DUO2015*, when the dancers referenced a sequence, there was interpretive freedom to adapt or develop the movement sequence—changing level, facing

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47 Johnson, email to the author, September 12, 2021.

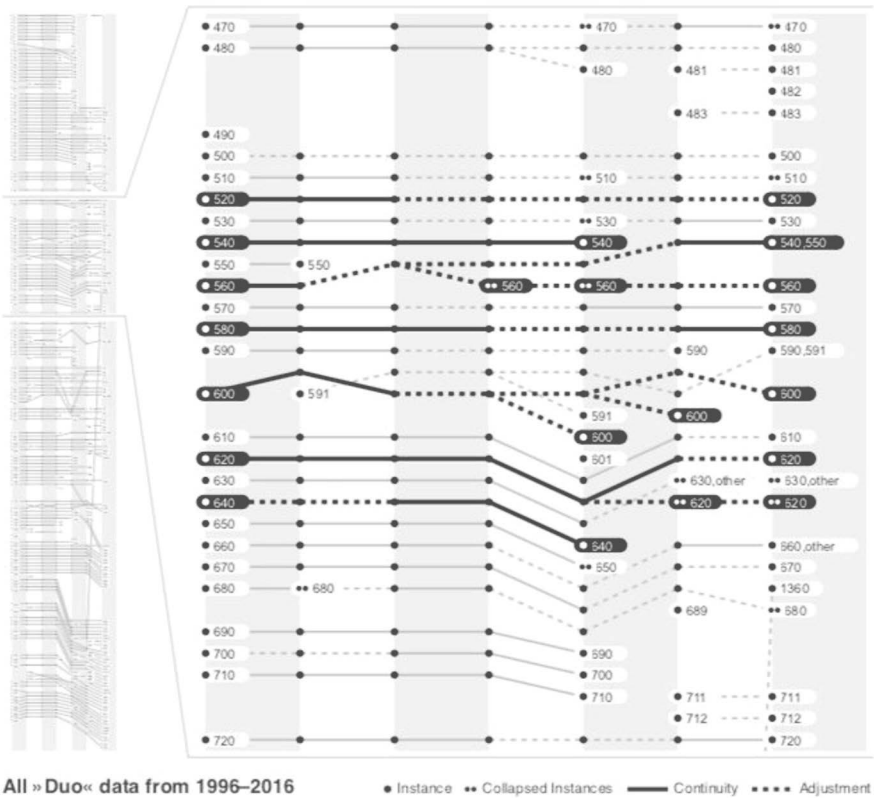
48 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

Figure 33. Overview of change and continuity in *Duo* longitudinally.



and dynamic. While the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* had only one section of improvisation, in *DUO2015* there were more instances of task-based improvisation and also one open improvisation at the beginning of the piece. Generally, these findings are understood to reflect differences between approaches to choreography in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. In the latter, the dancers were less frequently performing set material and more often engaging in relational improvisation, involving real time composition of alignment. These modalities were different from the procedures of Ballett Frankfurt, which are archived in Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*.

Another aspect of change in *Duo* was, as one would expect, the choreographer's explicit structural revisions of the choreography. The proportions of entrainment modes are quite stable in the Ballett Frankfurt version (see Table 4; Fig. 31); they change in 2013, when Forsythe cuts the introductory section. They shift again in 2015, when Forsythe edits *Duo* for the touring program, *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*. For *DUO2015*, a new introduction to the piece is made and many solos are added, lengthening the work. Dancers Watts and Gjoka performed the piece more frequently than any other dancers before them (in 52 cities internationally between April and December 2015), developing a fluency of partnering that enabled cues and transitions to become minimal (see Table 5). They also toured without Forsythe, allowing for the piece's emergence to follow

Figure 34. *Duo* longitudinal data at a glance.

their interpretation practice before an audience, and agency in self-directed rehearsal. Overall, the *Duo* project thus points to different conditions and phases in which the choreographer *and* performers shape a work's manifestation, usually in dialogue with one another.

The changes evident in the charts of *Duo* also reflect the revisions Forsythe made in collaboration with the costume, sound and light designers—which I have highlighted already in section 5.2. Of particular significance is the changing musical composition by Thom Willems. As I have described in section 2.4.1, Thom Willems' initial score for the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* highlighted the dissonance between independently clocked movement, a score for live piano (which was often modified), live acoustic elements and the dancers' breath. *DUO2015* had an even more minimal musical score of extended tone intervals, and greater volume of breathing-movement. *Dialogue (DUO2015)* changed the sonic atmosphere for the piece to a background of bird calls—highlighting the stochastic sounds and their relation to breathing-movement. These contextual elements were significant aspects of the fluctuations of the *Duo* project.



**Entrainment:** Overall, the model of counterpoint—based upon alignment as entrainment modes—had a strong fit to the *Duo* performances, with only between one to four percent of the material laying outside this matrix (see Table 4; Fig. 31). The annotation process suggested that the rhythms within entrainment were pair specific, shifting as new dancers entered the work, and established via consensus.

The proportion of entrainment modes were found to vary between versions, with more changes in entrainment modes and less pure unison in *DUO2015* than in the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo*; that is, there was evidence of greater complexity in the structure of entrainment in *DUO2015*. Possibly this reflects the influence of *Synchronous Objects* (2009), which enabled Forsythe to look at variations in kinds of alignment and take more interest in “intermittent and irregular coincidence” of movement.<sup>49</sup> It may also stem from Forsythe’s tendency to increase the complexity and speed of his choreographies as he comes to understand them—in order to refresh and break *his* own expectations.

The annotation process enabled study of the important movement-breaks within the choreography. In the Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo*, movement-breaks are frequently structural lulls after the dancers descend to the floor. In the 2013 key performance, they take the forms of resetting positions and shorter rests in standing (such as when the dancers catch their breath with hands resting on their knees, like winded basketball players). In the 2015 key performance, there is only one break in which the performers stand outside the light marking the stage. These movement-breaks reflect the general shifts within aesthetics of contemporary dance since the 1990s, in which still-acts and rupture have come to play an increasing role.<sup>50</sup> The structure of *DUO2015* also generally presents the performers as more self-aware in its coding and frame-shifts, allowing for the dancers to play with their status as performers through role-breaking shifts in dynamics.

The charts enable examination of how the modes of entrainment also changed longitudinally. Consistent with the dancers’ testimony that practicing unison together was the central means of learning to dance *Duo*, sections of Alignment and unison exhibit the most continuity throughout all seven key performances; this mean that these are the elements that have remained most consistent and constitutive in this longitudinal history. My observations added to the understanding that practicing unison is the component central to the choreography, even as the complexity of the contrapuntal structure and degree to which the dancers improvise within this structure increases over time. Adaption and improvisation are more prevalent in performances from 2013 onwards, while turn-taking and breaks show up mostly in the early performances prior to 2013. Sections of concurrent motion show a similar overall proportion before and after 2013, but there are almost no connections running across this year, showing counterpoint to be a generator of change. The choreography of *Duo* thus emerges through *processing choreography*, the dancers’ negotiation of movement practices passed on from pair to pair and creatively enacted in the immediacy of each performance context.

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49 Forsythe and Shaw, “Introduction: The Dance.”

50 See Brandstetter, “Still/Motion”; Schellow, *Diskurs-Choreographien*, in particular pp. 154–63.

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This chapter has undertaken an in-depth longitudinal analysis of *Duo*'s movements and sequence. Overall, the chapter has highlighted the potential for new sources and methods of conducting movement analysis in dance studies, blending first-person and third-person perspectives on movement and encompassing digital tools and software to study choreographic histories.

Bringing the lens of Laban Movement Analysis into my ethnographic fieldwork and study of archival videos of *Duo*, Section 9.1 presented a matrix of 18 movement principles that outline the movement style in *Duo*. The analysis has been informed by dance scholar Cynthia Novack's synopsis of the "core movement values" in contact improvisation. My emphasis on *Duo*'s shared and common attention to dynamics has suggested how a Laban approach—which typically focuses on how movement emerges through the individual body—may be developed to look at co-movement. This rubric also specified changes in the *Duo* project's movement over time.

Section 9.2 reported on new digital methods for performance analysis. Drawing from the precedent *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*, I have systematized a vocabulary for the components of *Duo*'s movement sequence and evaluated how these aspects have shifted over time. The analysis considered a cross section of seven key performances of *Duo* (from 1996 to 2016). After conducting *talk-through* interviews with the dancers, my inspection assessed the project's versions, variability and the role of entrainment in the choreographic structure, building on annotation categories such as cues and alignments used previously in the project *Synchronous Objects*. My observations were visualized through statistical and graphical approaches, offering an unprecedented view of one choreography's evolution and change over two decades. In order to reflect critically upon these graphical products, I triangulated to first-person testimony from my fieldwork, questioning the extent to which these images corresponded to the dancers' memories and perspectives.

The boon of this analysis has been discovering that despite the stage elements and movement aesthetic of Ballett Frankfurt and Forsythe Company performances of *Duo* varying significantly, the sequence of movements in *Duo* has been surprisingly well conserved over its history. The partners' *processing of choreography*, that is their creative interpretation of what they have inherited, was a significant factor in the changing appearance of the dance.

A second argument supported by this modeling was the fundamental role of entrainment as alignment. I came to understand *Duo* as a structure of shifting alignment, based upon the constraints of shared knowledge of the choreographic sequence. In contrast to Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, in *Duo* cues were more nuanced, focusing on sensitivity rather than on cause and effect. *Duo* dancers showed great attention and care for one another, bonding intimately and emotionally. The performance videos illustrated that the dancers' interpretation of the duet increasingly emphasized dialogue and play, suggesting the value of improvisation as a means for learning to entrain.

Returning to the testimony of dancer Roberta Mosca with which I began this chapter, I would like to conclude by testing a speculative notion. This is the idea that within Forsythe's ensembles, bodies and counterpoint define "fractal" persons. According to

Chris Fowler, fractal persons come about when: “Parts of a person, and people as parts of a community, may carry the same features as the whole.”<sup>51</sup> We have seen this in Mosca’s testimony, where she describes the sequence of *Duo* as resembling a body—one possessing an anatomy. We have also discovered counterpoint in *Duo* as within bodies, between bodies and between bodies and the specific materiality of the theater. Caspersen confirms: “A company of performers and creators can be seen as a kind of body, and the work that a company creates can be viewed in the same way; as a body that is composed of our thoughts and the differing ways that our individual bodies are thinking.”<sup>52</sup>

The entwinement of persons, bodies and counterpoint gives Forsythe’s repertoire dynamic properties—changing significantly as the artists themselves learn and develop. The concept that I would like to suggest is critical to the sort of organization of *Duo*, being held together and yet plastic towards change, is creativity. In the final part of this manuscript, I turn to *creation* practice.

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51 Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, p. 51.

52 Caspersen, “Decreation,” p. 94.

## **PART III - CREATION**



## Introduction to Part III: Creation

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For me, the Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company was pretty much a continuum. [...] I see it as one line of work. I think the more I am away from it—the more I'm doing my own projects out in the world and you know, being in charge of things—I recognize how unusual the level of (*pause*) constant re-creation is. Constant re-creation that really has a true line of work that everybody is involved in and everybody is thinking about.  
—Dana Caspersen<sup>1</sup>

When the dancers recalled the ensembles' creative process they often lapsed into compelling moments of narration—speaking with fervor, reverence and tenderness—as exemplified by Caspersen's remembrance above. They enjoyed telling me *how* pieces were made and changed. They embellished their stories, knowing that, as a former colleague, I shared their excitement. Recounting their surprises, they explained twists and turns. They laughed, sharing personal fulfillments and disappointments. The intensive labor was engrossing and open-ended. “We were working consistently toward something, with something, around something,” explains Johnson: “That social contract and non-verbal research was pretty extraordinary.”<sup>2</sup>

Their specific proclivities for movement invention differentiated Forsythe dancers from performers in other groups: constituting their perception of bodies, their sense of selves and their facility to interact. Yet I garnered from these testimonies that even more significant was a common sense of choreographic labor—as a processual and relational understanding of emergence. Caspersen calls this collective “thinking” and highlights the embodied components in her writing.<sup>3</sup>

In this section I will explore the practice of *creation* in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company; I will delineate *how* the community cultivated open-ended processes of making and re-making choreographic pieces. Through this labor, the dancers learned to produce organization. They became trained to sense agency through contrapuntal emergence. From firsthand experience, I know that this very specific sort of creative labor was transformative, changing how one sensed value between people, materials and

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1 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018.

2 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

3 See Caspersen, “Decreation,” in particular p. 94.

contexts. By this means, the ensemble cooperatively produced dance pieces with precise aesthetic properties and bodies with special proclivities: bodies of work (repertoire) and human bodies (dancers, choreographer, team) entwining constitutively. In bringing this labor into focus in this section, I aim to decipher this activity and make seminal points clear for the reader. For dance studies, I deliver a practice-focused account of choreographic making, of which there are unfortunately few in the literature. Without trying to reduce *Duo's* creative process to a singular narrative that would belie its genuine complexity, I aim to reconstruct the entwined perspectives of the participants and cogently draw out their meaning for the reader.

My introduction to creation practices in Section 4.5 has already highlighted how phases of *creation* interwove within the array of the dancers' institutionalized practices—infusing training and rehearsing. The term *creation* is native to these ensembles, where it is a synonym for making, choreographing or devising new dances. For example, the word “creation” designated a rehearsal in which a new work was being made; the process of being “in creation” meant making a new piece. As an American dancer arriving to join the Ballett Frankfurt in 2004, the usage of the term “creation” within this community was understandable to me, but not familiar. Within my history, “making,” “choreographing,” and “composing” had been more common vocabularies.<sup>4</sup> Dance scholars also use the terms “devising.”<sup>5</sup>

The methodology of choreography—of making and redefining dances—is of primary interest in the field of dance studies. Lack of access to sources, to the private and often fragile process of rehearsals, makes this still an understudied field—though there is a growing abundance of new media online that provide access to choreographic techniques and knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The scholarship on Forsythe's choreographic practice relies extensively on interviews with the choreographer and Caspersen, the dancers' writing and Forsythe's research projects documenting his methodology.<sup>7</sup> The ethnographic accounts of Wulff and Vass-Rhee, based on their firsthand observations, as well as the writings of dramaturg Heidi Gilpin, are outstanding in this respect. The creative process they witness is far from linear. Wulff's study of the creation of *Sleepers Guts* (1996) in the Ballett Frankfurt describes the intensive pressure of “changes” and the contribution of technology within Forsythe's process. Wulff writes:

The entire work process was defined by changes. Dancers, music and choreographic sections were taken out of the production by Forsythe as a matter of course, and some

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4 I suspect that within multilingual European dance contexts, the term *creation* is used because of the commonality between the English (*creation*) and Romance languages: French (*création*), Spanish (*creación*), Italian (*creazione*). Initially, I was hesitant to adopt this expression, which I associated with cosmology (i.e., the creation of the universe), mythology (creation myths), and religious belief (creationism). But after acclimatizing to the choreographic culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, it became second nature.

5 See Butterworth, “Too Many Cooks?”

6 See the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography.

7 See in particular Boenisch, “Decreation Inc.”; Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 51–73. Siegmund, “The Space of Memory”; Sulcas, “William Forsythe: Channels for the Desire to Dance”; Spier, “Inside the Knot That Two Bodies Make”; “Engendering and Composing Movement”; “A Difficult and Lovely Work.”

put in again and taken out again. Stuck in the creativity block that seems to be a necessary phase in all artistic (as well as intellectual) projects, the voyage from chaos to order was not over when the day of the premiere came. The production was still in progress, and it would take a number of performances before it suddenly came together.<sup>8</sup>

Vass-Rhee—relying on her longstanding insider position as a dramaturg with The Forsythe Company—demonstrates that the ensemble’s methodology does not rely solely on methods of movement invention, but also on cultivating and choreographing the dancers’ and audience’s perception.<sup>9</sup> Based on retrospective analysis of The Forsythe Company’s process making the piece *Whole in the Head* (2010), she underscores the importance of collaboration, noting the dancers’ “complicity” and how Forsythe deliberately attends to communal aspects.<sup>10</sup> Gilpin, interpreting the creation of *Limbs Theorem* (1990), demonstrates how Forsythe’s methods of movement generation employ iteration, chance and malfunction: “a process whose failures offer up previously unanticipated possibilities.”<sup>11</sup> We can gather from these accounts that Forsythe’s complex choreographic process proliferates authorship and instates a creative field of action, beyond one person’s comprehension and control.

On the whole, Forsythe scholars have foregrounded the collaborative role of the dancers in the choreographic process, observing the decentralization and added responsibility of dancers within the labor.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have also considered the influence of Laban and architectural thinking on movement invention,<sup>13</sup> and the importance of practiced strategies of improvisation.<sup>14</sup> Forsythe is known for the complexity of dramaturgical sources that may influence the choreographic process, making the work according to Vass-Rhee a sort of “distributed cognition” involving the dancers’ “danced dramaturgies.”<sup>15</sup> *Duo*, with its focus on the microcosm of moving together, helps us in particular to look at how cooperation upon movement took place and changed over time.

My contribution to this literature is the richness of a dancer’s case study analysis: adding description that follows one creation from its start until 2016—across iterations

8 See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, p. 159; following the creation see *ibid.*, pp. 157–60.

9 Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*.

10 Vass-Rhee, “Schooling an Ensemble,” p. 221.

11 Gilpin, “Aberrations of Gravity,” p. 125.

12 Sulcas, “William Forsythe: Channels for the Desire to Dance,” p. 55; Sulcas, “William Forsythe. The Poetry of Disappearance and the Great Tradition”; Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” pp. 13–15; see also Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” pp. 140–42.

13 See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 51–71; Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*, pp. 47–56; Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” pp. 138–39; Lampert, *Tanzimprovisation*, pp. 192–95; Baudoin and Gilpin, “Proliferation and Perfect Disorder.” As a dancer educated in Labanotation, I can testify that in my work as a dancer with Forsythe, I did not encounter Laban terminology, symbols or methods. Nor did I engage with the media or tasks from *Improvisation Technologies*. This is evidence of change in Forsythe’s methodology and a gap in the scholarship regarding Forsythe’s later methods, which have primarily been researched by Vass-Rhee and myself.

14 Lampert, *Tanzimprovisation*. See also Forsythe, *Improvisation Technologies*; Kaiser, “Dance Geometry.”

15 Cf. Nugent, “William Forsythe, *Eidos: Telos*, and Intertextual Criticism,” see pp. 26–27; see also Vass-Rhee, “Distributed Dramaturgies,” in particular pp. 90–94.



spanning over two decades. Differently than Wulff and Vass-Rhee, I focus explicitly on the dancers' accounts of working with the choreographer, from my position of having elicited this peer-to-peer testimony. I also link analysis of the initial phase of making *Duo* with my review of the processes of *re-creation* through which *Duo* continued its creative proliferation. Recognizing that each creative process, like each piece, was unique, I carefully generalize to explicate facets of the labor and its aesthetics of production that could be useful for comparative study.

My choice to highlight *creation* is thus motivated because of its central importance to the ethos of the *Duo* project and its occupational culture; it was not because of the ubiquity of the term and its central place in capitalism,<sup>16</sup> which Andreas Reckwitz diagnoses as both a "wish" and "imperative."<sup>17</sup> In my writing, I significantly choose to position myself aside from genius clichés—understandings of creativity that have themselves already been critically worked through and re-thought in scholarly literature on creativity in anthropology, psychology, sociology and organizational studies as well as in dance and performance studies.<sup>18</sup> Rudi Laermans concurs about contemporary dance: "In line with the increasingly predominant collaborative work ethic, artistic heroism or an overly glorifying approach towards individual artists is generally dismissed as an out-dated remnant of modernism."<sup>19</sup>

The "genius" label is however common in Forsythe's reviews and the popular press. Peggy Phelan observes that it even influences theoretical discussion.<sup>20</sup> Though Forsythe's dancers occasionally use the word *genius*, the term did not appear once in my fieldwork notes or interviews with the artists.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, I wished to understand how the dancers and Forsythe worked together to create and re-create *Duo*, and how

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16 Cf. Florida, *The Rise of The Creative Class*.

17 Reckwitz, *The Invention of Creativity*, p. 5.

18 Anthropologist Karin Barber writes: "The idea that innovation and creativity are necessarily the results of departures from convention by gifted individuals has also been comprehensively revised." See Barber, "Improvisation and the Art of Making Things Stick," p. 33. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes: "Therefore, creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context. It is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon." See Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, p. 23. In organizational studies, Neil Thompson summarizes: "Scholars adopting a relational ontology of organizational creativity have shifted attention away from a preoccupation with individual minds towards that which is enacted, emergent, shared, unpredictable and contingent." Thompson, "Imagination and Creativity in Organizations," p. 245. As developed at length in Part I, Howard Becker dispels the notion that an artifact is produced solely by the intentions of one person. See Becker, *Art Worlds*.

19 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 352.

20 See Phelan, "Performing Questions, Producing Witnesses," pp. 10–11. For example, in a recent *New York Times* review from 2019: "On Thursday, when Mr. Forsythe came out to bow, he smiled sheepishly and had to be pushed forward. He looked not like a *genius* or a scourge but like a happy man." Emphasis (*genius*) mine. Seibert, "Review: William Forsythe Brings a New Playlist to Boston," p. 2. See also the editor's introduction in Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, p. 1.

21 Caspersen, for example writes: "[Forsythe] has a joyous physical *genius* and an extraordinarily fluid and ungrasping mind in his working, which allows both the sublime and the grotesque to move through him. He trusts himself, but he never assumes that he knows." Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," p. 39. Emphasis (*genius*) mine.

this understanding of their practices could give a deeper sense of what choreography entailed.

The approach I took to answering my questions about creative process cycled from my ethnographic analysis to readings on creativity within social anthropology. These texts outside of dance studies were appropriate reference for my concerns, as they consider constitutive interplays of sociality, materials, economies and ownership. These studies of creativity have dispelled the notion that creativity is one essence—significantly, creativity is shown to take many modes.<sup>22</sup> Overturning some lingering approaches, the process of making has been demonstrated to be far more complex than materializing a preexisting idea of form—the so-called “hylomorphic” model of Aristotle. Rather, anthropologist Tim Ingold advocates seeing making as a generative emergence, in which there is interplay of relations, forces and materials.<sup>23</sup>

Comparing modes of creativity across Melanesia and Euro-America, anthropologist James Leach has interrogated “how the concept of intellectual property is embedded in a matrix of Euro-American thinking, in suppositions about being and doing, subjects and objects, agency and personhood.”<sup>24</sup> In the Euro-American understanding of creative authorship he finds there is a presumption that persons are creative and things are not—and that persons can be separated from things. In Melanesian communities, in a relational way similar to the sorts of bodies that Dana Caspersen describes, people and property are instead multiply authored and amalgamated. Ingold elucidates further: creativity is not “an internal property that *resides* at all, or that either persons or things *possess*, whence it causes ‘effects’ in their vicinity.”<sup>25</sup> In my view, *creation* in Ballet Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company names a sort of process where attunement to potential contributes novelty and change. Drawing from process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, Ingold concludes that creativity can be better understood through Whitehead’s concept of *conrescence*—in which there is “continual formation.”<sup>26</sup> Conrescence as a “growing together” and “creative advance.”<sup>27</sup>

Whitehead views creativity as generic to every event unfolding: part of nature, life and the buzzing of its creatures. Creative is not an aesthetic adjective used to designate certain events or people as more or less creative. It is process itself, which Whitehead defines as an ultimate fact of the universe—as ultimate as the tension between the many and the one. Creativity he explicates as “the principle of *novelty*,” and conrescence, as the “production of novel togetherness.”<sup>28</sup> For Whitehead, creativity is not

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22 See Leach, “Modes of Creativity.”

23 On hylomorphic thinking, see Ingold, *Making*, p. 37. Ingold writes about making a handaxe: “This is not an imposition of form on matter but a bringing out of forms, more topological than geometrical, that are latent in the variations of the material itself, in its energetic lines of tension and compression. [...] to borrow the words of Deleuze and Guattari once again, it is a question of ‘surrendering’ to the material and then ‘following where it leads.’” *Ibid.*, p. 45.

24 Leach, “Modes of Creativity,” p. 152.

25 Ingold, “Introduction Part I: Modes of Creativity in Life and Art,” p. 52.

26 *Ibid.*

27 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 236; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 21.

28 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 21 (italics in the original). Isabelle Stengers qualifies that in the case of Whitehead: “creativity, which is neutral, is not to be celebrated.” Stengers, *Thinking with*

something that people or things possess. Rather: “Each task of creation is a social effort, employing the whole universe.”<sup>29</sup> Importantly—different than other practice theorists—for Whitehead, the social is not based on a sense of self that is ambitious or competitive.<sup>30</sup> Overall, Whitehead’s philosophy, like the *Duo* dancers’, is optimistic. For Forsythe dancers, *creation* might not always improve or evolve a performance, but their efforts will continue to spiral around and reinvestigate emergent and contextual possibilities—and they view this as a good and worthy way to live life.

Through conjoining performance and creativity, the dancers’ work is performative in the sense meant by Judith Butler, as a practice that is always refashioning: repeating with difference.<sup>31</sup> In the article “Problematizing Performance” (1998), Edward Schieffelin observes the interrelationship of the terms *creative*, *improvisatory* and *performativity* in anthropology. He deciphers that with practice theory’s focus on the regular and habitual aspects of practice as well as their contextual improvisatory character (Bourdieu), when the term *performativity* was brought into anthropology, it was advocated to examine at the edges of practice that were not just regular and habitual. In his words:

The relation between performance and practice turns on this moment of improvisation: performance embodies the *expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of practice*. The italicized expression here could stand as our definition of performativity itself. [...] performativity is located at the creative, improvisatory edge of practice in the moment it is carried out—though everything that comes across is not necessarily consciously intended.<sup>32</sup>

This philosophy resonates with the testimonies of Forsythe dancers and their specific sense for bodily creativity and relation, enabling improvisation. These dancers even advocate that their learned attunement to creativity can be applied not only to performance projects but to other ventures (whether conflict resolution, designing a café, or landscape gardening—to name some of the recent projects that the dancers have invested in).

Discerning how the dancers’ practice creating and re-creating *Duo* cultivates a performativity of creation—relying on conventions, beliefs and practices—will fill the following two chapters. In particular, the relationality of *Duo*’s creative process is seminal and generative. These are not relations that exist between *fixed* entities but relations contingent and emergent to processes and processual bodies, *becoming* through creative activity. The relations are also between people and things: with the stage walls, the

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Whitehead, p. 258. In this chapter, Stengers discloses Whitehead’s creativity with regard to Kant, Deleuze and the question of God; see *ibid.*, pp. 254–76. Whitehead’s creativity coheres the past, present and future, and is conditioned by the past; Deleuze’s view is more a break or rupture with the past. On differences between Deleuze and Whitehead’s notions of creativity, see Robinson, “The Event and The Occasion.”

29 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 223.

30 Compare to Goffman; See Schieffelin, “Problematizing Performance,” p. 195.

31 See Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.”

32 Schieffelin, “Problematizing Performance,” p. 199 (italics in the original).

dance floor and the distant piano.<sup>33</sup> Illustrating these relational components through my analysis of the case study should help make this cooperation comprehensible.

Notably, in the writing that follows I will distinguish between the key concepts of cooperation and collaboration. I understand collaboration to be when people work together to achieve a mutual goal, sharing interest in and ownership of the outcome. Collaborative projects, by contrast, are more democratic, involving equitable decision-making, authorship and responsibility: the artists co-initiate and revise this shared goal. In my view, a dance-devising project—in which activities vary from collaboration to cooperation—is not, in sum, a collaborative project, and the discourse on Forsythe's practices has largely disregarded this. Forsythe's practice of making dances in Ballet Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company typically did not involve sharing decision-making on the final outcome of performance. It also required differentiation between the tasks of the choreographer and the dancers, as I shall show for *Duo*. For that reason, I prefer to use the term to *cooperation* to describe this project. I understand *cooperation* to be when people work together in a distributed fashion, in which their interests and responsibility within the project may be different, yet together they make "an exchange in which the participants benefit from the encounter."<sup>34</sup>

As noted by dance scholar and sociologist Rudi Laermans, by 2005 collaboration was an "omnipresent buzzword" within the Flemish dance world, in part because *collaboration* had "succeeded 'conceptuality' as one of the key signifiers in European contemporary dance, thus solidifying a change in the field's self-understanding, away from performance-as-text or the art-work-as-artefact to performing as collective labour or joint artistic work."<sup>35</sup> Studying the creation of the piece *Verklärte Nacht* by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker<sup>36</sup> in 1995, Laermans considers the paradoxes of the "semi-directive mode" of choreography; he observes the dancers are not docile facilitators, but rather "co-create" material for and with the choreographer, who then makes the final decisions.<sup>37</sup>

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33 The way that I develop the concept of *relation* here takes influence from anthropologists Marilyn Strathern and James Leach. The concept of relations pervades the language of anthropology, from the realm of relatives/kin to the broader field of social relations involving humans, animals, ecologies, things, materials and places. As noted by Marilyn Strathern generally, and pertinent to *Duo*, relations may both connect/link/merge as well as split/separate/divide; see Strathern, "Kinship as a Relation," p. 48. Relations occur not only between humans, but also materials, media and contexts. Relations may also vary between modes: from relations produced through bringing together/separating entities to relations that are constitutive of the entities themselves. Discussing the difficulty of translation of the term *relation* into English, Strathern distinguishes between marked (mode 1) relations and unmarked (mode 2) relations: Mode 1 is relations external to pre-existing terms. Mode 2 are relations constitutive of the terms themselves. See Strathern, "Re-making Knowledge," p. 11. In my writing on *Duo*, I emphasize mode 2 relations. See also Leach, "Kinship and Place," pp. 213–14. I am grateful to Leach for these suggestions and references.

34 See Sennet, *Together*, p. 5.

35 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 20, p. 33. See also Ruhsam, *Kollaborative Praxis*; Basteri et al., *Rehearsing Collectivity*; Kunst, "Prognosis on Collaboration"; Cvejic, "Collectivity? You mean Collaboration."

36 De Keersmaeker, like Forsythe, is a contemporary dance choreographer with high international status and reputation. She has worked with her ensemble Rosas in Brussels since 1983.

37 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 295.

He finds: “My conversations show that within the world of contemporary dance, performers expect to be given the chance to say ‘I’ or to singularize their potentials and to become co-authors in their own right.”<sup>38</sup> What is paradoxical for Laermans, is how the dancers are *dependent* on the choreographer to do so.

Overall, Laermans takes a more critical view than I have of Howard Becker’s sociological theory of art worlds. He radically promotes the view that scholars should not omit study of the specifics of composition and their “immanent logics,” through which the core members of art worlds interact.<sup>39</sup> Within these logics of practice, he suggests there may be explanation of why artistic investment produces feelings of expression—particular to bodies that are singular, moments that are singular, and histories that net them in links and chains. He finds: collaborators discover “the always contextually embedded, at once partially realized and still virtual potential to co-create.”<sup>40</sup>

The subsequent two chapters return to close review of the *Duo* case study. Chapter 10 reconstructs the rehearsals in which *Duo* was developed in 1996, studying the factors shaping the emergence of the piece and the dancers’ memories thereof. Chapter 11 explores the processes shaping the transformation of *Duo* as a project from 1996 until 2016. Through interpreting the testimonies of Forsythe and the dancers and examining existing archival video of rehearsals, I show how the practice of re-creation defines the continual emergence of the choreography. The reader will finally arrive through this concluding section at a rich practical understanding of the dancers’ activity and their experience of the choreographic.

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38 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 387 (*italics in the original*).

## Chapter 10: Creating *Duo* (1996)

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*Figure 35. Video still of the first rehearsal of Duo, January 2, 1996. From left to right: Jill Johnson, William Forsythe and Regina van Berkel.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

The first archival video—grainy in quality and dated January 2, 1996—lurches directly into a rehearsal already in process. William Forsythe, wearing loose fitting grey sweatpants and sweatshirt, is developing a sequence of movement, repeating an action until it seems known or recognizable to him. The rehearsal setting is the theater foyer of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt*, indicating that this is a makeshift rehearsal taking place outside of Ballett Frankfurt's two studios. The room is quiet, Forsythe's voice is soft.

“Wait a sec,” he says.<sup>1</sup> Near to the choreographer, two female dancers pause: Canadian dancer Jill Johnson and Dutch dancer Regina van Berkel; at that time, both in their mid-twenties. As Forsythe resumes his movement, the women continue to catch the movements coming out of him—mimicking and repeating. Forsythe directs his gaze to the camera and asks, “Are you going?” confirming that their movements are being recorded. Together, he and the dancers form a constellation of three, all facing the same direction. Forsythe is in the center and the women flank him, slightly behind on either side. The triangular formation gives the dancers equal proximity to the choreographer so they can both comfortably see and study his movement. After a couple of tries, he seems to understand something and begins to teach: “So you go here . . .,” he begins.

This initial introduction to the process of making *Duo* helps to orient the ethnographic reconstruction that follows in Section 10.4. My purpose is to provide—primarily for dance scholarship—a rich, chronological account of making choreographic work, foregrounding reflection upon the process of the dancers.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, my intent is to define aspects contributing to our growing understanding of the choreography of *Duo*, through looking at how this choreography was initially produced via *creation* practices. The cluster of concepts emerging in this section link creation, choreography and dance, with the terms: *potentiality*, *emergence*, *becoming* and *process*—which I try to make understandable through example.

The tone of this scholarship is tender, reflecting “closeness.” Close implies not only near in proximity but sensitively seeking understanding of what is meaningful within these interactions, as is fundamental in ethnographic study.<sup>3</sup> Interpreting the records of this process chronologically, my writing brings the reader intimately into the studio and near the stage—highlighting what I can perceive, based on my years of making

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1 Citations from the Ballett Frankfurt archival video labeled: 1996 01 02 A. All citations in this paragraph from the first minute of the tape.

2 Notably, such accounts are still lacking. The public/private division of performance/rehearsal has left the *actual* process of choreographing an under studied field by dance scholars, though there are increasing formats enabling choreographers to share and document their own work: see Blades and Meehan, *Performing Process*. Some examples are provided in the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography. Scholarly studies analyzing the making of a specific choreography from start to finish include the following: The dancer and anthropologist team Robert Maiorano and Valerie Brooks followed George Balanchine making the piece *Mozartiana* (1981); see Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*. Rudi Laermans has studied choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker making the work *Verklärte Nacht* (1995); see Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 293–310. Using augmented video-recording apparatuses, in conjunction with ethnographic live observation, there are two pioneering studies. The first, by a team led by cognitive scientist David Kirsh, analyzed a creation by Wayne McGregor in 2009; see Kirsh et al., “Choreographic Methods for Creating Novel, High Quality Dance.” The second, by a team of dance scholars and technologists, used the digital software Piecemaker to study the making of *Effect* (2019) by choreographer Taneli Törmä; see Rittershaus et al., “Recording *Effect*.” A final example is Katarina Kleinschmidt’s praxeological study of rehearsals—through multiple examples of contemporary dance—which focuses on knowledge production as opposed to the rehearsal/performance split, see Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*. The extreme diversity of these projects illustrates that making dance is interesting to scholars in many different fields, yet it remains a young area of study, without a common foundational discourse.

3 Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, pp. 1–4.

pieces in *The Forsythe Company*. Passing back and forth between ethnographic reflection and creative immersion, I allow my perception of the creative potential within this process to impact my writing. Points of analytic reflection expand into footnotes and overflow into my conclusion. The combination of these text types serves to reconstruct a complicated nexus of activity. My sources and process of analysis warrant further discussion for the critical reader to comprehend how this knowledge was produced, as defined below.

## 10.1 Sources and Methods for Studying the Creation of *Duo*

This analysis of the creation process involved in making *Duo* draws from interviews with *Duo* dancers Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel, choreographer William Forsythe, and the study of archival videos of the rehearsals while making *Duo*. These videos were made by archivist Nicholas Champion for use within the rehearsal process, as well as in anticipation of the value of this documentation to future dancers and scholars.<sup>4</sup> The window that they offer onto the team's process is exceptionally rich, though the single perspective it offers misses moments outside the camera's perspective of the studio (in dressing rooms, corridors, backstage, and so on). To emphasize the restorative nature of this fieldwork, I label it a *reconstructive ethnography*.

Accuracy and attention to detail were essential to this writing process, fashioned to reflect the *logic of practice* within Ballett Frankfurt/*The Forsythe Company*. All citations in this chapter are transcriptions from the archival videos, or when noted, a specific interview. Because of my interest in the relational components of creative process, especially how movement and ideas might be socially distributed, my analytic process honed in on these aspects. It focusses on tracing the relations between the dancers, Forsythe, the video, their notebooks, the spaces and my body, as an active observer watching the video tapes over two decades later. I used a form of "thick description" to write fieldwork notes that were then analyzed and edited.<sup>5</sup> Since my view was predisposed—knowing what

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4 Nicholas Champion was a British dancer in the Ballett Frankfurt (1984–1992). From 1992–2005 he was responsible for archiving the team's rehearsals and performances. He is well known to audiences for his role as the 'man with the megaphone' in Forsythe's ballet *Artifact*. Champion also took meticulous handwritten notes as he was filming, which are in storage and will be included in Forsythe's official archive. Champion recalls, "I knew that Bill's work was very, very important not just for the next premiere we were working towards, but for the development of our art form, and I thought that sometime later this material might be needed, not just by Bill. I filmed everything [...] at the time, I couldn't tell what would be especially important ten years later." Nicolas Champion, email to author, October 3, 2019. The contribution of film technology to Ballett Frankfurt's choreographic process was pioneering. According to dancer Regina van Berkel, in the 1990s the company was a "highly technological" environment. In addition to the way that video was customarily used in rehearsals, van Berkel would sometimes take home the "video viewing machines" to study the footage at night. Regina van Berkel, interview with author, Zürich, May 5, 2017. While Wulff notes the widespread usage of performance video in her study of ballet companies in the mid 1990s, to my knowledge, producing daily film archives of rehearsals was uncommon. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 155–57.

5 On "thick description," see Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3–30.



*Duo* would become—I practiced noticing what was occurring and trying to understand the logic of the unfolding practice, as opposed to purely looking back upon what was formative. This helped me to appreciate the plane of composition, to decipher forces in the making; I was looking not only for *what* was being done, but *why* and *how*.

The methodological approach that I have taken intermixes documentation, reconstructive ethnographic observation and analysis. My description in section 10.4 acts as a “literary evocation,” drawing the reader into particular events chosen with regard to my research questions.<sup>6</sup> In this I draw strongly from two literary models: First, re-creating the experience of the rehearsals for the reader in the present tense *as if* I were in the room with dancers—I take this model from Maiorano and Brooks’ approach to inscribing the creative process of choreographer George Balanchine.<sup>7</sup> Second, in fragmenting this narrative—intermixing the chronical with transcriptions from interviews with the dancers—I borrow from the style of writing developed by Loïc Wacquant in *Body & Soul* (2006). Sensuously, I evoke the activities and spaces of rehearsal, with attention to modes of sensation that the dancers have described in their memories. The documentation is, of course, selective, bringing out key episodes from each rehearsal. These highlighted instances help to illustrate the general flow or exceptions through which the work must be rethought. Drawing from the interviews, I prioritize inclusion of the dancers’ memories, using the archival videos to contribute my own observations to the events they emphasize. This involves filling gaps about what the people in the rehearsals are doing, based on my knowledge of the actual spaces and prior work with Forsythe—for example, my practical knowledge of the scale of each room and location of elements such as the mirror and tech booth.

My method of video analysis involved an ethnographic practice that I named *rewind/shifting attention*. Shifting my attention toward the dancers in the video, I observed what they were doing. Rewinding and shifting my attention to Forsythe, I examined how he was engaging with the field around him, and how decisions were being taken. Rewinding and shifting my attention to the tools involved, I discerned how these objects and traces allowed *Duo* to be constructed. Pausing and reviewing my interview notes, I tried to piece together what the dancers remembered in relation to what I was observing. This iterative practice of shifting attention helped me to critically reflect upon how the participants initiated, molded, gazed upon and judged the piece taking form—deconstructing the “attention regime” with my own mobile focus.<sup>8</sup> In these shifts, which would be different in live fieldwork, I concurred that the creativity of *Duo* was happening within a complex social and material interplay; that the stakes were shifting within each new rehearsal with the impending deadline of the premiere.

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6 On “literary evocation,” see Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, pp. 7–8.

7 See Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine’s Mozartiana*.

8 Compare to Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 302–5.

## 10.2 Between Dancers and Choreographers

Writing with an ‘insider’ view, dancer Dana Caspersen’s descriptions of creative process in Ballett Frankfurt provide lucid examples of these complicated journeys—showing this contingent interplay of people, ideas, materials, movement, media and traces. Caspersen speaks reflectively about the roles of the dancers and Forsythe, giving insight into a number of pieces.<sup>9</sup> From these accounts, a general outline of the ensembles’ creative process can be made, which is a useful background for reflecting upon the case study of *Duo*; three levels can be assigned from her testimony, as follows:

The first—what Caspersen calls a “traditional fashion” of making choreography—is with “Bill creating all the movement and the structure.”<sup>10</sup> In this modus, the dancers are respected and participatory interpreters of this movement, often building partnering and group works under Forsythe’s supervision. By using the word “traditional,” Caspersen acknowledges an approach that is widespread in European and American practices of making choreography in which the choreographer’s body is understood to be the source of invention, and his or her knowledge and vision must be transferred to the group. Within this, the choreographer has considerable authority and is the indisputable author of the work.

Caspersen names the second modus as when Forsythe’s movement serves as a basis for improvisation in performance. In this case, the dancers contribute richly through decision-making and the risk of real time improvisation on stage.

The third mode that Caspersen identifies is when “Bill developed the key parameters of an event”—that is, when Forsythe devised and distributed methods for creating movement and systems for structuring it.<sup>11</sup> In this enhanced democratic situation, the dancers created within frames and Forsythe took the final decisions to bring the work together. Given Forsythe’s position as editor, it was rare that dancers achieved co-authorship with equal decision-making on the piece’s content, form and philosophy. Caspersen and Forsythe’s collaborations—for example on the film *From a Classical Position* (1997)—do exemplify this, and warrant particular analysis given the overlapping of personal and professional ties.<sup>12</sup>

*Duo*’s process is an example of a “traditional” creation, to borrow Caspersen’s designation, in which Forsythe manifests the movement on the first day of rehearsal. The dancers’ cooperation molds and shifts the movement into co-movement. Recognizing the many modes of “devising” dance and various working relationships between choreographers and dancers, dance scholar Jo Butterworth has developed a spectrum for the analysis and teaching of choreographic practice. This model designates the range from when the choreographer is the “expert” and the dancer the “instrument” (mode 1) to the choreographer as “collaborator” and the dancer as “co-owner” (mode 5). The making of

9 See in particular Caspersen, “It Starts From Any Point”; Caspersen, “Decreation.”

10 Caspersen, “It Starts From Any Point,” p. 27.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

12 On this project, see Spier, “Inside the Knot That Two Bodies Make.” Caspersen is Forsythe’s wife.

*Duo* tends to involve modes 2 and 3—with the choreographer as the “author” and “pilot” and the dancers as “interpreters” and “contributors.”<sup>13</sup>

Forsythe and the dancers often switched modes in one creation—as Butterworth emphasized is common within devising practices. By naming these “traditional” methods, Caspersen recognizes that, although they are common within the ballet world, they are increasingly infrequent in a “post-control”<sup>14</sup> and “collaborative” process of contemporary dance, in which collaboration involves joint authorship and negotiation of shared decision-making in all stages of the process.<sup>15</sup> Forsythe himself recognizes this shifting within his lifespan as a choreographer. In 2006, he observes: “The next generation of choreographers don’t see it as a top down practice. It’s a horizontal practice.”<sup>16</sup> With this shift, Forsythe also perceives a change in his own working methods. In scaling down the ensemble size from the Ballett Frankfurt to form The Forsythe Company, Forsythe states in 2005:

That is why I wanted to set this company up as a workshop, literally, where we all make things. If everyone is responsible for creating material, then everyone is in charge and everyone is dependent on everyone else. It’s my job still to organize the situation, to frame the material, but I’m like a gallerist. The company isn’t a gang of competing dancers—it’s a community of artists.<sup>17</sup>

This would suggest that *Duo* dancers from The Forsythe Company had different practices of devising from the Ballett Frankfurt dancers, as well as a distinctive understanding of their roles. Further consequences of this will become apparent in Chapter 11, when re-creating *Duo* is considered.

Generally, Forsythe’s creative process was impacted by the context and divided into two phases: in the studio and on stage. During the studio process, the ensemble was highly explorative and distributed—generating excessively more (movement, scenes, texts, musical atmospheres, costumes, and so on) than was shown in the final performance—and generating emergently, without a blueprint for what would be made. On stage, in the second phase of formatting a performance for the conventions of theater, the decisions of what to include and exclude shifted the model more toward *cooperation*, as opposed to *collaboration*. This reduction of “the possible scope of action” was dependent on Forsythe’s authority.<sup>18</sup> Noting this, and labeling it as “editing,” Caspersen re-

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13 Butterworth, “Too Many Cooks?,” p. 187.

14 Kloppenberg defines *post-control* as “a process in which choreographers work collaboratively with dancers to generate fixed choreography out of improvisational explorations.” She adds: “By ‘post-control’ I mean that the defining moments in this kind of choreography happen just after control is exercised (by a choreographer defining parameters or dancers agreeing to participate in the explorations) and then relinquished to a collective unknown.” See Kloppenberg, “Improvisation in Process,” p. 189.

15 See Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 310–32; Ruhsam, *Kollaborative Praxis*.

16 William Forsythe, team meeting to discuss *Synchronous Objects* in Brooklyn, New York, May 5, 2006. Transcription by Norah Zuniga Shaw. Conversation between Forsythe, Rebecca Groves, Jill Johnson, Norah Zuniga Shaw and myself.

17 Forsythe, cited in Mackrell, “A New Dynamic.”

18 Here, Laermans draws from Niklas Luhmann. See Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 350.

counts: “The process of editing is difficult for everyone, and becomes increasingly so as the company members take on more and more artistic responsibility.” But Caspersen acknowledges that by 2000: “Bill [Forsythe] has altered the structure of things to reflect the increasing creative input from the dancers. Dancers are now paid an extra sum for their input, and receive program credit; or when appropriate, pieces are credited simply to the Frankfurt Ballet.”<sup>19</sup>

### 10.3 *Marion/Marion* (1991)

When did the process of making *Duo* begin? Were there any important antecedents or starting points? *Duo* premiered on January 20, 1996, in Ballett Frankfurt’s performance *Six Counter Points*—an evening of mixed repertoire, old and new works. During the Christmas holiday, dancers were chosen and called to rehearsals for three new pieces: later titled *Trio*, *Approximate Sonata*, and *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*. In addition, two recently made pieces of existing repertoire were planned—namely *The The* (1995) and *Four Point Counter* (1995)—as well as the piece *Marion/Marion* (1991).<sup>20</sup> Initially, *Duo* dancers van Berkel and Johnson were cast (that is, chosen by Forsythe) to perform a new version of *Marion/Marion*—a duet that Forsythe had created for Nederlands Dans Theater III in 1991, with music from Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Psycho* (1960).<sup>21</sup> The title referenced the protagonist of Hitchcock’s film, Marion Crane; the duet echoed the plot element of having look-alike sisters. *Marion/Marion* had not yet been performed by the Ballett Frankfurt, so it was a question exactly how the piece would transfer to new dancers.

The archival rehearsal tapes of *Duo*, as well as the technical cue sheet for lighting and piano, and even a heading in van Berkel’s notebook, all use the provisional title *Marion/Marion*. Despite this, the artists I interviewed all agreed that *Duo* and *Marion/Marion* were separate, i.e., distinct works. From review of the archival videos of a performance of *Marion/Marion* and one rehearsal of Forsythe and the dancers, I did not find evidence of shared movement material in common between the two pieces.<sup>22</sup> Links to *Marion/Marion* made by Forsythe during the first rehearsal were important starting points, but then opened up new avenues of investigation. This demonstrates how in Forsythe’s process, creation could involve seeds from previous works, while still taking off rapidly in new directions.

19 See Caspersen, “It Starts From Any Point,” p. 35.

20 *The The* (premiere on October 8, 1995, The Hague, Netherlands, choreography by Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe), *Four Point Counter* (premiere on November 16, 1995, Nederlands Dans Theater, The Hague, Netherlands), *Marion/Marion* (November 8, 1991, Nederlands Dans Theater III, The Hague, Netherlands). Source: Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 367, p. 370.

21 Music by Bernard Herrmann, *Temptation*. *Marion/Marion* was performed by female dancers Alida Chase and Sabine Kupferberg.

22 The rehearsal video was undated. The performance video studied was of the premiere on November 8, 1991.

## 10.4 The Chronology of Making *Duo*

### 10.4.1 Foyer: Material

In the context of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe mostly created new pieces for groups of dancers—a process that engendered a room buzzing with movement.<sup>23</sup> Intimate rehearsals between the choreographer and only one or two dancers were rare; *Duo* dancers remember being excited by this occurrence. Dancer van Berkel recalled:

We felt that it was for him [Forsythe] a moment (*she inhales audibly*) to let his inspiration [flow] and [follow] his desire of material ... movement. We were not making the phrases at that moment together. He danced in front of us—with us. He ... with his focus out, and we in the back ... trying. And then of course Billy [Forsythe] always turns around, “Did you get a bit of an idea, or?” And it was filmed. Our film/video man [Nicholas Champion] was there. And he filmed everything.<sup>24</sup>

With less than three weeks until the premiere, and with three other short pieces to make in addition to *Duo*, Forsythe plans to invent the movement (or at least some of it) on this day, and then allow the dancers to learn it from the video—saving time. Champion’s notes, which he makes in addition to filming, help the dancers reconstruct Forsythe’s motion.

In the archival video, I observe Forsythe combining a small arc of his right hand with a few rhythmical steps falling backwards. Like a current of water passing turbulently across the bow of a ship, the waves of Forsythe’s movements are caught by Johnson and van Berkel at different rates, as they absorb and think through what they see. The deliberate use of video recording means, as van Berkel explained, that the dancers need not save this movement to memory immediately; it can remain streaming, in a flow of invention—something Berkel differentiates as “dance,” as opposed to “making.”<sup>25</sup>

The unusual context of this rehearsal is relevant with regard to how the movement emerges. Because of the shortage of space (with only two studios) and the need to rehearse multiple pieces simultaneously, the dancers work within the theater foyer. This provisional space offers novelty to rehearsal: the dancers move upon a slippery wooden floor,<sup>26</sup> in the place where the audience typically drinks *Sekt* (German champagne) during the intermission, admiring the nighttime view over Frankfurt’s inner city. During this afternoon rehearsal, taking place in daylight, the artists gaze out across the large vista of a park where trees and skyscrapers stretch up through the cold of winter. There

23 See Chapter 4: The Dancers’ Practices.

24 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

25 Ibid.

26 On the floors of dance studios and on stage, there is a special type of vinyl laid called Marley that is smooth and nonstick. Now mass-produced and used internationally, dancers across European and American dance schools and companies work on similar floors. This is an interesting example of the influence of mass-produced material conditions, central to the development of the dance profession across many genres (such as ballet, jazz, modern, contemporary). In the case of *Duo*, the normal rehearsal conditions were disrupted (by way of a different floor, a fresh view and perhaps no mirrors), leaving its mark on the dance.

is no mirror supporting self-reflection and study—as there is in Ballett Frankfurt’s two rehearsal studios, where the dancers normally work.<sup>27</sup> Johnson recalls that the particular qualities of this atmosphere of the foyer were important for inspiring the work, specifying that the “vastness” and “beauty” of the space left a trace in the choreography.<sup>28</sup> Her partner van Berkel confirms:

I must say that, for me, space has a very big influence. I don't know how much space for Jill was influencing. I think the atmosphere, definitely, for us all three made that moment that moment in the foyer. Because that is the material [of *Duo*]. The material is simply that. There is not much changed from that moment.<sup>29</sup>

Not just the space, but the incidence of being together there: excited but calm, intimately attuned, letting “Billy’s” movement pour through and between their bodies.

The movements appear to pass through Forsythe’s body first. Forsythe attempts to integrate a small arc of his right hand with a few steps moving backwards. Bringing together the multiple small steps with the singular longer arc of his arm incites a dialogue in his body to make the rhythms align. This movement—oversimplified in my textual translation—is highly complex. Without lurching, Forsythe’s body bobs, intuitively synchronizing parts; his movement is integrated but not repeatable. He tries again and again. Eventually, Forsythe tells the dancers that he will change his approach. Instead of seeking continuity, he then tries to “break up” the movements. Variations appear to become more known, but not less variable. Like something slippery, the movement is not easy to grasp—to stabilize and remember—as a movement that can be reproduced.

On the fourth repetition of his hand arcing, Forsythe discovers a way to fall into the movement and sink into dis-balance. Gesturing to the dancers to come closer to him, he moves while explaining: a trajectory of the right hand moving towards the ring finger of his left hand. Johnson and van Berkel copy this action, more or less, and then Forsythe waits—holding his pose in suspense. This suspense, different from a pose, is still animated: the thinking-feeling of where one is now, to intuit what movement might come next. Forsythe, I believe, is open to have an association, an idea or a physical impulse. Van Berkel holds her pose clasping her ring finger expectantly. Johnson releases the pose to quietly review an aspect of what she has just learned. Making a small gesture, Forsythe physically sketches an idea, which then blossoms into a new part of the choreography: a way of falling to the right, while dipping the head. As the dancers catch onto the new motion in the sequence, Forsythe switches into a mode of describing and teaching—demonstrating a movement in miniature before explaining details (such as how the dancers should place the chin down to their hands and how the head should retrace the arc previously made by their hand).

He is aware of where the camera is; he is teaching the dancers in real time, as well as making verbal note of things that he expects them to review and memorize later on. His switching between inventing, gesturing and teaching is fluid—in that someone without

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27 The studios were equipped with mirrors hung with curtains—enabling them to be hidden when needed.

28 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

29 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

knowledge of the codes might not know what is instruction and what is ‘the choreography.’<sup>30</sup> The focused mood is undisturbed by a female passerby in the foyer, speaking to a colleague. The trio of dancers keep their eyes on one another. They are intensely focused and, as van Berkel remembers, trying to keep “calm,” while cooperating.<sup>31</sup>

**“We needed each other to make this piece come out.”**  
**Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.**

REGINA: We know there was a moment called tree and it was outside, he said “the tree.” So the movement started like that, for example. You know (*she marks the movement while speaking*) it kind of starts like this. It was not so much time we were there, and he improvised material and we were in the back trying to catch it and find details and look at each other. And we tried to stay calm. Sometimes you get energies that one dancer maybe wants to know it faster or better than the other one. Sometimes, dancers have a certain concurrence [competition] in those moments.

LIZ: Yes. Did you feel that then?

REGINA: No. That is what I mean. We didn’t have that. Not from the first day. We needed each other to make this piece come out. It is such a special vibration when you are with Bill alone. And we were from the first moment on—like this trying to find the movement and giving each other strength. And I found that! I see that! You see that. We will find it out later!

LIZ: How did you work together after the first rehearsal?

REGINA: Next was to have those phrases in our body to present it to him again. We exchanged with him. We were ready to show him the material. We always (*her voice lifts up*) did the phrases together! It was not that one did that phrase and practiced that phrase alone. And then the other one practiced that phrase alone. No. We went always together to: let’s try this phrase! Ok, this phrase! Shall we go there, a little? (*she vocalizes rhythmically*) *Ba ga ga!* Shall we try *be ga ga yeah!* Alright. I have difficulties there. Ok I wait for you. I wait for you. We felt, um, harmonized. But unspoken. It was not that we said to each other: “Now.” We want to move together onstage. No! And that’s how we are going to push the direction of the piece. No. Forget that ... anyway forget that with Billy. That’s the wonderful element of Billy. That it stays in such a live process. So, but for us in that moment, it gave us the right energy and hold, to make this material enter us. Feeling this was created in this very nice place with the nature view there. No mirror, ah. You do not look at yourself at the moment it is made. You don’t go to your own body and check what the other body ... no. You are just looking at him, and he looks at us. And we build new material. But for me, it was extremely him. I was so very thankful to receive that from him. In that moment. And we looked at him constantly on the tape. It was for me, a very special gift. Short gift though (*laughs*) in

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30 Thanks to Timo Herbst for this insight.

31 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

time. I remember that it was for me like ... (*she vocalizes*) *Vlunk!* We just worked one and a half hours I think.

Together, the three artists continue inventing movement after movement, concatenating a new sequence until their bodies become warm—with Johnson and then Forsythe shedding their bulky sweatshirts. Their voices become animated as the mood seems to relax and the sequence starts to flow—with laughter, jokes and questions or observations from the dancers. As van Berkel explains, Forsythe gives movement but “we build new material together.”<sup>32</sup> Johnson is more vocally active, while it is van Berkel who often “catches” the movement first with her body, creating waves of similar movements, with just a millisecond delay. They are precisely attuned to one another, though not (yet) perfectly synchronized; the dancers resonate Forsythe’s invention.<sup>33</sup> They mimic, adapt, think, repeat and question. Together, they build.

Periods when Forsythe invents a sequence and the dancers actively soak up the movement behind him are followed by phases of cooperative review. At this point, the dancers and Forsythe alternate moving, talking and moving-while-talking. Speaking quickly and referencing the movement by marking, they palpate what they have invented minutes before, exchanging equally as interlocutors with shared responsibility, taking turns. Together, they remember. When they forget or diverge, they defer to one another for help. They pose questions. They invent further, including the dancers, who sometimes give suggestions by moving first. Forsythe also catches onto them: “Right!” They reiterate the concepts related to the movement, chorusing shorthand words that Forsythe has said earlier: “match,” “ball change,” “expand,” “hip” and “over.” They sing rhythms, such as “e ah,” “ke ka” and “ba ba bum,” switching easily in and out of language. They are focused, but also riding on each other’s sentences and laughing in one another’s company. The impulse of movement coming forth this way seems to make them extremely excited. They appear to delight in talking and moving together.

In this phase of the creation process, the focus is on inventing movement sequences rather than committing them to memory or perfecting performance. Attention is also on capturing and reciting details for the camera, to facilitate the next process of memorizing. The reviewing described above does not stop the motion from being made. It is a way of helping the process of invention become cooperative, serving to collectively grasp the movement that is passing through them so quickly, by sharing cognitive terms. Van Berkel and Johnson appear eager to display their knowledge and help whenever Forsythe asks, “What happens here?” When a gap appears that no one can fill, they agree to defer (later) to the video recording rather than waste precious time or lose momentum. At

32 Emphasis (*we*) mine. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

33 I take the metaphor of “catching” movement from the dancers. Johnson explains: “I remember Nick Champion being there filming, and Bill, I mean it was one of those things, it was just flowing through him, I mean we couldn’t dance fast enough in a way, because the ideas were just pouring out and Regina and I we were behind him just trying to sort of catch everything we could.” Van Berkel concurs independently: “It was not so much time we were there, and he improvised material and we were in the back trying to catch it and find details and looked at each other.” Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.



times, Forsythe speaks directly to the camera, addressing the future Johnson and van Berkel to guide their study: “choose a version here” or “the shoulder is way up high.” The camera, powered by Champion’s dedication to documentation, is a soothing token of security, allowing everyone to trust in simply following the flow of movement invention. Memorization can happen later. Humans and camera together create an apparatus for capturing movement.<sup>34</sup>

Though the dancers later describe the ideas “pouring out” of Forsythe, out of him personally, it is a social affair.<sup>35</sup> Forsythe is in the midst of the two dancers and attentive to each of them. While reviewing the first, still-fresh sequence, they come to a movement of the head, the coordination of which proves difficult. Forsythe comes before Johnson to touch her hands, explaining more of what he was thinking. From the provisional piece titled *Marion/Marion*, he had associated (in a wordplay) from Marion to marry-on, hence the idea of the ring finger (or, expanding on that, the idea to arc the right hand to grasp the ring on the ring finger). This movement would subsequently be named *goldfinger*. Forsythe then turns to van Berkel, holding her hands like he had just held Johnson’s—guiding her chin and arm to launch them into an arc. In the rehearsal that follows, Forsythe addresses Johnson and van Berkel equally, including them, touching them, instructing them as the sequences come forth. He appears to be inspired both by and with them. In the short breaks they take together, the three artists clap and wiggle with excitement over the movement that they are producing. This reveals Forsythe’s tacit awareness of the attention regime in place; his deliberate effort to be fair, equally generous and attentive.

As an outsider, watching these videos over twenty years later, I wonder how much the movement really comes from Forsythe? Though the movement does “pour out” of Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson are seminal to the situation. It is because both they and the camera are there—as well as the deadline of the premiere—that the movement begins to emerge. It is also because all three, not only Forsythe, are exquisite movers, inspiring one another. Rather than compete, they all nurture the movement pouring forth. The movement is based upon their sharing and complicity, forming through the relay between their bodies. The movement is relational: through and through.

Forsythe helps the movements become known, or quasi-repeatable, by using his capacity to describe what he observes—in his own or the dancers’ bodies—in words. He makes the movement graspable, helping it to endure. This is not a game as simple as choreographer moves and dancers imitate, but one where movement intention, encoded in language, must be fed forward into the flow of the three-fold imitation-game—the triangle of Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson. Talking with abstract imagery and naming body parts seems to help, such as the arcs landing on a ring finger.<sup>36</sup>

34 It might be worth emphasizing how difficult it is to improvise complex motions and remember them. The topic of movement and embodied memory is a central topic in dance studies. See Brandstetter, “Choreographie als Grab-Mal”; Siegmund, “Das Gedächtnis des Körpers in der Bewegung”; Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung*, in particular pp. 147–59; and Bläsing, “The Dancer’s Memory.”

35 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

36 This is generally true in Forsythe’s creations, reflecting methodology developed during the Ballet Frankfurt period. Forsythe’s publication *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* gives dozens of examples—showing how imagery of points, lines, planes and curves in space

Forsythe works with thinking-feeling abstraction. This phantasmagoria is fed by the unconscious (or the becoming conscious) without caring for psychodrama or psychoanalysis—more as *reverie*. Reverie and wordplay are modes of invention. Remember, Forsythe jumps associatively from “Marion” to “marry-on” and, to what will become a movement referencing a suitcase, he jokes in terms of a “carry-on.” At the end of the rehearsal, Forsythe improvises another phrase while describing imagery and coaching execution, ending with the motion “turn on the shower”—what became *showerhead*.<sup>37</sup>

Within my research, neither the dancers nor Forsythe remembered references to Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, a thread of the precursor piece *Marion/Marion* (1991), as important within the creative process. In my focus on the movement *showerhead*, I was the only one to fathom that this imagery could have sprung from Forsythe’s imagination of the famous shower scene in *Psycho*. That this impulse was forgotten is helpful to illustrate the way that meaning-making is flexible and plural in this ensemble’s creative work. The antecedents of *Duo* transformed quickly in the rehearsal chronology as the piece began to take shape—aspects forgotten and intentions found. The team’s creative process is a weave of meaning-making, opening up an emergent and contingent process of cooperatively making movement.

In the creation of *Duo*, Forsythe’s movement—more aptly, the movement passing *through* Forsythe—becomes *choreographic material*. Alongside this, sharing intention and communing abstractions are essential; yet dissensus also persists. *Showerhead* exemplifies this. As another example: Forsythe starts moving—swinging his right arm again, in an arc up and across his body, with greater energy than before. He describes this action as tracing the upper half-circle of a steering wheel—an association, I speculate, to the character of Marion, driving in *Psycho*. Humored by this description, van Berkel steps right up to him to grasp his shoulder and point to something she sees in the distance—laughing that she had imagined him gesturing over the visible treetops in the park. (In interviews over twenty years later, she again remembers the view as important to how the ideas were invented.) Johnson pitches in with equal enthusiasm, “I was thinking something else!”

This joke, that Forsythe’s “steering wheel” can be van Berkel’s “tree,” is an indication of common understanding: they know that it is impossible to replicate one’s inner imagination of movement intention, but they agree that it is essential to *try* and to share images. By talking about movement, they show that imagery is essential to making movement in *Duo* come alive—to turning improvisation into material for making choreography, for making the singular into something common, for making it endure. Choreography is a process between dancing and abstracting movement. Choreography makes movement a constructive tool, one that can build structures—structures that pliantly explore the borders of dissensus in consensus.

By the end of the rehearsal, seven sequences or “phrases” of movement have been produced, Forsythe generating them with increasing speed. These phrases are enough

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can be a generative means for improvising movements. Here we see another property of these abstractions: that they enable the remembering and transmitting of movement.

37 See Chapter 6: The Movement of *Showerhead*.

for Forsythe to craft nearly the entire sequence of *Duo*—making this rehearsal, focusing on movement sequence invention, one of a kind. This is why van Berkel remembers: “That is the material.”<sup>38</sup> Gaining momentum as they work, verbal exchanges with the dancers become shorter. The last phrase of movement comes out intact in just two minutes, with Forsythe explaining his intention while he dances.<sup>39</sup> Finished, Forsythe walks forward slowly to sit down. He justifies, “I think it’s enough. I think it’s enough.” His voice brightens with the remark, “I think that’ll give you two days of material,” to which the dancers laugh. He continues: “You know what we could do? You could theoretically ... You could take ... You could take the video ...” The video tape cuts. The dancers remember that Forsythe asked them to take the video and review it alone in his office.

#### 10.4.2 Office Work: Intimacy and Details

The second phase of rehearsals for *Duo* takes place in Forsythe’s office, without the choreographer. This is a very unusual place for the dancers to rehearse, and there is no video record of this part of the process. Van Berkel and Johnson remember the office rehearsals fondly. In a room of approximately five by ten meters, Forsythe’s office offered the dancers a place to, as Johnson described, “make sense” of the movement that Forsythe had previously invented.<sup>40</sup> It was, for van Berkel, also a place supporting intimate exchange about personal matters that were important to their lives in that moment—a safe space.<sup>41</sup> The dancers enjoyed being together. They appreciated having time to talk together, and they recognized how they needed each other to “make sense” of the complex movement recorded in the previous session.

The labor was pleasurable. Like two children, van Berkel remembers, the two women knelt closely, nearly touching, to review the videotape of the foyer rehearsal on a small viewing device. Analyzing the details of Forsythe’s movement was important: Where did the movement begin? What were the complex chain reactions happening in his body? What parts of the body participated and what angles and trajectories did they take? The dancers also paid close attention to Forsythe’s pedagogical explanations, about the dynamics and images helping to create the movement. Never overwhelmed, van Berkel and Johnson remember feeling curious and confident. Prepared by their previous years in the company, they had the diagnostic skills to learn this difficult movement material. And they had the security and pleasure of having one another, recognizing each other as gifted and capable artists. The work alternated between kneeling on the floor to study the video and standing up to learn the movement, checking their image here and again in the small mirror in front of them. In breaks they shared personal stories, learning more fully about each other.

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38 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

39 This is the unison sequence of *Duo* van Berkel calls *poumphathan* and Johnson *paahhpapadum* and I call *umpadump*, after Watts and Gjoka.

40 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

41 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

Although studying movement from video was common practice in Ballett Frankfurt, not all dancers were able to learn movement as fluently as Johnson and van Berkel.<sup>42</sup> Learning sequentially from Forsythe's first action to the next, Johnson and van Berkel smooth the lurches between steps and make sense of the gaps, forming a set of nine sequences or "phrases." To entertain and facilitate the process, they give the phrases and steps nicknames—relying especially upon Johnson's verbal wit. Some decisions were prefigured by Forsythe, who had spoken directly to the camera in the last rehearsal, saying things such as: "That was three versions. I think the first one was good! Take one." They did not take liberties, says Johnson, but they did make decisions, says van Berkel.<sup>43</sup>

As an ethnographer, I was very curious how Forsythe's movement, itself brimming with multiple versions, could come to animate two bodies in unison—a synchrony with close similarity that did not exclude subtle difference. Laughing and speaking warmly during an interview in Frankfurt, van Berkel tells me, "We felt trustful together to say: well, once he does that, and once he does that, we can do this." She demonstrates figuring out how far to reach an arm: "The mirror was only there to make aesthetic decisions. Let our arm go on here, ok—yes." In the office rehearsal, both dancers started to fill their notebooks with ideas to help them learn—van Berkel in her native language of Dutch and Johnson in her mother tongue of English. These decisions enabled consensus between them that still recognized that no two people can be the same. Van Berkel concurs: "I have a very strong belief that each individual is so different, and nobody can actually be concurrent [competitive] or against somebody else. Because we are not the same. We cannot be the same."<sup>44</sup>

Rehearsing in "Billy's" office was exceptional in the culture of Ballett Frankfurt. More typical was the taking home of a video to review at night, working without a rehearsal director or on one's own when a studio was free, studying movement from the notes in one's notebook; these were all common supplements to rehearsals. This reflects how—in comparison to classical ballet culture—Ballett Frankfurt dancers had a different rehearsal practice, demonstrating greater autonomy and responsibility.

Expanded styles of rehearsal were paralleled by the artists significantly questioning assumptions and practices about *how* to participate in creating and reproducing choreography. One example, relevant to *Duo*, is whether the choreographer's movement must be upheld as the authority to be imitated—an original, so to say, to be modeled—or seen as a draft to be further embellished? A related question, pertaining to dancers learning *Duo* after the premiere, was whether a prior pair of dancers' movements should be learned precisely by a younger generation, or whether there was a logic for how it could transform. From my interviews and observations of practice, the dancers showed

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42 In the next rehearsal, Forsythe remarks to an observer in German: "There are some ... that when I demonstrate, they can take it directly from the television: Dana [Caspersen], these two [Johnson and van Berkel], a few others. It is really amazing. It is difficult to take it from television." Translation by the author.

43 Email exchange with Jill Johnson, June 29, 2017. Interview with Regina van Berkel, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

44 All citations in this paragraph: Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

differences of opinion regarding how closely one should adhere to Forsythe's or another dancer's movement demonstration. Some dancers believed in the value of attempting exact replication, others believed in translation from one body to another, and some were confident in the necessity of letting the past be the past and finding a personal version, in the here and now. Pairs had to negotiate these differences, to find consensus.

What the dancers agreed upon was that Forsythe's demonstrations and prior dancers' work were references, to be respected and studied rigorously—that is, not to be disregarded or disrespected. They concurred that these precedents were inspiring, even when such antecedents could and should evolve. It cannot be overstated how important the process of learning from Forsythe and other dancers' movement was to the culture of the company—an intersubjective process. In the case of *Duo*, both Johnson and van Berkel were extremely “thankful” to receive the movement from Forsythe. Van Berkel described this as “good material.” It was for her “precious.” It was a “gift.”<sup>45</sup>

The transmission of the movement from Forsythe's body to a dancer's body is a process that gives movement agency, or potential. The time it takes, and the time passing between original and copy, enables something new to happen—it is not immediate. Even with a “gift” like the movement of *Duo*, the dancers must take great care, to learn and reconstruct the movement, to enable it to carry on. Noting how this can be confusing to new dancers trained in traditional systems of dance education, dancer Antony Rizzi explains:

Eventually the work comes from the dancers. [...] At a certain point the work is left from Billy and now it's the dancer's. A lot of times Billy will say, you know—when something's going and the dancer hasn't developed the thing. And they've ... 'specially to newer people and they don't understand, and they're like, he's like, “I've given you a skeleton. All it is a skeleton. And now you have to, like, fill it in.”<sup>46</sup>

Van Berkel offered a different metaphor, of working with a “puzzle.”<sup>47</sup> Puzzling for her comprised of zooming into the details—carefully examining each movement before reconstructing the whole picture or phrase. She attuned to sensations, forms, proprioception (where a limb is in space, relative to the body) and rhythm (entrainment within the body).

The practical logic of zooming into details of the movement puzzle were defined by each dancer's individual body and body logic, requiring each dancer to follow their own timing and inquiry. But critically, and this point cannot be underemphasized, they did this investigation *together*—side by side, in the same small room. They gave one another time. They looked inward, somatically, at the same moment. They looked frequently over at their partner, to find a common flow, or to learn from what they could see in the other. In my interview with her, van Berkel read sentences written in her notebook:

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45 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

46 Antony Rizzi, interviewed by director Mike Figgis; see Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 26:00–26:30.

47 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

“I’m there for you,” “I hear you,” “I will wait for you,” “I see you,” “I feel you,” “I’m with you,” “I change it with you,” “I answer you.”<sup>48</sup>

**“You puzzle every single movement out in little parts.”**

**Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.**

REGINA: We felt very ... in a certain vibe in understanding the details—because that is also fascinating in Billy’s work, you also analyze so many details: Where does the movement come from? And ah! It goes (*she vocalizes*) *gung gung*, there! Or it’s from the shoulder and then the heel. You focus your brain every time to be very zoomed in to elements. It is like a looping eye [magnifying glass] you know? You look at the phrase not as an aesthetic outer view ... You dive every time inside, which makes your view so ... detailed. We were there, also, with our backpack already ... You know, secure. I was already three years there and you know Jill, I think, I think a bit longer because she was already before me there. We felt trustful to go into that detail. We were not insecure. We believed that we can get these complicated movements. And that we can transform that, together.

LIZ: Can you speak about some of the details that you remember? What kind of details were important in the movement?

REGINA: That is again the puzzle situation. You puzzle every single movement out in little parts. And then it becomes a bigger part of a puzzle. And then the bigger part of the puzzle goes in the whole picture. So yes, you remember the elbow in your side (*she demonstrates “goldfinger” holding her right arm up, palm facing the ceiling, elbow attached to her torso*). And that it goes over the bow and goes into your finger and then you remember that feeling, the warmth of your elbow in the side of your body. But then at one point, it goes together and it’s not so, anymore, maybe that detailed. But the process goes by very detailed. So, understanding located parts of your body. Parts that come together.

LIZ: This is another type of synchrony.

REGINA: Yeah, and details of where exactly, which angle of the head or ... temperature. You know, the warmth when you have your elbow there (*she demonstrates it touching her side*). It’s connected. It gives you a hold also, symbolically, it’s a match-up. And also, the grabbing of the ring finger, or grabbing the foot—yeah. That’s that kind of small detail in your own physic [physique]—what Jill experienced differently than me, I’m sure. But we went through all those details together. Each needed also maybe their own time a bit. We didn’t have maybe straight away things, each one’s so logical, but then we gave each other time: “Oh, I have to get that again.” Okay, and we try it again. Or you look at each other and at how to find a way to flow the movement. I mean ‘right’ means harmonic for us together. There is no right or wrong in that way. And for me, that atmosphere was very special in that close, small space. I’m positive that it was

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48 Ibid.

also indirect a very special thing to be in his office. I don't know how much his office was nice place, but it felt good to be in his office, somehow. His space was for us a special place.

“Necessity was the mother of that invention because our dance company never had a lot of time to make the work,” explains Forsythe.<sup>49</sup> In public commentary, such as this remark from 1999, Forsythe is transparent and pragmatic about needing to teach the dancers choreographic competence in order to make pieces quickly. In the case of *Duo*, there is critical time pressure to get the performance up and running in just short of three weeks. There is a scarcity of rehearsal space to do so and also a limit to the presence of choreographer, who has to be leading multiple and often parallel rehearsals. Forsythe's actions during the creative period making *Six Counter Points* demonstrate that he was adaptive and resourceful within the municipal theater system (his qualities in stark contrast to the slow, bureaucratic workings of the institution at large), harnessing spaces such as the foyer or the office. Also, Forsythe cultivated a working culture of self-motivation, offering dancers independence uncommon within the framework of classical ballet, where supervised rehearsals are the norm for all but the very highest principal dancers.<sup>50</sup>

Johnson and van Berkel's personal exchanges during the office rehearsals are essential to developing the intimacy which is pertinent to *Duo*. From my interviews, it was revealing to find that the closeness of bonding and studying movement in Forsythe's office will produce a type of synchrony that gives character to *Duo*. This is indicative of the type of emergent potential evoked by being creative in Ballett Frankfurt: a sort of listening to what is being produced, under and through particular conditions. The dancers are certain that *Duo* holds the traces of these rehearsal spaces—from the inspiring vastness, beauty and novelty of working in the theater foyer, to the closeness and intimacy of working in Forsythe's office space.

### 10.4.3 First Studio Rehearsal: Conceptual Pacts

In van Berkel's notebook, the first studio rehearsal is dated January 6, 1996—a Saturday.<sup>51</sup> The archival videotape jumps directly into the scene, showing Johnson and van

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49 See Kaiser, “Dance Geometry.”

50 An example of a rehearsal called by the principal dancers without the choreographer occurs in Maiorano and Brooks' investigation of Balanchine's creation of *Mozartiana*. See Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*, pp. 146–49.

51 Keeping notes was a practice common in Ballett Frankfurt; dancers Allison Brown, Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel all referred to their process of note-taking and the information they had recorded about *Duo*. The dancers' notebooks contained information about the steps and choreographic structures, as well as corrections and coaching from Forsythe. Additionally, archivist Nicholas Champion kept detailed rehearsal logs. *Répétiteur* David Morrow also kept rehearsal logs and comprehensive notes on the development of pieces longitudinally. The latter were kept in small notebooks that he could conveniently take on tour. Forsythe also commonly kept a notebook. In The Forsythe Company, *DUO2015* dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka rarely took notes. A software called Piecemaker was created for video archive storage and annotation by dancer David Kern, which shifted the focus and process of note-taking, centralizing and digitizing notes.

Figure 36. Video still of the first studio rehearsal of *Duo*, January 6, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and William Forsythe.



Photo © William Forsythe.

Berkel dancing in unison, Johnson to van Berkel's left—the same positions they took in the foyer, and the relationship that will become the primary constellation of *Duo*. Without Forsythe between them, they focus predominantly on each other. They are again wearing sweatpants, T-shirts and socks: van Berkel in white and sea green, with a bandana around her long neck; Johnson in black, about to put on a woolen pair of leg warmers. The back side of the ballet studio is littered with small snapshots. Broad windows and a balcony flood the room with light, offering an exquisite view over the south side of Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen.

Forsythe is off camera, heard but not seen. He sits or stands at the front of the room by the mirror—taking the usual place of a rehearsal director, aligned with the view of the audience. His role has changed since the last rehearsal he had with the dancers, when he stood in close proximity to the dancers, giving impetus to the field as the movement inventor. His gaze now becomes more important, with the dancers ready and nervous to show him what they have prepared in the office. Over the course of the rehearsal, the light transitions from daylight to evening blue to darkness; the movement phrases that Forsythe invented—and the dancers have learned and named—become a new common material that Forsythe himself can dig into. The dance progresses from sequence fragments to a growing whole—the days dissolve into the weekend.

Van Berkel remembers that it was a “delicate” moment: that they had “those phrases in our body to present it to him again” but they did not want to “look from the outside to ourselves.” They did not want to break the harmony they had, or be sent off in a different creative direction—as was common in Forsythe's changing creative process. They



wished to develop the experience they made in the office, which had grown meaningful to the artists; to not lose it to the effects of different contexts or demands. It was risky but still imbued with trust. Rudi Laermans captures these stakes well when he writes: “cooperative work of the creative sort cannot do without a serious dose of reciprocal confidence: the risk that a co-creation process may go wrong is exchanged for the risk of mutual trust.”<sup>52</sup> In this moment of palpable pitfalls, the team members know that doubt can snowball. In this *Duo* rehearsal they manage to synergize. The dancers’ confidence in Forsythe increases their self-confidence. In parallel, Forsythe’s confidence in the dancers enhances his conviction to make choreographic decisions. Laermans calls this: “joint faith.”<sup>53</sup>

From the outside, this delicacy is barely evident through the medium of video: the atmosphere seems relaxed as the women review in synchrony, vocalizing a bit—with breathing and tones that help cohere their action. Their timings are comfortable and elastic: waiting for each other when one person’s movement takes longer, or when someone has a glitch in memory. Such solidarity was essential to *Duo*. Working so quickly to learn this volume of material was a cognitive challenge even for these intelligent artists.

Forsythe watches, offering remarks here and there about how a movement can be accentuated or revised. He absorbs the two women intently, almost in reverse of what occurred in the foyer, when they were listening or paying attention to *him*. When the dancers pause, Forsythe asks them to continue—to allow him more time to watch and refresh his “vague memories” of the last rehearsal. Watching their movement in the stu-

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52 This, and all subsequent citations in this paragraph, see Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 339 (italics in the original). Klein also observes that Pina Bausch’s creative process with her company involved fragile negotiations of uncertainty, risk and trust; see Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 197.

53 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 339. I concur with Laermans’ critical observations on trust, based upon my experience as a dancer in Forsythe’s ensembles. Laermans finds that the fragile trust between dancers and choreographer is constantly at stake and in negotiation during a choreographic process. While trust is risked from moment to moment, it is also built and forecast long-term. Longstanding trust is forged when a choreographer can repeatedly make novel performances and knowledgeably direct the dancers, and when a dancer is able to contribute consistently over many years to the satisfaction of the choreographer. In companies where relationships between dancers and choreographers are long-term investments, Laermans observes that a choreographer’s decisions may involve the maintenance of trust as opposed to what is ‘best’ choreographically (i.e., by including contributions from all dancers equally, or not rejecting material from a trusted collaborator, and so on). Laermans also notes the complicated vulnerability and psychological complex through which dancers may feel hurt when they do not receive recognition or affirmation by a choreographer; for example, when she or he does not put their “material” into the performance, or worse, gives it to another dancer; see *ibid.*, pp. 300–10. Laermans observes, “artistic trust generates both a general climate encouraging dancers’ autonomy and a relatively non-disputed sense of heteronomous authority, legitimating the choreographer’s directivity.” *Ibid.*, p. 340 (italics in the original). Some but not all *Duo* dancers, supported all the above aspects noted by Laermans. Some Forsythe dancers were also ambivalent about Forsythe’s authority. As I show here, in *Duo*’s creation, delicate moments when trust could be broken and hurt inflicted were largely avoided because of polite communication, the dancers’ pact of togetherness and Forsythe’s division of attention equally between Johnson and van Berkel. *Duo* was an atypically harmonious and a continuous creation in comparison to other examples from Forsythe’s repertoire.

dio provides a common ground and helps Forsythe presumably shift into third-person knowledge of the movement.

Forsythe has authority: “There you are different!” he calls out. “Lean over more there. Don’t round your shoulders Regina.” To Johnson, on a particular flat movement of the hands: “Be careful of your thumbs.” Between directives, compliments: “Oh my god, you guys are really observant.”

The delicacy that van Berkel remembers is the subtle, yet palpable potentiality of creation. At that special moment, no one knew where the creation was going. The dancers did not know what Forsythe would do. From the interaction I observe on the video, Forsythe also appears to be in a mode of trying out. Berkel reflects that although it was unspoken, she and her partner “did not want to be put up towards each other” or “torn apart”—they did not want one or the other dancer to be “pointed out as better.”<sup>54</sup> Forsythe—whether explicitly or implicitly—gives attention, feedback, compliments, and touch in equal proportions. Johnson and van Berkel’s friendship together with the sheer difficulty of the task facing them, was a sort of protection from competition: they needed one another to enact this difficult movement.

In their fluid mastery of the motion, the dancers show that they have come to a harmonic consensus. They do not look perfectly identical, but the coordination animates their different bodies very similarly. Steps launch and pull directly from one to the next, showing the accomplishment of a narrative or sequential memory: from steps to a *phrase*. The dancing looks new—having shed Forsythe’s rhythms and groove from the last rehearsal, it acquires another form of torsional liquidity. The interior vibrations of Forsythe’s body, the discontinuities of weight, have been smoothed and infused with ballet technique. (In hindsight, van Berkel remarks, what has been lost is almost a shame, even though what they found—together—proved to be so enduring and rich.)<sup>55</sup> Transitions have been made. Integral memory has been achieved. Some details of the movement have been forgotten or lost (such as Forsythe’s rhythm, looseness and informal performance), but other aspects have been added (perfection of *épaulement*, attenuation of line and clearer flow between actions). To my eye, this *Duo* is now recognizably the *Duo* of the premiere. The previous dancing in the foyer was closer to Forsythe’s body and quality of movement. The movement now is a co-movement—that is, a consensus that Johnson and van Berkel bring forth.<sup>56</sup>

Forsythe appears to want to get back in the middle: to direct and shape what they have made possible. Using dancer Antony Rizzi’s metaphor, the flesh they have given to his “skeleton” now can be set in motion: relationally, between one another, and in time and space. A structure can be built, organizing the movement. It is already com-

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54 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

55 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Zürich, May 5, 2017.

56 This is neither strictly dialectic nor dialogic. As in dialectic processes, the dancers’ co-movement involves negotiating and adapting differences, but these are not initially posed as thesis/counter-thesis, nor are they completely resolved in synthesis. Like dialogic processes, the co-movement remains in process and under negotiation. Here I develop my remarks from Richard Sennett’s discussion of dialectic and dialogic conversations; see Sennett, *Together*, pp. 18–20.

monly agreed that Forsythe has the authority to make decisions about what possible movements will be chosen and organized.<sup>57</sup>

To do so, Forsythe needs to “grasp” the movement: to use it and build a structure with it. Language serves that purpose well, creating markers that the team can share to further engage in the material.<sup>58</sup> The phrases, and some steps, have been given names chosen by the dancers. Johnson and van Berkel have written them in their notebooks, in different languages and with different spellings—Johnson in English and van Berkel in Dutch. Forsythe listens to the dancers to understand the names that they have invented or remembered from the last rehearsal, asking: “What do you call that?” “How do you begin it?” “What do you call this?” “How do you spell it?” He writes bizarre titles for movements like “egyptian” and “snakedress” down in his notebook, and jokes with the dancers about the names that offer ambiguity—one phrase they riff is called “poumphathan,” “pump it up,” “pump a dump,” “paaahhpapadum,” or “papadum,” and so on.

The practice of naming is highly playful and associative: rhythms inherent in the movement, or funny things that happened while they were practicing (such as a dancer walking by singing, “nah-nuh”).<sup>59</sup> The names have many variations, given the complex rhythms and strange word play that they put together. They do not need to be singular to

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57 Compare to Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 350–51.

58 Dance scholar Katarina Kleinschmidt’s meticulous praxeological research of concept-building in contemporary dance rehearsal argues that building concepts are generic, generative routines across many choreographic teams’ processes, requiring little justification for their employment. Kleinschmidt designates two levels: naming (of movement material or improvisation tasks and qualities) and concept-building, in which principles are systematized. In *Duo* rehearsals, I observe only the former. Kleinschmidt argues that naming serves cooperation by designating an episode as material for further use and enabling discussion between people about the same phenomenon (such as the motivation, intention and what works and does not work). Naming intertwines with the movement, as a learning device and memory prompt, and also through conceptualizing aspects that may inform properties of the movement. Naming can also save energy, for example when the dancers recite names while marking (that is, moving with reduced energy). All these occur in this *Duo* rehearsal. Unlike in Kleinschmidt’s examples, in *Duo* I did not observe concepts being named or exchanges about what a concept meant. In *Duo*, there was coherency of names in the pairs but not always across pairs of different generations, supporting Kleinschmidt’s argument. In my view, naming in *Duo* serves: (1) the dancers’ memorization, (2) Forsythe’s desire to structure the performance, (3) the dancers’ rehearsal, such as choosing where to start and (4) feedback. The concepts that the dancers need to make the work (concepts such as unison, counterpoint, cues or sorts of imagery and tasks) are all understood by the dancers by their prior work in the ensemble. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 130–63. This practice of “nicking” pieces and steps is found to be widespread in ballet. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 90–92.

59 As Kleinschmidt notes, naming in dance rehearsals often has the iconic function of a sign. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 140–42. For example, in *Duo* the term *goldfinger* represents a property of the movement in which Forsythe spoke about a ring on the ring finger. This was humorously further associated to James Bond and the film *Goldfinger* (1964). The discussion of the name *poumphathan/paaahhpapadum/umpadump* is an example of rhythmic onomatopoeia and alliteration, turning the movement’s rhythm into a name. It is interesting that, despite the vocabularies varying slightly from person to person, they function in practice. Also, intriguing is how the names change longitudinally. Systematic study of this variance and change was unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.

function as common referents for the movement. They serve as oral shared references, or “conceptual pacts,” that are close enough to function.<sup>60</sup>

Forsythe further directs and shapes the movement through verbal interjection and prosodic coaching of dynamics, alliterating rhythms to help create more complex polyrhythms. The dancers refine their knowledge and movement execution through dialogue with each other and with Forsythe. When needed, Forsythe steps in to show or correct a movement: walking into the frame of the camera to explain the flatness of a plane, or to touch Johnson’s hands. Again and again, he is encouraging, motivating, complimenting: “Beautiful, ladies” and extending his vowels: “Veery veery good.” He honors their pact of supporting one another.

**“Yes, that’s how you whisper the word inside.”**  
**Interview with *Duo* Dancer Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.**

REGINA: (*referring to her Duo notebook*) Phrase 1 starts with the right hand on the right side. We call it “goldfinger.” Then there was a phrase 2, and that was “carrying on”—we had a certain suitcase in which we moved carrying on, heel, heel. And then there is a phrase 2B, it’s a continuation with the *arabesque*. Phrase 3, I have called “tree.” Phrase 4 is “snakedress.” And phrase 5 is “surfman Joe.” And then ballet combination 1: “nah-nuh” (*laugh*). The good thing is that Jill, [...] we are very different persons. Jill cracked me up! Jill is such a funny person, in her face and in her humor. Yes. Then there is ballet combination 2: “enough of that,” and then ballet combination 3 is “poumphathan.”

LIZ: How do you spell that?

REGINA: (*she spells*) p-o-u-m-p-h-a-t-h-a-n (*then repeats the phrase, which she pronounces in three syllables: poom-PA-than*) “poumphathan” (*she then writes it down to show Liz*).

LIZ: Ah! (*laughs*) In 2015 that word has turned into “umpadump” (*pronounced in three syllables: UMP-pa-dump*)! I am not sure how to spell that.

REGINA: (*she laughs*) Yes, that’s how you whisper the word inside. Maybe there are different versions, because I am a Dutch person, so maybe Jill wrote it slightly differently, I don’t know.

LIZ: Yes. It’s interesting, Ballett Frankfurt dancers kept notes in their notebooks. Forsythe Company dancers less so. It was more oral.

**“So, it was an alliteration.”**  
**Videoconference Interview with *Duo* Dancer Jill Johnson, June 28, 2018.**

LIZ: My next question is about “umpadump.”

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60 Brennan and Clark, “Conceptual Pacts and Lexical Choice in Conversation.” See also Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 4.

JILL: (*laughs*) I would need to check my *Duo* notebook. My recollection is that it was “paaahpapadum.” (*She pronounces this in four syllables: pah-PA-pa-dum*)

LIZ: Oh, this is so great! I was calling it “umpadump” because that is what I heard from Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka]. But I recognize that this is a chain. Can you tell me yours again?

JILL: What is coming to mind is “paaaahhh papadum” (*She pronounces this: paah-PA-pa-dum*). Like it followed the first rhythm of Bill, or us trying to do the movement. Alliteration. Like bend: “pah” (*she marks the gestures of her arms while speaking*), then “papadum.” So, it was an alliteration. So, you *plié* in fifth [position] first and then the hand that bounces off.

LIZ: Oh! That is a totally different rhythm than “umpadump.” On a video, I watch you riff on it. “Papadum,” “Pump it up,” “Pump a dump.”

JILL: (*laughs*)

In the second part of the rehearsal, Forsythe experiments with the music for *Duo*, asking the dancers to try the movement to a piece of what Johnson remembers was “beautiful” choral music—the voice of a woman singing, with mandolin-like accompaniment.<sup>61</sup> Johnson recalls, in an interview over twenty years later, the miraculous way that the music and the movement fit: the movement sequence ending at the same time as the music, as if by magical serendipity.<sup>62</sup> In the archival video, Forsythe also seems very pleased. But it is too early to commit; he is exploring possibilities. The dancers, trusting Forsythe, and sensing potential with him, are content to explore options.

*Duo* has not yet been named *Duo*. The rehearsal tapes are still labeled under the working title: *Marion/Marion*. By the last hour of rehearsal, the piece seems to be finding identity, through the movement quality, the performers have developed and the clarity of the phrase work. After the women finish the phrase called “snakedress,” Forsythe makes a declaration:

Ok fierce: (*emphasizing each word*) I—love—that. Ok, I am not going to write that down. Because what I am gonna do [...] I am gonna do the majority of the thematic, I think, as *unisono* [unison], it is so impressive ladies, it’s really beautiful, wow. And then when we get to a certain point, I am going to use *snakedress*. We’ll do *snakedress*, and begin to connect it to all the other themes and then just do a very brief, extraordinary counterpoint. (*the phone rings, Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson return to marking and discussing snakedress*).

This statement does not ring with the conclusive nature of an epiphany or decision. Forsythe’s tone is very friendly, and the phone interrupts. The declaration does not progress into “talking dance” in which the choreographer substantiates his decision-

61 This is ancient music from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The CD was given to Forsythe by composer Thom Willems. In David Morrow’s notes, he labeled this source the “Ars Magis.” David Morrow, email to the author, July 26, 2017.

62 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

making and dialogues with the performers.<sup>63</sup> The two dancers return to working on their own, still intent to master the movement *snakedress*, which has unusual properties of syncopation of arms and legs. Forsythe, known to experiment extensively in creation, has expressed a possibility. (As we shall see, this is indeed what he proceeds to develop in the next rehearsals.)

After the interruption of the phone call, the dancers “run-through” the sequence of actions Forsythe has strung together during this rehearsal.<sup>64</sup> Timing them, Forsythe notes that the women have learned a sequence of six minutes of movement during one rehearsal. An onlooker is amazed, and Forsythe as well, because they have built so much choreography so quickly. Forsythe again praises the artists for their “brilliant” work, for swiftly absorbing so much information. *Duo* speeds forward, based on the performers’ prior skill of incorporating movement and relating it between them. The first delicate moment has been passed and—attributable to the women’s will to stay together—*Duo* has found form, centering on side-by-side performance of mutual entrainment.

#### 10.4.4 Second Studio Rehearsal: Structuring *Duo*

*Figure 37. Video still of the artists talking before the second studio rehearsal of Duo, circa January 6, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson, William Forsythe.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

63 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 353.

64 A “run-through” means performing from start to finish without stopping.

**“That was a beautiful communication.”**  
**Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.**

REGINA: We were not reflecting too much. There was more trying to be open for what is coming. Trying to be free ... also in that studio, in that moment when Billy watched, to be free to show in that moment your experience with this. Not the energy of doubt or nervousness, or maybe an energy comes up that we are put against each other. Billy also didn't say much. I cannot remember if things were good or not. It was just there.

LIZ: [...] Do you remember the next step from phrases to the sequence of *Duo*? Do you remember how it happened, that you started doing different material and then coming back in to unison? Because in the last rehearsal, you were almost always demonstrating in unison.

REGINA: That happened in that day when he structured it. But I think our desire not to be alone in that piece and each speaking another phrase was a very strong demanding/timing. I think. We didn't speak about that. That's something of reflecting 21 years later—my instinct of thinking back and putting my feelings in words a little bit. I think we went back and forth a little bit. “You maybe start” and then, ok, uhm, we do that, ok. “Maybe you go back there?” “Or can you do then that phrase Regina?” It happened quickly. At one point I just write the whole order out [in my notebook].

LIZ: When I reviewed the video, I was struck that Bill had to relearn the names, so that he could move with you—direct things. Talk to you. He doesn't get up and move very much in the second rehearsal.

REGINA: No, no, no, no, no, no!

LIZ: I hear his voice, so he's off camera most of the time, and it sounds like a pleasant exchange.

REGINA: Yeah, yes. I cannot speak for him, but my feeling was there was maybe in the moment before, maybe a little blackout or a little, let's say, a “doubt” of the order of the phrase. That was a beautiful communication.

LIZ: And opportunities presented themselves. For example, there is one complex movement (*I demonstrate an Alignment*). I watched it [being assembled] and it looked like you would follow the curves and open with one foot and Jill on the other foot—it was symmetric, not identical—and then it became: “oh, that's fine,” and then you just changed legs. It seemed very organic, including blackouts and findings.

REGINA: Yes, so that's how it went. I don't know, but I have the feeling that he took that. That's a beauty of Bill, that he also really sees in those moments what's coming. I had the feeling it was a unique moment of us in that desire which I cannot define. I also believe certain things are not to be put in words, that's the magic of it all. Of course, you can try to find out, and now, 21 years later, I can definitely say: space, absolutely, the person, character, absolutely. I think if you do a cast, you almost have to look how the

characters of the people are. (*laughs*) Well, character is maybe too complex. Well, that's anyway the question! Do you want to reproduce something that had this situation? Or do you like to use the material and see what comes up with different characters? 'Cause *Duo* could also be representative of an ugly concurrence [competitive] duo piece. Or in bits harmonically, and in bits not. Or not synchronized and irritating, let's say. I don't know. Since I also choreograph, it's fascinating to not hold on to things that happen, but to believe that things are happening [because] of a very unique energy state. Of course, you can study that I think, again and again. We both wanted to be together. The basic issue was: "we want to be together." I'm here for you and you are there for me. And I'm not here for me.

LIZ: And why? Why did you want to be together?

REGINA: We [...] through that we could give ourselves, really, we could be ourselves, in that form. It's a certain support to each other to be yourself in that moment. And we held on, in that way I believe we took Billy with us. And it's also, I remember—I don't know if Jill has expressed that—but in the moment structuring, there comes a little bit oh, this phrase, or now she goes there but I want to come back to her again ... You know? You don't want to go too long: you alone that phrase, and I alone that phrase. Somehow you want to come back again. So, the puzzle starts, the structure starts. And, you know, we indirectly also gave tempi, by knowing we want to be together, somehow.

#### 10.4.5 First Time on Stage: Intimate Reversals

The shift in rehearsal from the dance studio to the stage is a giant leap—the scale and context of the theater change the habitat of working and the participants' perception of the "studio-born" choreography.<sup>65</sup> Forecasting the audience's perception becomes critical: How might this dance be perceived? To imagine the audience's perspective, Forsythe must move away from the dancers and adopt distance. From my experience, Forsythe often chose to delay this, and this is indeed what takes place in *Duo's* stage rehearsals. In the video documentation of January 10, 1996—the first stage rehearsal—Johnson and van Berkel are on the stage of the Opera with Forsythe, inhabiting the vast space like an intimate studio. Forsythe has postponed the final step—to move back and sit in the tech booth or in the audience. This suggests that he wants to continue to work intimately: with his body, his voice and the interaction of dancer-choreographer in the studio. There is, fortunately, still time—ten days until the premiere.

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65 American choreographer Doris Humphrey notes in her manifesto *The Art of Making Dances* (1959): "One of the peaks of anxiety in choreography is that moment when the studio-born dance is transferred to the stage. Immediately space works magical and often appalling differences. Distance has weakened almost everything about the dance. Dynamics are not so strong, personalities are dimmer, timing looks slower [...]. Also, there is a seeming illogicality in the fact that detail is much more apparent at a distance. One would think that small movements and inaccuracies would be easier to see at close range. Not so, in practice." Humphrey, *The Art of Making Dances*, p. 161.



*Figure 38. Video still of the first stage rehearsal of Duo, January 10, 1996. From left to right: David Morrow, William Forsythe, Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

*Figure 39. Video still of the first stage rehearsal of Duo, January 10, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, William Forsythe, Jill Johnson.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

The stage rigging is lowered, so there is no theatrical lighting—just work lights. A few chairs are at the front; Forsythe sits on a table, his jacket thrown beside him. In silence, he watches the women perform the structure that he has set in the last studio rehearsal, his left hand on his hip, hunched forward. Beside him, *répétiteur* David Morrow sits partially hidden behind a stereo. Between them is a device for communicating on the loudspeaker to the technicians. The camera zooms in and out. The women are caught in the middle of a unison phrase, both in practice clothes that make them look like harlequins: each wears a white T-shirt, van Berkel in sea-green pants, Johnson in orange. The only sound is of their bodies, folding, stepping, brushing and breathing.

They pass through the sequence with ease, without any rising action or intensity—the typical push in the middle that often occurs in Forsythe’s dramaturgies. After the women finish, Johnson looks down, clears her throat and walks forward, perhaps listening to the indiscernible remarks Forsythe is making to Morrow. Van Berkel releases her arms with a flung gesture that dissipates her presence sideways into the space. She steps a bit nearer to Johnson, but also lets herself breathe; both are panting. Because of their grace, one can easily forget how difficult this movement is to execute. Forsythe rises to his feet and, with two soothing vocal waves, reassures the artists: “Very, very good. Very, very good.” The women rise from their resting positions. Van Berkel smiles; Johnson responds, good-naturedly, “I was thinking while doing it, he’s not going to like this.” They talk and laugh, all mirroring the same posture: hand on hips, relieving tension in their lower backs. Together they seem to be satisfied with the arrival into the theater space and the potential for their current piece to take root here, in its new habitat.

The first critique is regarding the movement: Johnson and van Berkel display a professional allegiance to performing the movement with coordinative rigor, performing the movement identically. At this stage in the process, Forsythe however is interested in both identity and difference. This attention to difference is new since the last rehearsal. For example, when they ask Forsythe a specific question regarding a discrepancy in their arms, he comments that he prefers that they actually do it differently. After they try a problematic section again and miss their alignment to synchronize a motion, a conversation begins about how to perform it correctly. Forsythe runs between the two women, gesturing with both hands waving above his head, as if trying to stop a cat fight—lightly dissipating their questions and enforcing that they do not have to come to consensus here.

In the rehearsal that follows, Forsythe focuses on drawing out their differences when they perform different actions, as well as using differences to find a new consensus. At one moment, he prompts Johnson to improvise a funky version of ballet jumps (*gargouillades*), to which they all laugh, Johnson riffing that she has “hoochie class.” Judiciously balancing his attention and the dancers’ potential to solo in the composition, he searches for something similarly ornate for van Berkel, proposing a traveling sequence with a flurry of taps and ornamental gestures of the legs sideways and back. “Differentiate things” he vocalizes, demonstrating what he means while grooving in his black high-top sneakers. When the bustle of movement results in discoordination, frustrating her, he touches her hands, comes near and gives her time—to encourage incorporation of this way of grooving that does not come naturally. She remarks, this way of “going back-

wards and forwards at the same time” is extremely difficult. But later van Berkel shows her own prowess at another moment in the sequence—bending her body backwards while rising up from the floor. Perhaps noting the opportunity to boost her, Forsythe expresses satisfaction and asks for Johnson to try the same; “unfair advantage” quips Johnson, always quick with her sense of humor. They all laugh. This give and take, challenge and attempt, seems to be an enjoyable type of comradery. Now Forsythe builds individual elements into the dance, carefully proportioned to be fair and just.<sup>66</sup>

Having sketched the initial choreographic structure within the previous two studio rehearsals, at this moment Forsythe finds opportunities to increase the complexity of this structure—organizing relations of Johnson and van Berkel’s movement that he expects to challenge the spectator’s attention. These micro-alignments and semi-correspondences are more intricate to arrange than the previous contrapuntal sections. As such, they also require more refined skills of pedagogy and direction for Forsythe to set them in motion. Some opportunities need only to be caught—accidents or mishaps that prove advantageous. Other choreographic decisions are deliberately produced through effort. For example, grasping a chance moment where the dancers end in alignment, Forsythe yells “Good!”, then both go into the next movement together. Forsythe continues to direct: “I want you [Johnson] to go forward then I want you to reverse backwards and sideways to Regina [van Berkel].” Johnson understands that she is to rewind her previous steps; she improvises a solution that Forsythe approves. Building momentum, Forsythe adds more: new reversals, a short insert (a *non sequitur*) of new, fast, isolated motions for both women, and a few intervals where one or both dancers walk backwards in curved spiraling paths. Forsythe crafts subtleties, where the performers change from pure unison to being synchronized in time, with contrast in the angle of their bodies. At one point he asks the dancers to find a way to change their places, so that Johnson is not always on the right side of the stage. These details are essential to making *Duo* essentially *Duo*, making it a dance not just in unison but one that negotiates different degrees and types of synchronicity. Forsythe’s editing is far from erratic—it is part of his skill in how to refine patterns and transitions of organizations. First draft the structure, then add nuances within it.<sup>67</sup>

From experience, I know that the cognitive challenge to incorporate and remember these nuances is extreme. While the camera is there as backup, the dancers seem not to need it; they learn rapidly. Miscommunications arise, particularly when Forsythe conceives ideas that are difficult to explain in words to the dancers—language may be an issue, as van Berkel is not a native English speaker. At one point, Johnson catches on more quickly; Forsythe takes time, to patiently explain exactly what he means to van Berkel. But overall, the dancers seem not to remember competition or stress. The dancers’ joy in moving together, their pact of support, coupled with Forsythe’s frequent

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66 This shows that despite withholding the effects of negative competition, Forsythe and the dancers do push and challenge one another.

67 Reversal is a strategy that Forsythe uses at large in his choreographies on many levels; that is, moving backwards, moving and then reversing the same action, moving in retrograde, changing the facing, doing things unusually, and so on.

praise and equally divided attention, keeps them optimistic. Yet the situation is still precarious.

The result of Forsythe's editing is that the structure becomes more "baroque," in the sense of being folded in compressed space and time.<sup>68</sup> Through repetition, and supported by his encouragement of the dancers, Forsythe composes a short insert, creating one of the most complicated sections of the choreography. (While this appears to be spontaneous, I realize Forsythe has actually fulfilled what he previously declared in the studio rehearsal: to use the movement *snakedress* as a knot in which to loop and re-loop structures.) Elsewhere in the composition, he adds repetitions, reversals, loops, changes of angle and changes of position. This makes the choreography a sort of labyrinth, with recurring branches. In sum, this knotting and folding of the sequence—growing more complex with each rehearsal—becomes a particular challenge of *Duo*. A dancer might lose track of 'where' one is in time: Is it the first, second or third repeat in the sequence?

Forsythe's edits reflect his aesthetic of counterpoint. Describing his approach elsewhere, Forsythe explains:

What I'm doing [...] is choreographing your attention. [...] The timing of the actions is so constructed as to engage your predictive faculties; for example, if you're observing a choreographic situation, you might realize that there's a certain amount of controlled information coming out of it, whether dense or sparse, recognizably patterned or stochastic. What I strive to provide are contrasting structural alternations that play with your anticipation of these informational densities.<sup>69</sup>

In this rehearsal, Forsythe's gaze and attention become the organizational axis; his speculation about the audience is the second spindle around which the cooperation churns. Such actions do not need to be conceptualized through "talking dance" as they are basic strategies within Forsythe's rehearsals, exhibited in his process of construction for many pieces. Forsythe is forecasting, based upon extensive experience, about the "constant reduction and selective actualization of aesthetic possibilities."<sup>70</sup>

In the second phase of the rehearsal, Forsythe continues to speculate, testing the studio studies in the new context of the stage. He tries the *Ars Magis* recording on low volume while the dancers repeat what they have worked on thus far.<sup>71</sup> This time the music proves less magical, even troublesome. When they finish, van Berkel talks directly to Forsythe while walking toward him. She illustrates what she means with her body, while speaking rapidly: "In a way without music," she makes a gesture that looks like sign language, bringing her fists together "it's more one." She catches her breath. "It's so"—she brushes and twists her rib cage, then circles both elbows forward back around. "You get more ..." then turning to Johnson for affirmation, "... Do you feel that too?"

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68 Here I borrow from Deleuze's reading of Leibniz. Relating this to Forsythe's work, see Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*, pp. 93–96. While Forsythe also develops folding one body's movement in the space of the kinesphere, what I mean here are structural folds: how the choreographic sequence is developed in space and time.

69 William Forsythe, in an interview from 2017. See Neri, "Interview with William Forsythe."

70 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 353, p. 356.

71 See footnote 61 in this chapter.

Supportively, Johnson says, “Absolutely.”<sup>72</sup> They are all aware of being at a critical point. Forsythe is trying to jump into the conversation, with soft interjections, explaining his view that what worked perfectly *once*, an arrangement of music and dance as if he had planned or choreographed it, is not something that *always* continues to be efficacious. Forsythe is planning and yet still listening to the potentiality of each of his choices. The music is put on hold. The reaction of his dancers is critical.

In the final hour of rehearsal, the artists continue to explore options. Using ballet terminology for jumps (such as *sauté*, *jeté*), Forsythe asks whether the movement in a certain section could be more sprung. In passing, Forsythe proposes some ideas about the lighting—perhaps after the first piece on the program, he might hang the light lower for *Duo*, to emphasize that the first piece is played very close to the audience (that is, downstage), and the second piece (*Duo*) opens the space back.<sup>73</sup> Forsythe floats the idea of developing some *non sequitur*—part of the anomalies and exceptions that he finds necessary in his choreography of attention. Champion then turns off the camera. When filming resumes, the dancers are running in a circle, trying cross-lateral movements—a parade that never finds its way into the choreography. Though these activities do not all become part of the final *Duo*, they show that the group is experimenting. They illustrate how Forsythe assumes directive authority, while still looking to his dancers as sounding boards for his ideas, as well as people he depends upon to enact them. Some of these proposals are quickly incorporated into the structure, some provide steps on the way to other decisions.

#### 10.4.6 Second Stage Rehearsal: “Take Your Time”

*Figures 40–41. Video still of the second stage rehearsal of Duo, January 15, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, William Forsythe, Jill Johnson.*



Photo © William Forsythe.

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- 72 As this example so beautifully indicates, there is often mixing of language, gesture and dance when the artists communicate with one another.
- 73 While the Ballett Frankfurt program for *Six Counter Points* listed the pieces as separate works, this shows that Forsythe is also thinking of them choreographically as one continuity.

The tape labeled: January 15, 1996, (five days before the premiere) begins in the middle of the women dancing the same unison phrase—the start of the sequence. They are finding their groove—I see more subtle delays, more intricate timings, more elasticities. The unison is growing more tethered, more magnetic between them. On the stage there is a square of white tape, like on the periphery of a tennis court, marking a boundary; the women willingly disregard and cross over these limits. The new segments inserted in the last stage rehearsal, the knots and intricate reversals, appear to be fluidly encapsulated into the sequence. Forsythe is hard to see and hear, sitting in the shadows behind a table, on stage.

I observe a new section of the choreography, perhaps introduced during an interim rehearsal with no video record. Johnson and van Berkel run backwards and fall to the floor—almost as if they had been shot, recalls dancer Allison Brown.<sup>74</sup> After a long pause, they intermittently slide their limbs to variations of *Duo* positions, made awkward or foreign by the obstacle of gravity—certain limbs stretch gracefully while others collapse passively on the floor. In this rehearsal, the dancers break their action and assume pedestrian postures: propping their heads upon their hands, as if leisurely reading magazines on the floor. They hold this resting stance for ten seconds before returning to the mode of improvisation. Perhaps this motif is the discovered *non sequitur* that Forsythe had expressed interest in during the last rehearsal? According to Forsythe, *non sequiturs*, exceptions and “anomalies” are there to keep the audience interested in the patterns that are emerging; without exceptions, minds become bored, placated.<sup>75</sup>

The dancers continue. Forsythe breathes a “nice.” Transitions appear to make sense. The sequence has been adjusted to have movements of more or less momentum, speed and surprise. Johnson and van Berkel are farther apart than they have danced in the studio. They finish the choreography, closing on *fifth position* and facing forward. This time there is a soft silence, in which the whole space settles—like a resonant last note of an orchestra playing. Softly, Forsythe says, “Very nice” and van Berkel beams a radiant smile, while walking forward to him. Johnson looks down. Both women move forward toward the choreographer, while smoothing their hair with their hands, presumably wiping sweat and brushing small hairs from their eyes. Van Berkel looks to Johnson.

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74 Fieldwork note, studio session with Allison Brown, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

75 In an interview in 2012, Forsythe says, “Counterpoint in bodies I think help [sic] keep the brain alert. It has to do with the way that movements are timed and the distribution of anomalies throughout the choreography.” See Whittenburg, “William Forsythe in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg,” p. 9. I remember the term “exception” and “opposite” was more common in studio parlance than “anomaly” in my time as a dancer in The Forsythe Company, used in particular during and after the creation *Theatrical Arsenal II* (2009); see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 29. In the next *Duo* rehearsal, Forsythe will choose to omit the exception described above (with the dancers lying on the floor), while keeping the slow *développés* he constructs for van Berkel and Johnson. This indicates that not just any exception will do; rather, there is a compositional art to the exception, both in its timing and mode of contrast. The sorts of exceptions in *Duo* change over the piece’s history, including more frame- and role-breaking over time. In *DUO2015*, for example, the dancers stop to catch their breath with their hands on their knees like basketball players, they exit the stage light, they roll into knots on the floor, and even bend the codes of their movement vocabulary, by making subtle gestures referencing b-boying and hip-hop.

What they say in their initial discussion—the three of them clumped together in the dark side of the stage—is difficult to hear on the archival video recording. They laugh. Forsythe moves around a bit, gesturing, looking eager to move. Van Berkel asks for a short rest. Forsythe announces: “Take a break,” then walks away, respecting that they are winded and need a moment for their bodies to soften. But, unable to hold back his burgeoning ideas, Forsythe turns around excitedly to talk about timings, demonstrating actions with his body. The dancers’ work has garnered his enthusiasm. Much of the subsequent stage rehearsal focuses on the details of timing. Forsythe begins, “It is getting too ...,” van Berkel finishes his sentence, “... even.” Forgetting the need for a break, they begin to work again.

Overall, the dancers are well aware that Forsythe dislikes dull phrasing. He is notorious for constructing pieces that “overwhelm” and “lull.”<sup>76</sup> Naming his work now not as “choreographing” but “rehearsing,” Forsythe develops the dancers’ timing choices through verbal coaching, mixing language and prosody. A collection of his comments exemplify these exclamatory directives: “Really push your bodies, nnnneeeah!” “Use more hip” “Stay on the edge. Do not go down” “e da da e um” “e ah, eh da um” “Get that a little more sudden!” “More more more, I would say” “Increase the scales of the curves. Make them demonstrative” “That’s it!” “One more time, ready?” “OK, on that thing. Turn it. The *glissades* come out of the turn. Know what I mean? You know what I mean!”

The imperatives, coupled with Forsythe’s excitement and affirmatives, cause the dancers’ movement to become much faster, even faster than they will ever perform this movement. Frequently, Forsythe vocalizes as they dance, becoming their music—giving a clear rhythm to work within; making accents, dynamic shifts and phrasing more precise. Johnson laughs that she is holding her breath, “You too?” she asks van Berkel, who answers “Yeah.” After further work, Forsythe affirms: “OK very nice. Better, better, better. Ok, better timings.”

Having caused their movement to accelerate, now Forsythe works at the other end of the range: slowing time. This is both respectful of the dancers’ energy and part of his strategy to expand the dynamic range of their effort—both at the high and the low end of the spectrum. At a new place in the sequence, Forsythe stops the dancers in action, and interjects, “I want to add something.” He then asks Johnson to stop and very slowly lift her leg to the side, using the ballet term: *développé*. He explains: “I want everything to stop” (meaning not only her, but also the audience). Johnson proposes some adjustments, adding an arm to shade the movement’s classicism. After checking the movement in context, Forsythe crafts a similar moment for van Berkel in which she lifts one leg to an extension back (not an *arabesque*, but an “alabesque” says Forsythe, using the dancer’s slang for a movement outside the classical canon, between back and side). Again, they receive equal attention from him, and likewise equal solos before the audience. Here, and again later in the rehearsal, Forsythe tells them: “Take your time.”

In the second half of rehearsal, the artists take more breaks from moving. Forsythe uses gaps to banter about details relevant to the piece. He tries out a title and Johnson quips back an alternative. They try new music. They continue to work on timings

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76 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 209–31.

and to discuss discrepancies: Johnson asks van Berkel about a specific section, “Do you take longer? Do you take more time?” Later, “We always get on the opposite leg there,” Forsythe resolves, “I would not worry about it.” He asks them to restart from the section called “tree” and reminds them twice, “Take your time. Take your time.” They finish with four minutes left; Forsythe checks his watch. They come back into their tight huddle on the stage. Conversation is again hard to hear. They talk about the floor section, perhaps making the change to cut the *non sequitur* they introduced. Champion leaves the camera running.

#### 10.4.7 Technical Rehearsal: Gold Costumes and a Big Stage

Figures 42–43. Video stills of the technical rehearsal of *Duo*, January 15, 1996. Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and technicians.



Photo © William Forsythe.

Technical rehearsal is the name of the challenging process of bringing the medial elements together on stage: the dancers trying movement for the first time in their costumes, the composer adjusting the music, and the technical team experimenting with Forsythe’s vision for sound, light and stage design. Stress looms in this type of rehearsal. There is little time left to interweave the production layers.<sup>77</sup>

In *Duo*’s technical rehearsal, Forsythe has broken from the dancers, pulling himself off the stage and into the technical post at the back of the theater, in the first balcony. The camera is also positioned from this vantage point, capturing the sound of conversations among the crew. Nearly the entire artistic and technical team working together on *Duo* is present at this rehearsal—the stage, sound and light technicians, the pianist and the dancers. Forsythe is the pilot figure whose decisions take command.

After marking through some of the movement, the two dancers perform from the beginning, for the first time, with costumes, sound and light. They are wearing sleeveless gold ballet dresses, with skirts to their knees and flesh-colored socks. Lights are focused down onto the stage. The background is dark, the flooring light grey. The space

77 Because of the complex settings of Forsythe’s choreographies, often these elements were tried out before, in the studio or first stage rehearsals.



is animated by the sparse sounds of a woman's voice speaking isolated words ("together" "two" "one" "two" "one" "suspense" "seven minutes").<sup>78</sup> This is punctuated by intermittent strains of live acoustics, soundings like an organ and a trumpet, adding volume and dramatic tension. These are all new conditions the dancers adapt to.

Forsythe is experimenting drastically with the lighting. He requests that all lights except from the neons coming from the front are turned off. To communicate with the dancers and everyone else simultaneously, he has a microphone. "Good, thanks ladies," he tells them as a signal that they can stop. Johnson jokes about her performance: "Fierce *développé* guys!" noting how Forsythe picked the worst moment to change the lights, right in the middle of her balancing on one leg! Forsythe and van Berkel laugh.

Everyone knows the importance and the perils of this sort of rehearsal. All the elements are being tested together. As longstanding collaborators, they are aware that these investigations might be arduous; that much change can take place until all the conditions are right. Forsythe is notorious for throwing out old ideas and finding new ones within this editing stage. The dancers face the real possibility that their work could fail—that they will not get to perform what they have rehearsed to this point, or will do so in a new manner. Practicing power, Forsythe manages these possibilities, shifting from "soft governance" to polite yet firm direction.<sup>79</sup>

When the video restarts, Johnson and van Berkel are performing the movement without sound, just breathing-movement. The stage appears extremely large. Forsythe is exploring the vision he has expressed in the first stage rehearsal: using the full space of the stage and finding the right light to illuminate them.

To be heard, Forsythe must give cues over the microphone. While the dancers are in the middle of dancing, he stops them. With an air of frustration, he switches to German to tell a technician with firm politeness that the floor needs to be taped as quickly as possible. The team uses the gap to multitask: the technicians tape, the pianist asks the dancers to demonstrate a cue (Johnson's slow *développé*), the dancers mark the movement together, the pianist and sound technician discuss timing. The hall reverberates with the deep banter of male technicians speaking in German and crashing noises—the sources of which are not visible in the tight camera shot which remains focused on documenting the dancers. A man walks across stage and returns with a roll of white tape. Drilling is heard and three men are seen taping the floor. Throughout this, Johnson and van Berkel continue to practice, moving forward onto the front of the stage when their space becomes occupied. They converse with Forsythe about the "spacing" of their movement on the stage—he requests the dancers to "use the whole big stage." Johnson jokingly making the sound of a truck honking as she passes the technicians.

78 The speaker is Dana Caspersen. This is the sound score for *The The*, a work by Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe, which premiered at Nederlands Dans Theater a few months earlier (October 1995) and will be the first piece, before *Duo*, on the program *Six Counter Points*.

79 On "soft governance," see Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 354. Mutual trust is especially important at such critical inflection points. In Forsythe's creative process, the mood and judgement of whether the process was going well often had a significant effect. In the occupational culture of Forsythe's ensembles, optimism and humor were used strategically by the dancers and Forsythe to lighten up tense situations. The dancers tended not to criticize and over conceptualize, demonstrating trust of the choreographer and one another.

The camera cuts; the construction work magically disappears; the dancers restart. There is the click of a stopwatch being switched on.

The dancers perform the first few minutes in silence before the musical elements come in (piano, a woman's voice and penetrating acoustic sounds of various orchestral timbres). As the dancers perform, Forsythe and the technicians experiment with the sound levels and the lighting. A spotlight appears on Johnson. Forsythe comes on the microphone again to request the dancers (softly) to "be a little closer together" when they dance. The women strain their movement, moving valiantly across the enormous stage. They finish a full run-through of the sequence without being requested to stop. There is the click of a stop watch. "Thanks ladies," says Forsythe, as Johnson collapses forward with her hands on her knees to breath. The piece is 9:08 minutes in duration. The camera cuts off.

There is no tape of the discussion that may or may not have happened after this exploration. In my view, the enormous space challenges the movement material. Equally, the expanse and heavy acoustic layer do not support the intimacy and togetherness that has been so critical to their version thus far. The dancers are courageously doing their best but their energy dissipates without a fitting theatrical frame to hold them. Though Forsythe is calling decisions, the materials themselves (the space, movement, light and sound) are also steering the common exploration of potentiality. The dancers' exhaustion is partly a symptom of the situation not cohering with what they are enacting. Because of a "genuine cycle of trust," the team continues to follow Forsythe's piloting without resistance.<sup>80</sup>

When the camera turns on, the team is trying something new. Van Berkel and Johnson are separated on a diagonal, having finished the movement *showerhead*. Van Berkel is downstage on a *black* dance floor, Johnson is upstage on the *grey* one. The contrast of the different colored floors acts a new register for the composition, constructing the space. Forsythe directs Johnson to perform the "tree" phrase, and then for both the dancers to run backwards, falling to the floor. Following this, he directs van Berkel to commence her low-level floor movement and then for the dancers to rise together to standing. Next, Forsythe proposes that he would like Johnson to repeat "tree" and then for her to suggest some traveling material to move upstage, before she and Berkel repeat the fall. Johnson arranges the movement immediately.<sup>81</sup> Forsythe takes the affordance of the contrast of the black and grey floor to suggest a transposition—Johnson and van Berkel switching places while falling (now Johnson downstage, van Berkel upstage). I recognize, finally, what has been missing in rehearsal thus far: the prologue of *Duo*.

Exemplary of most works in Forsythe's process, *Duo* comes together through many small decisions, and many people's contributions, based on trials along the way. The team has found the beginning to the piece, but through the 'wrong' context. The black and grey floor will not be part of the final *Duo*: ultimately the dancers will perform

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80 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 340.

81 Seconds later, Johnson forgets what she has done and van Berkel comes to her aid—illustrating the difficulty of remembering movement and their pact to help one another.

only with a black floor overlaying the apron, not using “the whole big stage.”<sup>82</sup> The materials at hand provide a creative contingency. The dancers are able to improvise and fill in the gaps for Forsythe, as well as to frequently pose suggestions—framed subtly as questions—that respect his authority to decide.

Forsythe is still not sure of the music, asking to go back to the *Ars Magis* recording they had tried previously, on low volume. As the dancers practice, Johnson offers van Berkel a hand to get off the floor. Regina gestures to her costume. “Feels what?” asks Forsythe. Van Berkel laughs, “The costume falls totally down,” pulling her top to show it sliding down her chest. Forsythe teases her: “Were they out?” Regina confirms, laughing “The breasts are out!” She appears very comfortable with her body and Johnson joins with her laughter. The costume sliding down is a minor annoyance that can easily be fixed by the costume designer after the rehearsal. They quickly return to business, running through the new sequence.

Experimenting further, different colored scrim come up and down. Music that sounds like Björk comes on, then a very spooky science fiction soundtrack with the sounds of birds, ethereal strings and ominous clangs. The dancers run through the entire choreography as all sorts of new sounds pierce and clutter the space—they are still entrained to one another. They appear very exhausted but also persistent and dauntless.

As they approach the end, Forsythe stops them, asking the women to come forward so that he can speak to them. Enacting a decision, Forsythe calls to the technicians, “*Hauptvorhang zu*” (close the main curtain). The stopwatch turns off.

He asks the dancers: “Do you think it would be possible? Do you think spacing-wise that we can do it on the apron?” Van Berkel points to the front and answers confidently “Yeah.” Forsythe justifies, “I am not getting any (*pause*). It is so nice to watch you up close. But I am not getting any—it is not visceral enough. And I think it would make you work better together. I feel sometimes you (*he searches for words*) pushing through steps.” The dancers’ chance to react is thwarted by the sound of multiple technicians talking on stage and the black curtain coming down behind them. Forsythe says to the person beside him, “I want to see how it looks in this lighting.” And then, after the light shifts, sounding positive, “Oh this is intense.”

Forsythe’s asks encouragingly: “Gals, just show me the beginning.” They dance for ten seconds. “Good. OK, that is good. We’ll try that tomorrow.” Van Berkel answers brightly “Yeah.” Between juggling talk with different technicians, Forsythe speaks to them: “Thank you ladies. Thank you very, very much.” He offers a quick correction about one movement, and then again, another affirmation: “Thank you very much ladies, today was just a question of lighting and ...” The camera turns off.

Figure 44. Video still of the dress rehearsal of *Duo*, January 19, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and an unknown photographer.

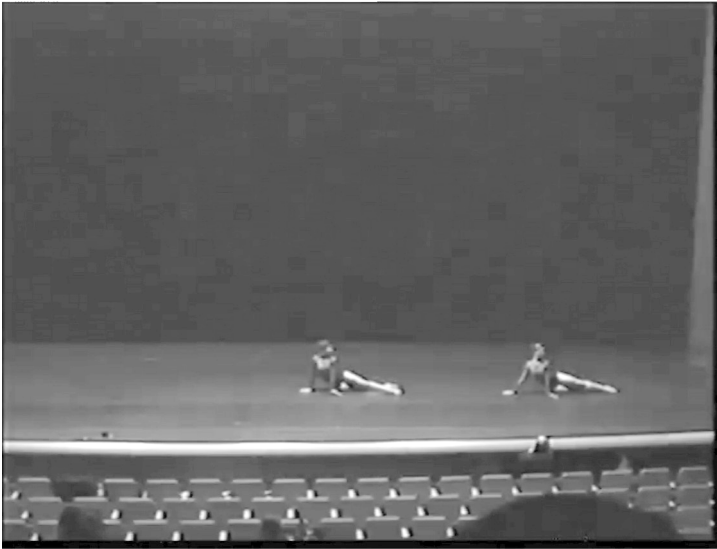


Photo © William Forsythe.

#### 10.4.8 Dress Rehearsal: Black Costumes

The women are on stage wearing black leotards—with long sleeves, translucent mesh above the waist, individually cut neck- and leg-lines and black opaque trunks.<sup>83</sup> These are the chosen costumes for *Duo*. Though barer than the gold costumes, they appear to be much more comfortable for the dancers to wear. Unlike the gold costumes, the black ones stretch and stay in place.<sup>84</sup> Before the run-through begins, the dancers are zipping through the sequence, practicing the movement with their arms—a method of cognitive review like speed-reading one's notes before an exam. They are sometimes talking, using their names for the movements, and sometimes laughing. The pianist is playing and the sound technicians are testing sound samples. With hindsight: all the intrinsic elements of *Duo* are in place.

82 The apron is the front part of the stage nearest to the audience. In the Frankfurt Opera House, it extended under the proscenium arch and over the covered orchestra pit, right up to the first seats of the audience.

83 From the changed structure of the beginning of the choreography, I deduce this must be after the previous rehearsal on January 15, 1996. It might be the “tomorrow,” mentioned at the end of the previous tape. What I observe is in the file labeled “January 10, 1996.”

84 Though I can only speculate, it is my intuition that the problems with van Berkel's costume in the previous rehearsal are what triggered the associative leap leading Forsythe to clothe the dancers in translucent mesh, exposing their breasts.

In the tech booth, composer Thom Willems has joined William Forsythe. Pianist Margot Kazimirska is backstage at the piano, playing the score that Thom Willems has given her. “We’re going to try a few different starts,” says Forsythe, as he and the backstage team discuss whether they should begin with piano or acoustics. With movement, stage, light and costumes chosen, the last step is the sound layer.

The piece still does not have a title. Cueing the pianist, “Margot, go,” to start playing, Forsythe jokes that he will call the piece “Mar Go Go,” to which Johnson makes a hilarious retort—imitating his proposal and making it sound like a parrot. The pianist behind the curtain cannot see the dancers and they realize there is no way to cue her to begin playing. Not wishing to lose time to have a technician locate and install a monitor, Forsythe decides that for today he would give her the cue himself. They will get a monitor for the next rehearsal. When Kazimirska voices a question backstage, Johnson repeats it so Willems and Forsythe can hear. Other messages pass back and forth over the intercom. The backstage crew is busy testing the pathways of communication they will need during the performance, creating a ruckus of overlapping voices.

Forsythe commands complete quiet. The stopwatch clicks on. The women dance the piece once, in the version nearly identical to the premiere. Outside of earshot of the performers, Forsythe whispers with Thom Willems while they are dancing, tailoring the sound levels: cuing sometimes the piano to rise higher in volume than the acoustics, and sometimes the swelling acoustics to become voluminous. Intermittently, the ancient music threads in. In the black space, the women’s movement appears fuller, yet lighter—more uninhibited, less pushed. Their breath is not lost in the soundscape. They appear to stand closer again and to be concentrated upon one another. At the end, Forsythe cues the piano to stop and says “And, lights out!” to indicate a blackout. Without losing a beat (entrainment), he goes onto the microphone to say: “That was absolutely beautiful ladies. Thank you. That was stunning. (*pause*). That was stunning. Thank you. You were absolutely ...” The camera cuts off. Forsythe affirms, from his distant position—via the only avenue he has, projecting his voice using a microphone—that he is grateful and that the work is beautiful. As a last gesture, Forsythe affirms the work as having reached a place where he is satisfied.

## 10.5 Analysis

The creative process of making *Duo* is a context-specific and contingent form of cooperation—a form of “thinking while making” rather than “thinking before making” that is heavily dependent on the real materiality of bodies and the situations of each rehearsal context.<sup>85</sup> In the timeline of creation, Forsythe moves from his role of inventing movement (being on the ‘inside’) to a role-shifting director (that is, ‘outside’ and ‘distant’)—arranging and editing the sequence, designing the theatrical elements, and taking the role of an outside eye. The role of the dancers is distinct from that of the choreographer in that they focus almost exclusively on memorizing and performing the designated movement together. They are not passive tools, but dancers who

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85 Ingold, “Thinking Through Making.”

speak with each other and Forsythe, making suggestions appropriate to their task and pact—to fulfill the movement potential. In comparison, Forsythe takes multiple views of the choreography as the piece emerges and is responsible for weaving the different threads of the work together: movement, light, sound, costumes and space. Chance and contingency, as well as the dancers' material bodies, are essential to making *Duo* uniquely *Duo*.

The production of *Duo* relies on longstanding practice creating choreographies together. It does not make something from nothing (that is, the blank page or clean slate). Nor does creativity involve one monumental decision that crystalizes a plan for making something novel. Rather, it involves bringing elements together and enabling them to change, through decisions large and small, and the contributions of many players.

The antecedent, the choreography *Marion/Marion* (1991), is a starting point that inflects ideas into the process. Forsythe's vision of the choreography (as involving unison and counterpoint) is not presupposed, but comes in the first studio session (specifically, after the foyer and office rehearsals). Finding the proper lighting and spatial context is a decision made by Forsythe in the very last minute of the technical rehearsal, after exhausting other intuitions.

Salient factors shaping the identity of the piece include the pact between the two performers to dance together and not be competitive with each other. Also, the integrity of movement material made on the first day, which remains an essence focusing the dancers' pact to support rather than compete. Thirdly, the material conditions shaped the piece: lacking rehearsal space, the artists worked in unusual contexts, and these took influence on the duet (such as the entrainment produced by intimately rehearsing in the small space of Forsythe's office). The creation of *Duo* relied on the extensive trust between Forsythe and the dancers, and their mutual tolerance and sensitivity to choreographic potential. It was also significantly impacted by Forsythe's shift from soft to strong governance over the course of the rehearsals. The above resumé shows that *Duo* was not brought out of thin air, nor by the will and decisions of one person, but through processes of bringing people, materials, contexts and practices together.

How does the choreography become known or present to the people making *Duo*? And to what extent do these people understand the choreography in the same way? Because of their history of cooperating, the team members can share understanding: exploring as the potential of their creative materials produces an event, intense and interesting to them. Rather than being confined to communication through verbal language or "talking dance," this may be felt more as an affect, intensity or emotion than a conceptual articulation. Thus, their way of thinking while making is also a feeling while making. Yet there is also one clear moment of explicit validation. This occurs at the point when all the elements come together and Forsythe publicly (that is, over the loudspeaker) praises the dancers' work after the general rehearsal. This suggests that *his* public recognition is primary for the team to acknowledge the work. Yet clearly before arriving at that point, the creation requires a web of people working in their respective mediums—artists, as well as support personnel.<sup>86</sup> Forsythe nets these efforts, by com-

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86 Cf. on personnel, see Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 77–92.

municating in different languages and with different repertoires and styles of direction (imperatives, questions, proposals, dialogues, and so on).

In the end phase of the process, the dancers are, to borrow a difficult image ‘the canaries in the coal mine.’<sup>87</sup> By this I do not mean sacrificial life forms, but sensitive creatures, who show early signs of the stage elements not providing a frame in which their movement, as practiced thus far, can be potentialized. Though Forsythe asserts authority in evaluating the intermediary stages of the choreographic process, it is also the dancers’ bodies that have the ability to recognize whether the practices are suitably congealing. For this reason, they hold great power. They are also, during creation, placed at risk (a stressful and energy consuming affair). Forsythe and the dancers, I believe, are equally cognizant of this unspoken aspect of their relationship. This supports my argument that both explicit and implicit understanding of the potential of a choreography forming are highly socialized and embodied.

In the example of *Duo*, technologies and modes of inscription provide seminal memory aids: from the video camera—without which Forsythe’s improvised movement would be lost—to the participants’ notebooks. These inscriptive and capturing modes are tools for committing a choreography to memory. Yet the artists’ practices of rehearsing and creating are equally critical to helping the choreography congeal. The *Duo* rehearsals demonstrate how talk and sociality, as well as nonverbal communication, are indispensable within the choreographic process. Forsythe and the team negotiate the powers of what are perceived and appreciated in the emerging dance: they actively risk, take chances and document all of this, in order to define a repeatable constellation of creative potential.

These observations are significant for our understanding of the concept of choreography. André Lepecki explains choreography as “not only a discipline or technology of the body, not only a mode of composition, not only a register, or archive” but an “apparatus.”<sup>88</sup> Drawing from Foucault, Lepecki observes how making dances is a means of defining signification and perception. Choreography not only sets in motion tools for preservation, memory and iteration of dance, it demarcates, “those hegemonic modes of aesthetically perceiving and theoretically accounting for dance’s evolutions in time.”<sup>89</sup> These forces are in play when Forsythe’s team creates—requiring the team members’ attention to preservation and tolerance of ambiguity, as they generate and eliminate.

This ethnographic approach has shed light on some defining aspects of Forsythe’s choreographic process in *Duo*, but also more generally—showing how Forsythe implements choreographing the audience’s attention, drawing on cognitive ideas about human interest in pattern emergence and change. This is seen most clearly in his editing process, in which he adds exceptions, contrasts and micro-structures, in the belief that these will be interesting for the viewer. He also coaches the dancers’ phrasing, to range from greater passages of “taking time” to other sections of acceleration and springing, based upon the principle that variance is pleasing and holds the viewer’s curiosity.

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87 This is an English saying, which refers to miners’ practice of bringing caged canaries underground with them. The birds, if exposed to toxic gases, would die, warning the miners to exit immediately.

88 Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” p. 120.

89 Ibid.

The process reveals little conceptual talk about aesthetic judgement and the meaning of the work in the studio. There is also almost no direction of the dancers' breathing, which emerges as an implicit process—necessary, and yet unguided. Words like “unison,” “counterpoint,” “cues” and “alignments” are the most common working terms, and they are general to Forsythe's working process, not specific to *Duo*.

Based upon this study, I would describe creativity in making *Duo* as the *moving thinking-feeling while making*—that is, *the tuning of collaborators to the potential of ecologies of materials, relations and practices*. The team, throughout the timeline of the rehearsals, moves quickly—crashing and colliding and testing, without extensive time for reflection and justification. Aside from the names of the movement and phrases, the common terms used are already there, in place from other choreographies. For the participants, creating choreographies involves events emerging, differently than in daily life, in which the forces and feeling of attuning are palpable and exciting. *Duo* shows creation as a *process that tunes to an event's potential*.

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This chapter has analyzed the creation of *Duo* at the Ballett Frankfurt in 1996. Section 10.1 described the sources and methods for the reconstruction, based on study of approximately ten hours of archival videos of rehearsal as well as interviews with *Duo* dancers (Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel) and with William Forsythe. The limitations of these sources were discussed critically. Section 10.2 has oriented this account of creation within Caspersen's overview of the range of Forsythe's processes. Section 10.3 discussed the relationship of *Duo* (1996) to its precursor, *Marion/Marion* (1991). Section 10.4 chronologically analyzed each stage of the team's rehearsal: from the first rehearsal taking place unusually in the theater foyer, to the final dress rehearsal on stage. Rich description of the labor has been interwoven with lengthy citations of interviews with dancers van Berkel and Johnson. The writing is evocative, designed to give readers the feeling of being in the room with the artists as they work.

Section 10.4 analyzed the process. The argument I build through this interpretation is that the creative process making *Duo* adhered to a semi-directive and cooperative “thinking while making” approach that was heavily dependent on the real materiality of bodies and the context of each rehearsal.<sup>90</sup> Forsythe's choreographic leadership involved initiating, editing and focalizing the team's shared intentionality. Having created together before was vital to the efficacy of this complex, mediated and altogether swiftly cohering teamwork—this adventure of exploring potentiality and discovering together.

In this chapter, I have shown how creation was processual: bringing something new into existence, while relying on old components and practiced methods. In the subsequent and final chapter of this manuscript, I will consider the possibility that creation was not limited to the phase of making of *Duo* in 1996, but rather sustained and continually fostered the *Duo* project throughout its history.

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90 Ingold, “Thinking Through Making.”





## Chapter 11: Re-Creating *Duo* (1996–2016)

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*Duo* is a “project” whose subject matter was revised over decades—illustrating a processual approach to choreography, crucial in Forsythe’s oeuvre.<sup>1</sup> Forsythe exposed relations and continuities between his works, similar to editions and multiples in visual art: the *Duo* project, the *Detail* series, and the *Scott* complex.<sup>2</sup> In my interviews with Forsythe and the dancers they described their repertoire as a reservoir of interconnected and evolving ideas, stage elements and movement practices. “There’s always more to find out,” explained Brown.<sup>3</sup> “There was always some part left over,” said Forsythe: “I, obviously, don’t understand everything that I do. So, it would reiterate itself. On some level.”<sup>4</sup> Each choreography generated a world and preserved methods and materials for reflection. The *Scott* series illustrates this lucidly. I shall consider this rich example first, supporting subsequent discussion of *Duo*.

Forsythe’s *Scott* complex shifted dramatically across eight iterations over 35 years—what Forsythe likened to changing from a “giant film” to a “haiku.”<sup>5</sup> The first performance, *LDC* (1985), unfolded from Forsythe’s interest in the British explorer Robert Scott’s perilous *Terra Nova Expedition* to the South pole (1910–1913). The thematic material served, according to Gerald Siegmund, “as metaphor for the unknown continent of ballet.” Returning to these components two seasons later, the Ballet Frankfurt produced the one-act ballet *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (*The Interrogation of Robert Scott †*, 1986), which remained in the repertoire of the ensemble throughout the 1990s. Elements of the stage setting from *LDC* were reused in this version, placed in the periphery of the space with the dancers at the center—their movements, according

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1 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

2 The *Detail* series: *The Loss of Small Detail* (1987), *the second detail* (1991) and *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991). The *Scott* series: *LDC* (1985), *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (1986), *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (2000), *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000), *7 to 10 Passages* (2000), *Wear* (2004), *7 to 10 Passages* (2010), and *Whole in the Head* (2010). On the *Scott* complex see in particular Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” pp. 20–29; Cf. Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” pp. 48–50.

3 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.

4 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

5 Ibid.

to Siegmund, reorganized through computer operations.<sup>6</sup> Over a decade later, this one-act piece was expanded into a new full-length version for the 1999–2000 season. While aspects of the prior performance were preserved, “such as the two tables behind which questioning took place or the man with the bucket over his head circling and crawling around the stage,” Siegmund observed that overall: “the new version bore little resemblance to the earlier one.”<sup>7</sup>

Working fluidly with his repertoire, Forsythe frequently expanded one-act ballets into longer works<sup>8</sup> and inserted existing one-act pieces within larger, new works.<sup>9</sup> Occasionally this process even went in reverse. From the full-length *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (2000), two acts were extracted and performed independently: *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000) and *7 to 10 Passages* (2000).<sup>10</sup> While both used the same tables, creating different landscapes on the stage, the music and movement material varied considerably. In *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, the industrial roar and virtuosic flurry of movements was organized within a hazardous grid of metal tables. In *7 to 10 Passages*, a line of performers was revealed between the tables at the periphery; glacially, they traversed at a snail’s pace from the back to the front of the stage, precisely twisting and refracting their motion.

At the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe returned to the *Scott* series for his second to last production—which could be interpreted as a deliberate gesture of reflecting upon an era’s process. The work *Wear* (2004) was a sparse piece for three dancers. Siegmund recalled: “If the clothes and the setting are to be trusted, they have ended up somewhere in the Polar region. But during the performance the dancers free themselves from their straitjacket-like clothes and muffled movements. Even the igloo is finally pulled down. [...] A strange and curious new activity sets in that seems to produce movement playfully from the very constrictions of movement.”<sup>11</sup>

The *Scott* history offered new potential to Forsythe’s second ensemble, The Forsythe Company. After a new version of *7 to 10 Passages* (2010) was created, the dancers invested further in a movement phrase from the Ballett Frankfurt history of the *Scott* series, developing group scenes and solos that became the piece *Whole in the Head* (2010). Dramaturg Freya Vass-Rhee observed how the creation process forged collaboration between “veteran” and new company members, rekindling movement materials going back over twenty years in time and scaffolding different generational skills.<sup>12</sup> At the end

6 Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” p. 48.

7 See Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” p. 21.

8 Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” p. 24. Further examples include, *As a Garden in This Setting* (1992/1993) and *Woolf Phrase* (1995).

9 Examples include: *Self Meant to Govern* (1994) appearing within *Eidos: Telos* (1995), and the third act of *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005) being combined with *Clouds After Cranach* (2005). For further examples of such modified pieces, see Siegmund, “William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann,” pp. 24–25.

10 For example: the short work *Double/Single* (2002) was extracted after making the full-length work *Kammer/Kammer* (2000).

11 See Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” pp. 20–21.

12 Vass-Rhee, “Schooling an Ensemble.”

of The Forsythe Company, Forsythe drew upon movement and acoustic material taken from multiple existing works, including *Duo*, to make the piece *Study#3* (2012).

These examples help to make transparent Forsythe's process of creation as reiteration, expansion and recycling—as “re-creation.”<sup>13</sup> Re-creation was the norm, rather than the exception in Forsythe's oeuvre and was a vital force shaping the practice of choreographic labor. Understanding how these series embody aesthetic knowledge, forms and methods has been one challenge for Forsythe scholars, which I aim to make clearer in this final chapter. I will demonstrate that Forsythe's choreographies are complexly marked and re-cycled objects—defined by a performative character of being singular and plural. While Forsythe was required in his contract to make a specific number of premieres per season for Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company fitting appropriate conventions (of duration, number of spectators, number of dancers and the practical limits of the theater space) this, however, did not stop Forsythe and the dancers from, in addition, re-creating older pieces. Forsythe reasoned that many pieces are not closed and finished entities. Rather they leave aspects that are unfinished.<sup>14</sup>

In this chapter, I sharpen my arguments about the processual nature of Forsythe's choreography, through a final and distinct review of the *Duo* project's chronology. Considering the dancers' testimony and existing documentation of their rehearsals, I examine how they enact choreography in practice: their activities of learning, passing on, rehearsing, adapting and performing the work. I thereby show how these activities constitute an occupational culture that valued the *re-creative* components of longstanding cooperation, defining choreographies that dynamically shift over time.

These considerations also point to changing ideas towards choreographic authorship. Generally, while the creating process was intensely relational, the procedure of editing and selling Forsythe's pieces was more object- and authorship-oriented. Public recognition of authorship of *Duo* shows these changing attitudes. In programs, the choreography, stage design, lighting and costumes of *Duo* and *DUO2015* were attributed to Forsythe. After 2018, Forsythe retained the title of choreographer but ascribed the authorship of the program *A Quiet Evening of Dance* to himself and the dancers jointly; he also shared credits for lighting and costume design.<sup>15</sup> The dancers divided financial profit equally with the choreographer.<sup>16</sup> Substantiating this further, in dialogue about her biography for this manuscript, *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson described her current relationship to Forsythe—touring as a performer in *A Quiet Evening of Dance*—as a “co-collaborator,” a term designating co-decision making.<sup>17</sup> These titles mark changing times in which dancers' contributions are receiving greater recognition, both in dance studies and in the field of practice.

The stages of learning *Duo*—in which the dancers explore *how* to practice—are very insightful. They are insightful because they show conventions of rehearsal and performance that were transformed and adapted. This gives vision into the constitutive power

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13 Dana Caspersen, videoconference interview with the author, December 19, 2018, emphasis mine.

14 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

15 See credits in Appendix A.

16 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

17 Jill Johnson, email to the author, October 3, 2019.

of their choreographic practice—enmeshing practice, performativity and subject-constitution.

**“There’s always more to find out.”**

**Interview with Duo Dancer Allison Brown in Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.**

*Sitting together in front of a video monitor, watching a performance of Duo from 1997, Allison Brown is dressed warmly in a bulky sweater, and I in a light blue one. Sometimes she stands to explain something to me, turning away from the computer screen to dance.*

LIZ: You mentioned before that the first performance that you saw of the Ballett Frankfurt, before you joined, I think you said that you saw people having fun, that it was sexy, that it was free, that the movements looked free, that you wanted that too. Did you feel that with *Duo*, that it gave you ...

ALLISON: (*interjecting*) Later I could ... Later I got there, but at the beginning I was just freaked out and just trying to get through it okay—in the sense of remembering choreography and trying to stay with [my partner] Regina [van Berkel]. Because she’s very daring and demanding and, so, I was just trying to keep up with her. [...] I mean basically the whole thing that I learned about working in Ballett Frankfurt is there’s more: there are more questions, there are always more questions, there’s always more to find out, you’re never just satisfied, and kicking back with how you do things or how you are working or ... You are always trying to look at things from another angle. I learnt that from Regina, from Jill [Johnson], although I didn’t work so much with her, but Dana [Caspersen] ... I’m watching her [Caspersen] work, approaching roles again a year later and re-taking it, re-looking at it. So, it was never like a sky opening, rainbow sunlight through “aha, I made it, I’m me, I’m free!” I never really got there ... I mean, I *did* get there and there were moments, but it wasn’t really like a clear path to get there and a clear staying of that in that. There were repeated moments of feeling that, but not all the time, because it’s just so fucking hard work all the time. (*laughs*)

## 11.1 Learning *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt

For many companies, the process of “passing on” repertoire from dancer to dancer is a vital source of rejuvenation for a dance work. Dance scholar Gabriele Klein has examined how, as dancers question and bring their experiences to the piece, they also reflect on the work’s “contemporaneity,” between when it was made and the moment of rehearsal.<sup>18</sup> These factors enable a piece to adapt and change, while still preserving continuity of relational investment. To follow this chronology in relation to *Duo*, readers are recommended to refer to the visualization of the dancer pairs in Appendix C.

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18 See Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, on “passing on” in particular pp. 210–22; on “contemporaneity” in particular pp. 386–96.

“I learned [*Duo*] by doing,” underlines dancer Allison Brown, reflecting upon her history of dancing *Duo* from 1996 until 2003. This was not a “clear path” but years of exploring her approach to the choreography, her way of being with her partners and her own identity, amidst a lot of challenges. *Duo* was one of the first works Brown learned after joining the company; she was also the first performer to learn *Duo*, chosen by Forsythe to take on the role of Jill Johnson after she left the company.<sup>19</sup>

Brown was taken under the wing of Regina van Berkel to learn the role of her partner, Jill Johnson. It was standard within the Ballett Frankfurt for dancers to teach one another their own parts. Not having seen the premiere of *Duo*, nor overlapping with Johnson in the company, left Brown with a gap to define her own expectations of dancing Johnson’s role in the piece.<sup>20</sup> They rehearsed quickly, with the support of performance video documentation, having only a few weeks to prepare. The first performance, memorable for Brown, was a Gala for her Majesty the Queen of Denmark.

Fortunately, van Berkel knew both parts well enough to help Brown acquire expertise. Brown remembers van Berkel teaching her, focusing upon the movement first, in the customary way of the Ballett Frankfurt with its rich practice of movement analysis. Brown recalls moving, studying and repeating; moving, studying and repeating:

Every detail possible, over and over again, everything. Phrases, I think we started with phrases, and just like the detail, how the arm and the hand and the shape of the wrist and the hand. I never worked, no I did, I had worked like that before, with Saburo [Teshigawara], but just somehow it was different. And just the two of us. I think there was someone else in the room, but Regina [van Berkel] was my teacher.<sup>21</sup>

Comparing her prior work as a dancer in other companies, Brown emphasized that in the process of learning *Duo* one’s partner “really supported you,” sharing the wish to make the process meaningful and interesting.<sup>22</sup> The artists also shared a strong desire to make the performance successful—an achievement marked by the response of the audience and, also, importantly, of Forsythe and one’s partner. This way of working shows that *Duo*’s choreography is more than just an assembly of steps. It is a mutual project in which the dancers share stakes in a successful relationship.

Rather than rivalry, the dancers showed kindness to one another—not competing, but complementing. The prior togetherness of *Duo* was so special—between Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson—that van Berkel sympathized it could be uncomfortable for Brown to enter into this process. Van Berkel tried to be very “caring” to Brown and to give her a sense of freedom: reinforcing that they should not be bound to reproducing the previous version of *Duo*. Van Berkel insists that she did not simply “teach” *Duo*. In our interview, she explains herself by demonstrating holding Brown in an embrace and warmly encouraging: “Come on! We are going to find our way, together!” In this way,

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19 Brown had worked previously in the New York City Ballet, and with choreographers Twyla Tharp, Amanda Miller and Saburo Teshigawara among others; see her biography in Appendix D.

20 Johnson was a member of the National Ballet of Canada for three seasons in the middle of her long tenure working with Forsythe in Ballett Frankfurt.

21 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

22 Ibid. See also Brown’s biography in Appendix D.

van Berkel pushed Brown to take agency and situate “her desire” within the work.<sup>23</sup> Brown was adapting to the rehearsal practices of the Ballett Frankfurt—learning to go beyond repeating and perfecting steps, conventions she had learned in the occupational cultures of other companies that she had worked with. New to her was the focus on the social aspect of being a confident partner.

The relationship between *Duo* partners was one of *equal* counterparts (“We were both leaders, we were both conductors, we were both followers!”).<sup>24</sup> It was inappropriate for a more experienced dancer to exhibit greater authority. At times, dancers reported difficulty in mutually agreeing to take turns leading or trying to refrain from settling into a hierarchical relationship. New dancers who came into partnerships with more experienced *Duo* dancers, as Brown’s testimony shows, could be daunted by the seniority of their partner; others were confronted with the existence of a model to emulate; all recalled the formidable coordinative difficulty of the steps and remembering the sequences. In studying the archival performance videos, I see such coping in play: where the new dancer is slightly behind in tempo, or the experienced dancer makes more decisions—such as cueing, breathing or stepping first. Brown recalled it took years before she found her place with confidence in the equality of the shifting “leadingfollowing,” acting and responding, surprising and being surprised by one’s partner.<sup>25</sup> These later performances—in 2003 and 2004—resound with new musicality, a rhythm distinct to the musical way Brown found to be with her partners.

In my interviews with van Berkel and Johnson, they mention Forsythe frequently. This is less apparent with dancers later in the history of the *Duo* project. Johnson and van Berkel’s sense of *Duo* appears to remain tied to the intimate practice of making the work with Forsythe in 1996. Forsythe generally stayed in the background of the early rehearsal process, waiting until the dancers had proficiency before coaching and making choreographic revisions. He trusted that dancers with prior experience dancing the work had the best competence to help someone new come into the choreography. Forsythe tells me, “I always say I am the *how* guy, not the *what* guy.”<sup>26</sup>

The vital characteristic of Forsythe’s choreographic practice at large is the processual aspect of choreography, the practice’s openness as a generative and emergent phenomenon changing over time. The choreography is plastic, changing in an active process where all participants invest and explore *how* its materials can be rekindled. Forsythe engaged with what new dancers could bring out in *Duo*. This is what *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper regarded as his general strength—in letting the dancers “inspire his vision.”<sup>27</sup> Brown remembered about learning *Duo*: “[*Duo*] It was still new for [Forsythe] too, because he had just made it a few months before, like half a year before, Jill [Johnson] had left and I took her place and so he was interested I think to get it back, and continue working on it.”<sup>28</sup> In recollection of Forsythe’s working process, Brown affirms that

23 Fieldwork notes, interview with Regina van Berkel, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

24 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

25 Drawing from Erin Manning, see Lepecki, “From Partaking to Initiating,” p. 34.

26 William Forsythe, phone interview with the author, January 30, 2019.

27 Francesca Harper, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

28 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

Forsythe treated choreographic pieces as works in progress, taking interest in the continual revision of his pieces. This was also implicit in van Berkel's testimony: she knew that Brown must not imitate what came before—that they would find something new, through her care and Brown's investment. *Duo* was thus developed along the contingencies of each pair, with Forsythe exerting influence after the initial phase of careful transmission.

New dancers were brought into *Duo* for pragmatic reasons, such as when a dancer was injured or had left the company. Given the possibility of injuries (typically from general overuse, such as one's back being out or knee strain), it was sensible to have others ready to step in. However, for more than these reasons, Forsythe generally took interest in the process of how a piece could grow and change through the introduction of new performers—reflecting his value of choreography as a processual medium, adapting to people, locations and times. This kept the work in creation, without needing to invent something new from scratch.

In cases like *Duo*—small pieces that only few dancers enacted—passing on the choreography enriched the ensemble, giving more people access to the embodied knowledge within the work, exemplified in *Duo*'s particular movement and relational qualities. Allison Brown was given knowledge through Regina van Berkel and indirectly from Jill Johnson. Comparably, when Regina van Berkel left the company, Brown passed on that information further. This passing down and sharing was central to the ensemble's knowledge and emotional ties, reflected by Brown's alliance to van Berkel, as the person who taught and cared for her. *Duo* was a contexture of learning that was beneficial to spread within the company—to extend experience into the folds of the other dancers' bodies and knowledges.

Most dancers wanted to be recognized as good—to receive affirmation from Forsythe, their peers and the audience. Yet some new *Duo* dancers reported struggling with finding the right way to be a good dancer. Their loyalty to repeat or reproduce the movement exactly as it had been demonstrated or performed before, a value taught in many other traditional institutions of western dance education and performance, could be a problem—blocking them to the relational and creative attunement.<sup>29</sup> The dancers' education and prior experiences brought different values to the enactment of choreography, shaping the styles, rights and freedoms of what a dancer should and should not do.<sup>30</sup> In *Duo* it was not always possible for the artists to feel free from the stakes or the history of the piece. They were exposed to the possibilities of success and failure. Would they be able to perform as well as their partner? Or as well as previous pairs?

Partners Watts and Gjoka reflect—from their position now as confident dancers performing the most recent version of *Duo*—that in the beginning they had not found

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29 As one example supporting this from my fieldwork, a *Duo* dancer explained: "If Bill shows something, then I have to do what he's done. [...] Some people would just do something like he did. I was trying to do *exactly* what he did." Source: anonymized citation. Cf. Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 103–4.

30 For a related consideration of talent, body type and mentality of work in classical ballet, see Wulff, "Experiencing the Ballet Body," p. 132.



their way, finding the movement material technical, even old, and just not right for their bodies. Unlike van Berkel and Johnson, who had created *Duo* and who felt a sense of innate belonging, new *Duo* dancers had much more varied experiences. Some new *Duo* dancers struggled with feelings of inadequacy in filling their predecessors' shoes; others took to *Duo* with ease, such as *Duo* dancer Cora Bos-Kroese. For her: "This [*Duo*] felt really like home."<sup>31</sup>

Many of my field notes could be cited for evidence: *Duo* dancers and the wider company culture of Forsythe dancers were resources for one another. *Duo* was vitalized through dancers reflecting upon their practice *together*. The dancers agreed that their interpretation should continually and curiously question the piece. To substantiate this claim, when Jill Johnson returned to the Ballett Frankfurt in 2000, she had the opportunity to dance *Duo* with a number of new partners. She stressed that each time this required development:

There was an adjustment every time, 'cause you get so used to someone else's timing and just their being. And then, when your timings are based on that—you know, it's a partner—there was always a period of adjustment and I wanted to remain curious. And it was different for Allison [Brown] and I to get used to each other and create from what it was for us together. And then also with Natalie [Thomas], and Cora [Bos-Kroese]—it was fascinating every time. I learnt more every time.<sup>32</sup>

Like van Berkel, with whom she had created *Duo*, Johnson understood that *Duo* has to be created from what the two partners are *together*.<sup>33</sup>

Through these examples, defining aspects of the occupational culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company can be brought into focus. First, an experience and understanding of choreography as in-process, relational and plastic—not as an organization reproduced, without novelty entering into the process. Secondly, knowledge of *Duo* is understood by the dancers to be mobile; the dancers value the speculative aspect of imagining, experimenting and mobilizing one's point of view. Lastly, the professional environment invests in practicing as labor, inviting risk and uncertainty into this process. Processual, relational, speculative and risk-taking—the choreographic logic is creative at its core.

**"Yes, I did switch roles."**

**Interview with Allison Brown, Frankfurt am Main, September 23, 2016.**

LIZ: You switched roles?

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31 Cora Bos-Kroese, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

32 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016.

33 Interestingly, when one compares the first pair of *Duo* dancers to the subsequent generations, the relational and creative approach to interpretation is not automatically embraced by the new dancers—especially those espousing more traditional ballet values about replicating a movement exactly.

ALLISON: Yes, I did switch roles. 'Cause I did originally Jill [Johnson]'s role, after Jill left the company. And then when Regina [van Berkel] left the company and Jill came back, I switched to Regina's role. I felt like I had learned so much from Regina and we look a little bit alike and some people actually mistake us for each other, so I felt like more connected to Regina's role and just Regina in general. 'Cause Jill, I didn't really know her and I didn't think I tried to be Jill, when I first did it. So I was more like leaning towards Regina, the Regina way than the Jill way, and so when I actually got to do the Regina role it felt more like me, I guess.

LIZ: And can you describe the difference between the Jill way and the Regina way for you?

ALLISON: They are different people! There are differences in the movement quality and coordination.

LIZ: And musicality!

ALLISON: Yeah, for sure. I also experienced it in the alignment of the movement sometimes, whether the torso was more horizontal or vertical. Maybe it's 'cause Jill comes from a strong classical background, and Regina more contemporary.

LIZ: When you teach *Duo* do you try and teach these ways?

ALLISON: No.

LIZ: Why?

ALLISON: I think that's not really ... I like to leave whoever I'm teaching it to ... I like them to be their person, and find their way at that specific time or that teaching of it. But of course, at the same time, the original people, their individual physicality of course has influenced the material, so it's also embedded, integrated, ingrained in the material anyway, but I usually don't try to have them be like Jill or like Regina, no.

LIZ: I would say that I see these qualities also in Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka] [the dancers performing *Duo* since 2013].

ALLISON: Mm, wait, so Riley does Jill, and Brigel does Regina? Yeah? Okay. Right, yeah of course, all that is passed on.

LIZ: Riley even studied with Jill when she was teaching at Julliard!

### 11.1.1 Roles, Heritage and "Jill-i-ness"

In rehearsals of *Duo* that I observe in 2015, the rehearsal director sometimes refers to the "Jill-person" and the "Allison-person" to give instructions (that is, the names of the dancers in the archival video studied in this rehearsal).<sup>34</sup> This illustrated to me the fluid

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34 Cyril Baldy, fieldwork observation of *Duo* rehearsals at CCN – Ballet de Lorraine, April 21–23, 2015.

way that persons could infiltrate into the bodies of the newest dancers, even when—in this case—the new *Duo* dancers had never made contact with Allison and Jill.

By the time of performance, however, the spectral nature of these forbearers should be subsumed in present dancers' embodied interaction. For Forsythe, the "history for me is *really* not the piece."<sup>35</sup> Forsythe notes that when the audience sees his choreographic work, years after it has been created, often it is no longer the original dancers performing; instead a new person is "giving his all." For Forsythe, the work is its present moment of performance. But in rehearsal, there are multiple realities in the room: sometimes calling up 'original' or earlier dancers, and sometimes focusing extensively on the presence of live enactment. As I studied *Duo*, I began to see these layers of history within the present—I saw how the past lingered.

The dancers learn through a lineage of passing down the dance. There is a twofold (and for them, not contradictory) obligation in this: to respect originality and value plasticity. Thus, taking on a role is a fascinating process of negotiating the choreography and exploring where it goes—how their interpretation can inflect the movement form, dynamic and timing. Reviewing archival performance videos with the dancers, I observe their extensive self-criticism as artists—always noting what did not go well and what could have been better—as well as their delight in watching each other, particularly their partners' movement. In a video elicitation with dancer Allison Brown, she laughs as she watches herself and partner Roberta Mosca, explaining to me that the manner in which they just performed a sequence is very "Jill." Brown describes Jill Johnson's movement quality as "finding all the possible movements in just that little bit. How you can break up, move the joints as much as possible—especially in *showerhead*." Brown suggests "I must have kept this 'Jill-i-ness.' Then Roberta learned it from me."<sup>36</sup>

Most dancers pause and search for words when asked to describe their partner's particular special qualities; most smile. Some point out that this is ineffable and that is why dance is their medium. Others react more affectively, telling of what they sense, and how they are inspired through them. I gather that their partners assisted them to stay present, to feel their bodies, to learn, to develop their coordination. Their partners helped them to find confidence, to feel comfort, to get out of their habits, to find inspiration, to feel the desire to play. Their partners supported them, confirming after a show that what they just created was not just ephemeral but was real and may endure. Their partners enabled them to dance *Duo*, to do something that they could not have done alone.

The significance of the body in choreographic practice has been explored by Leach and deLahunta, in an ethnographic study of dancers in Wayne McGregor's contemporary dance company in London. In this work, the authors articulate how movement is not just the shape-shifting of the body. Rather: "There is a quality to bodies that we feel, and in that feeling, a kinesthetic as much as an emotional response is central."<sup>37</sup>

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35 William Forsythe, team meeting discussing the project *Synchronous Object for One Flat Thing, reproduced* in Brooklyn, New York, May 5, 2006. Conversation between Forsythe, Rebecca Groves, Jill Johnson, Norah Zuniga Shaw and myself. Transcription by Norah Zuniga Shaw.

36 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Bern, January 23, 2016.

37 Leach and deLahunta, "Dance 'Becoming' Knowledge," p. 464.

Similarly, within *Duo*, each dancer offers his or her body movement, which elicits his or her partner socially—and if we listen to Leach and deLahunta, also morally and politically. The work of professional dancers involves feeling the dispositions of “desire, shame, imposition, power, politeness, domination or facilitation.”<sup>38</sup> In the context of *Duo*, the dancers desire to experience the potential of intimate co-movement. At times, they feel shame about their bodies, or their performance. They question the sensitive signals they receive from their partner. Rather than dominate, they explore how to listen to one another and the audience, and to creatively respond through breathing-movement. They learn to facilitate the experience of *Duo* for one another and the audience. For Erin Manning, “Facilitation aligns to the field of relation, to its tastes, its feeling, its immanent shapings, and it carries this differential potential across the productive abyss of nonconscious and conscious experience.”<sup>39</sup>

## 11.2 Reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company

In 2012, Allison Brown was invited by Forsythe to work with dancers in The Forsythe Company to help reconstruct *Duo*, which had not been performed since the end of Ballett Frankfurt in 2004—a gap of seven and a half years. These rehearsals included male dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka, both new to the piece, as well as female dancers Parvaneh Scharafali and Roberta Mosca, both of whom had performed *Duo* before but not with one another (Scharafali in Nederlands Dans Theater and Mosca in Ballett Frankfurt). The rehearsals ignited different perspectives and memories of the piece, making apparent some of the gaps in practice between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.

### 11.2.1 Riley Watts: Learning *Duo*

*Duo* dancer Riley Watts described his learning process as happening on many registers, in different phases.<sup>40</sup> Reflecting Allison Brown’s own learning process, he was instructed to place attention on the movement first, to copy and memorize the sequence. In Watts’ own words, he began a process of “translation”—transferring what he saw in seasoned *Duo* dancers’ bodies into his body. He explains:

It seems to me that the process of learning *Duo* went into different levels that overlapped with each other, but happened at slightly different times. Initially I think that we relied on visual input from the video and the *répétiteur* Allison [Brown]. It was necessary that I focus my attention onto observing and memorizing sequences of movement done by other bodies, either on video or in the studio with Allison. Very quickly after the initial observation of either the video or Allison, it was necessary to “translate”

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38 Ibid.

39 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 164. On facilitation of communication and the poetics of autistic communication, see *ibid.*, pp. 158–64.

40 *Duo* dancer Riley Watts provided me with my first impressions of learning *Duo*. See Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*.”

what I saw into my own body. Allison acted as an aid in translation, based on her own experience performing the piece.<sup>41</sup>

Watt's description of learning moving as an act of "translation" suggests the manner that movement becomes adapted, from one body to another. Like the linguistic passage from one language to another, each person dancing *Duo* has his or her body history and *habitus*, changing the manifestation of *Duo's* movement. Initially, there was an effort to replicate the movement and perform it as "identically" as possible.<sup>42</sup>

Watts explained how his approach then evolved: to focus purely on the form of movement was "incredibly boring" for him and, he also realized, incorrect. Watts emphasized that he and his colleagues discovered, "only copying the shapes of the movement would not be enough to do the piece well." *Duo* was not about a sort of unison that *appears* identical, but about sharing intentionality, focusing initially on "sensation of form."<sup>43</sup> Not only did sensual intentionality change how the movement appeared, but it merged the dancers into their shared project of simultaneously feeling breathing-movement. Watts described *Duo* not as a reproduction of movements, but as a "process of attention to sensations that the dancers are experiencing simultaneously."<sup>44</sup>

In The Forsythe Company studios where Watts was working there were no mirrors—Forsythe did not think they were necessary.<sup>45</sup> Without a mirror, it is difficult to correct outer appearance but easier to concentrate on the feeling of motion, the feeling of movement-moving. Watts remembered being directed to observe sensation by means of all available sensory modalities: tactile, acoustic, visual, kinesthetic, proprioceptive. The dancers attuned to their bodies—winding and unwinding, rebounding off the floor, moving through dynamic states of (dis)equilibrium. Watts felt the sensation of his skin and tissues stretching. His kinesthesia extended into his partner's movement: co-felt. Through rehearsing *Duo*, he became tied to his partner empathetically through learning a new sense of movement with him—through sharing "sensation of form" and feeling that his own sensations were tied to Gjoka's motion. For Watts, this was a change in his perception of what movement was: both his understanding of it, and how he enacted and performed motion.

Their breathing congealed this. Watts described the use of breath in *Duo* as a "song-like" description of the motion that helped him to remember the complex sequences of choreography. This "breath-song" was co-sung with his partner, and was also influenced by Forsythe, vocalizing in rehearsal.<sup>46</sup> It helped to recall the movement, which, without counts or music to follow, could be tricky to remember. On stage and in the studio, their audible breath helped the dancers to keep track of each other in space and time, like echo-location. The breath-song provided a sonic envelope, within which the two dancers could nest themselves intimately and engage "in conversation" with each other,

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41 Riley Watts, email to the author, March 3, 2014.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 9.

45 Van Berkel also remembered not needing a mirror for making *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt studios. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

46 Riley Watts, interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing on January 14, 2014.

aligning their motion.<sup>47</sup> They took this envelope from the studio to the stage, learning a mode of listening and feeling one another.

Already in these initial rehearsals, the dancers are acquiring a specific *Duo* practice. They are not just repeating and perfecting movement, though repetition is involved. They are finding out *how* doing and understanding *Duo*'s movement has to shift with their entry into this choreography.<sup>48</sup> They question, with their partners, what it means to share. In doing this, the dancers learn that there are multiple perspectives in *Duo*: their own, the choreographer's, the rehearsal director, other *Duo* dancers and, in time, the audience. Through the project of having—and communicating about—movement and sensations, the pairs bond and develop their *Duo* microcosm.

## 11.2.2 Archival Rehearsal Videos: January 19–21, 2012

The archival video documentation of *Duo* rehearsals is unfortunately very limited—with only videos of The Forsythe Company rehearsals in the period of January 2012 in existence.<sup>49</sup> During the three days actually documented, the pairs learning *Duo* worked on the stage of the Bockenheimer Depot. As is common in Forsythe's busy rehearsals, they work amidst other activities: other dancers rehearsing different pieces in the back of the space, warming-up happening on the sides, all accompanied by the technicians preparing for the afternoon rehearsals ahead. The dancers have memorized the Ballet Frankfurt sequence of *Duo* and are working to acquire fluency to perform it in unison. What seems to be at issue in these rehearsals is achieving movement mastery—the right timings and confidence, and of course doing this synchronously.

Talking to one pair intermittently as they dance, Forsythe stands up to demonstrate detail of the hands, an essential focus for him. He also encourages nuances in the timing through prosodic coaching—singing along with the artists as they move. He uses rhythm, intonation, tempo, stress and lulls in his voice to co-phrase the dancers' movement. His enthusiasm appears to help:

When you turn around, watch your right hand. Right! The hand looks too ornate. (*He demonstrates the hand like a claw.*) Too ornate. (*The dancer repeats.*) Yeah, much better. Longer longer longer. (*He demonstrates a longer hand.*) Longer hand line. Longer. It's a little bit like this. (*He demonstrates incorrectly again.*) So longer. Right. Better. Better. (*The two dancers continue in unison. Forsythe synchronizes with them, speaking:*) Eeeeeee—go!

47 Citation of Levinson and Holler in Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 10.

48 I understood Watts to be speaking out against other forms of movement transmission, as can be the case in the field of ballet, when movement learning involves the reproduction of a standard set of forms. In such a method, each individual is responsible for his or her actions. Wrong appearances are corrected by the rehearsal director or choreographer. Discussing intentionality is less a part of rehearsal. This relates to other examples I found in my fieldwork, of dancers wishing to reproduce movement perfectly or exactly, until there are no more corrections. Cf. Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 102–5.

49 Documentation exists for rehearsals held on January 19–21, 2012. In these, the audio is often ambient, making voices on stage difficult to hear. This reflects that Forsythe often did not document rehearsals reviving repertoire; instead, documentation focused on archiving performances and creation rehearsals.

Bah ee. Yeah! Right. This is where the body wants to hang behind. So have a game with your body! Go annnd. (*One dancer says audibly, "Yeah!" They continue. Forsythe multitasks, doing some work with the technicians. Then he turns back to them.*) Right and. Da da. Whoop! That's good. That's right. Eee ah! Ya dum, baaaa! That's right, good. Ha ha. Perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect. Wee (*rising in pitch*)!!! Ya da da da kum. Ka. And we are getting to the end—de da da da da da (*rising in pitch and slowing down*) dhhh (*lowering in pitch, releasing air*) ha ha (*laughter*). Ahhh right! That was good. Yeah! You can have a little longer pause. You can go. (*He sings a short melody.*) That was much nicer today.<sup>50</sup>

In the sunny rehearsal, the dancers perform well and confidently. Praise is ample.

On the next day, the rehearsal appears tense—with the dancers expressing doubts and making gestures that suggest stress. Working without Forsythe, the rehearsal director gives constructive feedback to the dancers, focusing on dynamics. She demonstrates “a balletic placed position that then gets *full*,” corrects movements that were too long or too short, and emphasizes with her breath and gestures how the dancers can proceed now to “be more in the flow.”<sup>51</sup> The eldest and most experienced dancer, who has already performed *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt, is the most vocally engaged in the rehearsal, articulating her questions about the movement and rehearsal approach. She asks the rehearsal director about the dynamics of one motion, and then uses that example to bridge to a larger issue. For her the *creativity* of the rehearsal process seems to be at issue, as well as finding out how to best approach the practice more generally. She asks:

I don't know how to make the choice about of what is flexible and what is fixed. Because many things have to be one way. You see what I am saying? But I think it is important to ask this question: When are these things fixed? And when is there the possibility (*pause*) of changing actually or finding these things? And I understand certain things don't have to have the same specificity of this dynamic. [...] It is a system also of rehearsing, and of fixing things, and trying to fix those points. And then, those things that are fixed, you try to accomplish them, and you create more tension [*indcipherable*] I am just wondering of ways to approach this. That's all.<sup>52</sup>

While the artists do not resolve this matter in the rehearsal, the question of the correct “system of rehearsal” is one that they continue to think about. The rehearsal director emphasizes that it is not a matter of dancing individually, but dancing *together*.

In this phase of rehearsals, the stakes of what it means to be together surface. At issue is the power of who can decide and communicate what is “right” in *Duo*, whether from the inside or outside the event of dancing. The dancers are vulnerable to this assessment. Watts testifies that, together with Gjoka, the rehearsal process became about

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50 William Forsythe speaking as Roberta Mosca and Parvaneh Scharafali rehearse *Duo*. The Forsythe Company archival rehearsal video, January 20, 2012. Forsythe is wearing a microphone, enabling accurate transcription.

51 Allison Brown speaking as the rehearsal director; archival video documentation of The Forsythe Company rehearsal, January 21, 2012.

52 Roberta Mosca, The Forsythe Company archival video, January 21, 2012.

finding “consensus.”<sup>53</sup> That consensus was predominantly an embodied philosophy, enacted in doing *Duo*—one forged between phases of critical reflection and discussion. The cooperation in rehearsal shows that choreography is negotiated, both implicitly and explicitly, and that perspectives within these intercessions are multiple. What was troubled and at stake, given the plasticity of the choreography, was the authority of who decides what is correct and incorrect about the practice. Choreography provides organization that changes with the artists’ negotiation. *Duo* becomes an event of collaboration, achieved through rehearsal, via the medium of choreographic work.

### 11.2.3 Canceled *Duo* Performances, 2012

Forsythe’s decisions to cancel the performances of *Duo* in 2012 are a challenging phase in the project history for the dancers. In place of *Duo*, Forsythe chose to assemble a different program interweaving new works and pieces of existing repertoire in which the dancers were already fluent.<sup>54</sup> These precarious moments illustrate how the ensemble might halt or suspend performing troubling pieces, resuming them later under different conditions. The ensemble was committed to open-ended rehearsal, and compliant to Forsythe’s authority to make difficult decisions that would keep change alive in the process. There was no public apology or significant energy spent transitioning when *Duo* was cut; not only must the show go on, but it was not part of the occupational culture to view change as failure.

Throughout the rehearsal process, and particularly during the difficult phase of 2012, the dancers’ “symbolic capital” is at stake.<sup>55</sup> Yet ‘failure’ in Forsythe’s ensembles is understood and accepted as part of the choreographic process; it is deemed constructive, not negative. One member of the team notes: “It’s needed. If you avoid failure, you will never get anywhere.”<sup>56</sup> Although Forsythe canceling performances is an emotional

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53 “When learning this piece, we had to synchronize and agree on how we thought we wanted to do it based on what we had learned from Allison [Brown]. We were given the information and then we would come up with a consensus between the two of us as to how we felt the best way to do it was.” Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, September 2, 2014.

54 The Forsythe Company forecast a production featuring new and existing repertoire for a run of eight performances in the Bockenheimer Depot, February 3–12, 2012. They rehearsed *The The* (1995) and *Duo* (1996), while preparing two new works (*Stellenstellen* and a piece under the provisional title *Trio*). One week before the premiere in Frankfurt, Forsythe chose to change the program to *Whole In The Head* (2010) and the new piece *Stellenstellen*. The *Duo* dancers had however another performance opportunity. For the tour to Brescia on April 20–21, 2012, what was proposed and prepared prior to travel was a new work, titled *Study#1*, followed by *The The*, *Duo*, and *N.N.N.N.* During the two days of rehearsals before the performance, Forsythe chose to again change the program: omitting *Duo*. The performance involved *N.N.N.N.* followed by *Study#1*.

55 Cf. Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 79. Here Wacquant draws upon Bourdieu’s concept of “social capital” to analyze the practice of novice boxers.

56 Forsythe’s production assistant Julian Richter, cited by Glentzer, “William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects’ Tricks Bodies and Minds.” See also discussion of failure by Heidi Gilpin, in Gilpin, “Aberrations of Gravity,” in particular pp. 114–15; linking this to the *Robert Scott Complex*, see Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” pp. 27–28. In particular Forsythe’s works *Die Befragung des Robert Scott t*, *Decreation*, *Human Writes* and *Yes We Can’t* explore varieties, aesthetics and the ethics of failure.



letdown for the dancers—specifically disappointing, embarrassing and stressful—their status as dancers is not injured. There is no need for the *Duo* dancers to ‘save face.’<sup>57</sup> On-lookers (including myself) showed empathy in support of the dancers and assured them of their continued value to the team and the process of choreographic re-evaluation.

The challenging rehearsals in 2012 are a telling and significant phase in *Duo*’s project. Changing partners and contexts, Mosca (who had danced *Duo* in Ballett Frankfurt) and Scharafali (who had danced *Duo* in Nederlands Dans Theater) are in a complex knot of obligations: commitments to one’s history and former partners, to one’s current partner, to the novices learning with them (Watts/Gjoka), to the rehearsal director and to Forsythe. The multiplicity of these views proved to be confusing for the dancers, as well as challenging to their idea of rehearsal. Discussions questioned who has the authority to decide what is flexible within the choreography and what is not. It becomes clear—through tough rehearsals—that choreographic interpretation is not a matter of the *individual* choices of one dancer but choices made *together*. Successful *Duo* dancers find a “consensus” in their dyad and affirmation from Forsythe.<sup>58</sup> In hindsight, Watts/Gjoka stressed they did not take agency in the initial rehearsals. For these reasons, Watts/Gjoka understand *DUO2015* to be based more on their partnership, not the original qualities of the *Duo* movement material.

In summary, there was excitement but also friction in reconstructing *Duo* in 2012. Given the shift in repertoire and practices between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, it is not surprising that rehearsal and performance practice changed, and therefore *Duo* had also to change. Brown observed that during the subsequent rehearsals with Forsythe, the piece became something new. Not only did the choreography appear and sound different from what she had performed but, compared to her memory of rehearsals in Ballett Frankfurt, the dancers were also more active—voicing their thoughts, asking difficult questions, framing goals within the parameters of the choreography. The dancers’ understanding of rehearsal shifts with this process, as well as what it means to be a “good” dancer. What gives *Duo* its unusual presence in performance is sociality shaped in rehearsal, helping partners attune together.

### 11.3 Becoming *DUO2015*

In 2015 a new opportunity arose for the *Duo* project. Forsythe was asked by French ballerina Sylvie Guillem to include the piece on her farewell tour, *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*. The dancers chosen, Watts and Gjoka, were excited when the work became revised and retitled, to honor the contemporaneity of the context. Gjoka explained: “*Duo* was created in 1996. And he [Forsythe] is also in a different position today. [...] What it is, is a work in progress. It’s today, *Duo* today. It is the relationship of *doing Duo* today. *DUO2015*.”<sup>59</sup>

57 Cf. Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 79. Drawing from Goffman’s concept of “corrective face-work.”

58 Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, September 2, 2014.

59 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

Retitling the work underlines the artists' transformation of their own conception of *their* project—signaling a new iteration. This is substantiated in the artists' own words, in separate interviews with the dancers and Forsythe, reproduced below. These clarify how *DUO2015* afforded Watts and Gjoka extended reflection and prolonged discovery of the appropriate strategies of rehearsal and performance. Forsythe also considers the particular problem of how to adapt choreography to the expertise of performers who had worked with the medium for *years*. These artists take the occasions presented to enable *Duo's* becoming—through burgeoning relational expertise and revisions.

**“Because *Duo* had also to do with us.”**

**Interview with *DUO2015* pair Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka, Bologna, October 25, 2017.**

*This interview takes place in a dance studio, with the dancers sitting together on a couch, opposite myself and the video camera. Having taught *DUO2015* all afternoon to dance students, now at the end of their workday, the dancers have changed into their street clothes. Gjoka, who directs this dance school in Italy, is wearing designer sunglasses, a black down jacket and dark jeans. Watts, who has flown in from Maine, USA, is outfitted in a rust-color flannel shirt, a black Forsythe Company T-shirt, burgundy pants and a camouflage baseball cap. They appear to enjoy reflecting together, while often looking to one another to finish sentences or supplement the thoughts they have.*

LIZ: What made *Duo, Duo*? And when you think back upon your experience, from the beginning until now, with *Duo*, can you narrate a bit—five, ten minutes—how the phases of the process went, perhaps some high points and some low points?

RILEY: In the beginning we learned it from Allison [Brown], so really her version. And we were trying to do it as good dancers—so do just the material as it was taught to us, as well as we could, with the information that was given to us. We didn't really have time or the opportunity, or we didn't *take* maybe the agency to let the material and let the dance transform through our own personal experience between the two of us. [...] And then we got to stage, and Bill didn't want to do [*Duo*] in the program that we had intended to do it for, which was good, I think. There's the video of that one rehearsal that we did on stage and it was like ... it just didn't look good. It really wasn't good.

BRIGEL: It really didn't go well.

RILEY: Yeah totally. It was very disappointing at first. And then we thought that we would never dance it again and then, only because of the tour with Sylvie Guillem, the *Life in Progress* tour, was there an opportunity to re-develop it. Though before that, we did have the opportunity to try our own version of it in Darmstadt, and then Weimar.

LIZ: The two gala performances in 2013.

RILEY: Yeah. But in those we didn't feel so free. I watched the video recently and it looks very chopped to me. We just looked nervous—it's like we're dancing in relationship to the material only and not really to each other. It's not musical at all. And then because

of the Sylvie tour [*Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*]*—*that Sylvie [Guillem] asked Bill for this specific piece *Duo*, and we were the only people in the company who did it at that point and who had really been working on it. [...] It came at a good time because we had been using the material from *Duo* as part of *Study#3* to improvise bits. It was very legible to Bill, so he could see the material transforming itself [...].

So, then we made a *Life in Progress* version of *Duo* in the studio, which had still the beginning that was more similar to the original version, but excluding the laying on the floor parts that we don't do anymore. The dress rehearsal did not go well. We were nervous. It didn't feel good. [...] And we went back to the studio, up in the theater in Modena and Bill said: "Let's just mark it. Just show me what it's like in a marked version." So, we did it, and you know, it felt so much better, somehow, [...] I liked it. We felt good about it. We felt like it was the right, at least the right place, to start. And then we just kept going with it. With every show I think that it gradually grew. So, in the beginning as it was more upper body—the legs didn't do a whole lot. But gradually motion started to come. We didn't consciously decide to say, like: choreographically, let's do this. It just kinda came out of, not even really necessity, but just it came out of the repetition of having, of doing it in that specific context so many times, I guess [...].

It really transformed from almost only the performances—not from preparing, ahead of time in rehearsal in the studio, but only from the work that was done on stage, which I think is interesting. It's a very strong and specific circumstance to be on stage, performing for thousands of people. And not knowing exactly what's going to happen, which is different from what most dance companies do—where you have your ideas and you have the choreography and you try to perfect it in the studio and then bring it on stage as best as you can, as close to the perfect version that you think it should be from rehearsal. Instead of [that], we found a different idea of what a rehearsal was.

BRIGEL: I think we flipped the process. For years we did the normal process, what Riley said now: that you would rehearse, you'd try what would be the best and then bring it out on stage. [...] Then we started to do the opposite and to actually *understand* that the opposite was maybe what was needed. Because *Duo* had also to do with *us*. We were incorporating, or I'd say incarnating the material in a way that was not about the material actually, it was about *finding*. We had the material, but we didn't find each other. [...] There is no need to rehearse steps, because this is not the way we wanna do it. And also, if we wanna keep it fresh for fifty-three shows, then how do we do this? What is the process? [...] You have to find a way to develop your own way of being creative every day—to not get bored, not get annoyed. I never felt one moment with him, even when we were rehearsing, that we got annoyed.

RILEY: It was never boring.

BRIGEL: No, never boring, yeah. What should we do? Anything!

RILEY: It was never boring! 'Cause like every moment is different. It's a much bigger idea of movement that I think comes, came, from The Forsythe Company—being able to think about dance as every moment. It's so Buddhist, you know? Every moment is different from the last. And why would that not be true on stage? Like it seems ridicu-

lous to try to pretend like we're in a studio in rehearsal, or in front of more than 5000 people at the Herodeon in Athens. It's a very specific circumstance and the only way that you could practice this is just to be on stage: it happens because we happen to have this material, and also five-plus years of working together in the Company, and also dancing with everybody else in the company, and working with Bill and stuff that all collected as part of who I am, and who he is, and then together we're on stage, wearing sweatpants. (*laughs*) That's so, that's just, the material is like secondary, almost.

**“A nice balance between my ideas and their skill and structure.”**

**Phone interview with William Forsythe, January 30, 2019.**

LIZ: One thing I wondered about ... You've been working with dancers for so long. Could you tell me about *how* working with *Duo* dancers has changed? From maybe the Ballett Frankfurt version to how you work with Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka]? And on what do you work, also?

BILL: Well the difference with Riley and Brigel is that basically they rehearsed it for five years. That's the big difference. They rehearsed it for a very long time. They only did fragments. And every time they did fragments, I asked them to spontaneously grasp a point of reference. So they developed this very entrained, very accurately ... There is acute perception of each other and it became a way of being, with someone else and a work at the same time. So they held each other and the work in their minds and bodies, and constructed the piece themselves—according to what their opinion or their analysis of what was happening in the moment. And having watched them do that for several years, knowing what they were capable of doing with material, I tried to find a structure that would adapt to that particular skill set. [...] A nice balance between my ideas and their skill and structure. And that was the interesting difference. I could have done the same with Regina [van Berkel]—or easily done the same with Regina and Jill [Johnson], because they were so immersed into the material. For example, Jill [Johnson] could jump in and replace Brigel or Riley without a blink. She knows the material so well. There would be a few little structural differences, but there would be absolutely nothing in her capacities that would not allow her to enter that structure with ease.

### 11.3.1 Rehearsing *DUO2015*

Gjoka remembers that in The Forsythe Company there was not enough time to rehearse, he was always stressed by performance. With *DUO2015* there was the possibility to go deep into something and to relax, to “just be.”<sup>60</sup>

Watts and Gjoka incubated their own rehearsal process, working on tour, without Forsythe there to direct them. The dancers watched with awe how Guillem warmed up and rehearsed dutifully before every performance—rehearsal as performance, showing consistency of achievement. For Watts and Gjoka, emulation of Guillem's mode of

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60 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

rehearsing did not make sense for *DUO2015*—a choreography which required experiencing every “minor gesture” as being ripe with potential to vary. Manning’s concept of the minor gesture captures the “living variation” of nuanced events such as *DUO2015*: a choreography with the potential of improvisation, tucked into the folds of the structure.<sup>61</sup>

Watts and Gjoka discovered that rehearsal needed to support a mode of performance, linked with spontaneity and creativity. This required cognitively having a strong memory of what the sequence was so that they could adapt it, riffing playfully in the show. Watts and Gjoka explained: when they rehearsed “as performance” right before the show, it was counterproductive.<sup>62</sup> Watts describes: “If we were comparing it to what happened two hours ago or whatever, the other day or whatever, it wouldn’t feel so authentic as if we had just really jumped in without any kind of recent precedence of what it might be.”<sup>63</sup> In Gjoka’s words, in *DUO2015*: you cannot “force the outcome” on a perspective or expectations that you previously rehearsed. “If you rehearse, and expect to reproduce what you have rehearsed, the choreography of *Duo* is dead.”<sup>64</sup> To be “authentic” meant to negotiate the choreography in real time with one another, not to repeat what had previously happened. It meant not to be habitual—rather, to feel the “minor tendencies” possible in performance.<sup>65</sup> To feel alive. To feel “free.”<sup>66</sup>

The dancers did not stop preparing. Instead, they shifted how to do so. What the dancers describe is a change in their concepts of rehearsal and performance, even use of a new word suturing these—what Gjoka calls *entrainment* (“a form of progressive work”).<sup>67</sup> What did this entrainment entail? When the dancers were provided time to rehearse on the stage, they would “mark” quickly through the order of the sequence to refresh their memory.<sup>68</sup> The dancers deliberately moved more swiftly than what they

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61 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 72.

62 Watts specified that if there had been a long time since the last show (that is, more than a few weeks), they might perform in rehearsal, but otherwise it was not needed. Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

63 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

64 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 5, 2016.

65 Manning writes, “The challenge is to make these minor tendencies operational, thereby opening habit to its subtle multiplicity and exposing the fact that habit was never quite as stable as it seemed.” See Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 89.

66 Riley Watts, interview with the author and Brigel Gjoka, Bologna, October 25, 2017. Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.

67 Gjoka, “*DUO2015* Workshop Description.”

68 By “mark” or “marking,” the dancers mean intentionally practicing the movement without using full effort, to improve one’s cognitive grasp of the sequence and movement details. Marking is an under studied phenomenon in dance studies. Typically, marking is a rehearsal practice not exhibited in performance. But in the case of *DUO2015* the dancers also perform marking on stage. My previous remarks in section 7.1 on the movement material of *Duo* also describe the practice of movement to include various levels of abstraction, in accordance with David Kirsh’s study of marking. Kirsh writes: “When marking, dancers use their body-in-motion to represent some aspect of the full-out phrase they are thinking about. Their stated reason for marking is that it saves energy, avoids strenuous movement such as jumps, and sometimes it facilitates review of specific aspects of a phrase, such as tempo, movement sequence, or intention, all without the mental and physical complexity involved in creating a phrase full-out. It facilitates real time reflection.” See Kirsh, “How

would in performance, to challenge their minds to work fast—also, to have fun and turn the rehearsal into a game. Watts found that thinking-together and getting his thoughts to become fluid was better than sensing his body or taking note of how it happened. Social connection was important, in an unscripted manner. Watts explains: “Now in terms of the things that we did privately on our own, we would work out together. Or we would just spend time together. Or warm-up. Or fool around, actually that was a really important thing that we would do.” In lightening up, Watts and Gjoka were able to access their fluid creativity and relational connection, bringing “magic” into the process of dancing *Duo* once more!<sup>69</sup>

### 11.3.2 Performing *DUO2015*

**“The state of mind was just totally different for me.”  
Interview with Riley Watts in Bern, January 11, 2017.**

RILEY: I remember a few moments [when I was in The Forsythe Company] when I realized, wow, this is really something: I don't know how to be focused on stage when I'm improvising, in the same way that I'm finding myself focused in rehearsals or in creation process. The state of mind was just totally different for me. I actually think I never really figured that out in the [Forsythe] Company. I really don't think I did my best dancing on stage. I think I was better in certain moments in rehearsal. [...]

I like being on stage. It's just a different set of mind; it's a different thing. You know, because [in The Forsythe Company repertoire] you come on stage you have your scene, and then go off stage. Also, the way I was often used [by Forsythe] in pieces [was this]: I was very fast, so I'd have to come in very very quickly and like get things going. Very often I just couldn't keep up with myself! Like my body would be going, but my mind would be like trying to ... I ended up relying on adrenalin instead of like—really, really in depth, in the body, in concentration. [...] So I remember that was a real key for me: [I realized] I don't know what kind of focus I need to use here [on stage]. I don't know how to harness my way of thinking, my way of focusing during this type of improvisation—the type of work that we're doing and the questions that we're asking as a company really requires me to have ... you know, that's why I teach now. I try to figure out what that is, through teaching. That's the kind of environment I try to make when teaching, where it is that kind of concentration.

Performing *Duo* on stage, in front of a large audience, involves dealing with stage fright: sensing nerves, stress, risks, challenges and excitement. *Duo* dancers learned how to perform in this high intensity environment. As one dancer described it: “Bill [Forsythe]'s work cannot be performed at 100 percent, but it has to be 160 percent.”<sup>70</sup> Further field-work with the dancers helped me to understand how this is acquired and even mod-

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Marking Dance Constitutes Thinking with the Body,” p. 183. See also Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 131–38.

69 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

70 Cyril Baldy, conversation with the author, Nancy, May 12, 2015.

ulated by longstanding performers, who seek to evolve their performance beyond the adrenalin of movement mastery, to achieve a deep state of concentration. The pace and frequency of performance take a role in this. On the *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* tour of *DUO2015*, the dancers are seasoned professionals. Through their years of experience in The Forsythe Company, they have cultivated the capacity to perform intensely. In fact, they seek a respite from the high intensity of pressure described by Baldy and Watts in the citations above: a state of positive eustress rather than negative distress.

Gjoka described this in his own terminology as shifting to be “living” the choreography as opposed to performing it.<sup>71</sup> The distinction he perceives as a holistic investment in his project and partnership—one affording the thrill that comes through relational attunement. It was also a practice of being present, and not trying to reproduce the past. He explains:

So, when we rehearsed it so many times and we would feel like, damn ... we rehearsed it too much. I was like, how can you rehearse it too much?! Because we, in dance, we practice to rehearse. We practice to be perfect. But sometimes, we are totally going around it. It is not about practicing, how to say, a certain technique. Of course, you absolutely need to have the knowledge of it, but if you want to go beyond, then you do not allow yourself (*pause*) to build this trust, that you can give (*he dances*). Take it and go: let's go! And in the moment when you do it, (*he dances and vocalizes whooa!*) you are living it. But you are not thinking: “I'm performing.” I'm living it.<sup>72</sup>

Watts uses different terminology to describe the fluidity between living on and off the stage:

On the tour we had done so many shows of it [*DUO2015*], that the work became really what you saw on stage, and it didn't make sense for us to rehearse it ahead of time. Now ... Just check in, make sure that it's in peak-performance, or whatever. The work that we did was really the work that everybody saw.<sup>73</sup>

Watts observes that because of new frequency of repetition of performance on the world tour of *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*, it became even more necessary to allow performance to be a sort of “work” without rehearsal; meaning the choreography had to stay alive by changing, in work that the audience could see.

Practice, performance, work and life—all intermix for Watts and Gjoka. Western dance education foregrounds practicing—in the sense of repeating to be perfect—as a value in itself. What occurs in Watts and Gjoka's approach to *DUO2015* is a thriving enactment that carries the rigor of the project's history of practice, coupled with creative speculation on what the project might become. With each performance, this is mediated by singular conditions.

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71 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Dresden, March 6, 2016.

72 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author and Riley Watts, Bologna, October 25, 2016.

73 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

Drawing extensively from interviews with the dancers and Forsythe, as well as review of archival videos of The Forsythe Company's *Duo* rehearsals in 2012, this chapter has examined the dancers' phases of learning, rehearsing and performing *Duo*. My aim was to comprehend how notions of practice, rehearsal and performance were understood and enacted by the dancers, as well as how and why these changed over the piece's history. Individual sections have focused on the dancers' process of learning *Duo* in Ballet Frankfurt (11.1), reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company (11.2), revising the project for *DUO2015* and the specific practices of rehearsing (11.3.1) and performing (11.3.2) involved in this. Through this examination, I have illustrated that the force of creativity is central to *Duo*'s practice. Rehearsal and performance were generative processes in which the team explored what *Duo* may become today. I have also shown that the regime of practice was influenced by what the dancers believed was relevant to being a "good" dancer and finding the "right" mode of rehearsal. Consequently, the aesthetic of *Duo* reflected the dancers' achievement of a common framework for these values, furthering my claims that choreography is more than a formal organization of movement, but a complex nexus with the social plane and moral sphere.

This investigation showed various modes and purposes of rehearsal across the project's history, which changed together with the aesthetic of the piece. The Ballet Frankfurt version of *Duo* demanded balletic virtuosity and endurance. *DUO2015* required greater facility in joint improvisation; not over-rehearsing was important, to stay spontaneous. Throughout the history of *Duo*, developing rapport, connection, musicality and trust with one's partner was essential. The dancers stressed "learning by doing." Their testimony underscored the ongoing journey of the piece, in continuing to expand the enabling constraints, always questioning what more and what else the work could be.

The choreographic process thus continued to be *re-creative*. Instead of rote repetition, or nostalgic reproduction of the past, the dancers' testimonies have delved into the processes of creative reenactment, situated within the specific materiality and context of the theater space. This re-creative process was close to their constitution as persons, which they described as a sort of "living" on stage. Continually finding rather than repeating, negotiating rather than complying—dancing together was a journey that afforded personal growth and fulfillment.





## Conclusion: Choreography as Creative Organization

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The point of departure of this dissertation is the *Duo* project (1996–2019) of choreographer William Forsythe—a short dance performed by pairs that has taken various titles and forms over the last two decades. Looking back on the recent past, this manuscript also probes my special vantage point as a former dancer from The Forsythe Company, to critically reflect upon an experience of choreography that, to some extent, I share although I have not performed *Duo* publicly. My aim was to give the *Duo* dancers' voices and accounts of their practice a focal presence in this analysis, while also critically examining their practice within this finite microcosm of one project. A second aim was also to question and develop how my competences as a dance practitioner could be incorporated into the field of dance studies and writing theory. This meant not only adding systematic, discursive and critical methodology to my way of interpreting this case study, but also bringing forth an appropriate writing style. The resulting manuscript provides dance studies with a 'dancer's reflection' within this field.

The approach chosen for this research challenged disciplinary methods. The initial two axes upon which I framed my research interests were the fields of practice theory (Bourdieu/Wacquant/Schatzki/Reckwitz) and process philosophy (Whitehead/Manning). The pillar of practice studies, on one hand, opened the avenue of ethnographic empiricism—participant observation of activities in which meaning was understood to be situated in contexts of repeated, embodied doing (as opposed to in external structures or rules). I took from this field concepts such as *practice* and *habitus* to examine the generative nature of routine and patterns constituting dispositions. On the other hand, process philosophy more strongly eschewed subject-object divisions. Foregrounding passage and creativity, people and things were 'of time' and 'in transition.' From this theoretical approach I borrowed concepts such as *creation* and *relational movement* to examine a mode of dancing together in *Duo* in which a 'we' emerges and a work in progress continues. For the task of studying a duet—in which moving together was central—and examining this longitudinally, these perspectives helped to articulate an initial hypothesis. My preliminary thesis was that the *Duo* project would only weakly fit a traditional concept of an artistic 'work'—that is, a work produced by one author's labor, a work existing purely in performance, a work nostalgically recalling the 'original' presence of the premiere, a work that ideally reiterates without change in time

or context or a work constrained by the notion of choreography that operates through discipline and rules, as the force of what dancers ‘must’ do.<sup>1</sup> Rather, my view was that the *Duo* project was an emergent and relational nexus of practices anchored by passing down embodied knowledge and artifacts, in which there were multiple perspectives. *Duo* was not a very simple singular evolving entity, but rather a dynamically changing organization (multiplicity)—which I aimed to trace along its history, as a process of emergence and change.

To explore this hypothesis further, I drew a practical research question that shifted the aesthetic or theoretical problem of assessing the ‘work’ (a traditional concept that has long been critically overturned in dance studies) to focus on a praxeological one: what the dancers do in practice. I chose to foreground the terms *choreography* and *choreographic*. Slipping away from a defining question, such as ‘What is the choreography of *Duo*?’ I asked the processual one: *How is the choreography of Duo enacted and understood by the dancers in practice? And how does this change over time?* I also added onto this question the doubled perspective of a reflective turn, by asking: *How do I enact and understand Duo as a dancer-researcher?* I chose methodology to synergize with the available sources and traces that I could grasp of this enactment. This became a research architecture merging the approaches of reconstructive ethnography and detailed micro-analysis of a cross section of *Duo* key performances on video. A third layer was my continual self-reflection upon my memories and embodied knowledge as a former Forsythe dancer.

The results of this investigation developed along clustering themes, which grew into a three-part text, falling under the headings: Art World, Movement and Creation. Each part highlights a related aspect of the *Duo* project’s *choreo-logic*—delineating the institutional framing and occupational culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, the lasting impact of movement and dancing together upon the dancers’ intersubjectivity, the role of longstanding practices of rhythmical relation and the importance of creative experience within this community.

The main conclusions of the research are as follows: First, the dancers’ enactment and testimony demonstrate that *Duo* is a processual and dynamically changing entity, richly multi-perspectival and plastic—a process of emergent, enduring organization. Secondly, in contrast to concepts of choreography foregrounding that which results from explicit planning of the dancers’ movement by the choreographer and culminating in ephemeral performance, I develop the argument that the choreography *Duo* is a rich nexus of people, im/material practices, contexts and relations—an *emergent* organization, in which the artistic participants process, expose and expand its constraints.

Hence, instead of a choreographic piece as a static site of meaning, ideally reproduced by the performers for the audience (that is, the work of dance that reproduces the author’s original and singular intent, or an enacted organization of dancing with strict

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1 André Lepecki captures many of these aspects in one account of choreography (that he also problematizes): “Choreography demands a yielding to commanding voices of masters (living and dead), it demands submitting body and desire to disciplining regimes (anatomical, dietary, gender, racial), all for the perfect fulfillment of a transcendental and preordained set of steps, postures, and gestures that nevertheless must appear ‘spontaneous.’” Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 9.

and static rules) the study presents the dancers' perspectives of choreography as an active *site* of thinking and doing and as a *process* continued before and after the event of performance. *Duo* enables practices of dancing together, blending singular and plural. The concrete example of *Duo* shows how a choreography is distributed between people and contexts, and thereby linked to the social plane. The attention to detail and expanse of evidence gives this assessment richness, ideally providing the reader with a palpable understanding of how this is the case. Since these chapters have been summarized individually in the text, here I aim to further sharpen overarching points.

First, it was impossible for me to describe the longitudinal changes in the *Duo* dancers' practices and understanding of choreography without recourse to the changing organizational frames and occupational cultures of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. This investigation revealed that, despite *Duo* being a microcosm for development of the pair's sociality, the teamwork of the ensembles defined routines of practices—as the team shared labor upon the choreographic pieces. Moreover, I found out how the reality of dancing *Duo* was constrained by the pragmatic requirements of the economic and municipal constraints of distributing public performances. This defined many aspects of working choreographically according to conventions and the theater's specific materiality.

Forsythe's choreographic works were not just made and then distributed but, as my writing shows, the distribution process impacted the development and changes of pieces and projects like *Duo*. For this reason, I drew upon Howard Becker's notion of an *art world*, which emphasizes the manner in which art works are brought into existence through interlacing chains of cooperation. Like Becker, I emphasize how my case study shows influencing conventions, pressuring markets, routinized contexts for working and retention of useful skills and materials over time. My position is not, as Becker's also was not, to discredit 'the' authoring artist and the special power they are given in 'their' network. Rather, like Becker, I conversely try to include all the activities, small decisions and participants that enable a work of art—such as *Duo*—to be performed at all. As Forsythe said himself in 2004, his name no longer belonged to himself alone: "William Forsythe has in the meantime moved away from me. [...] William Forsythe is a collective of people."<sup>2</sup>

While the phrase 'the choreography of *Duo*' is often used by the dancers and Forsythe to mean the planned sequence of steps that they enact in performance, this does not mean, in practice, that the choreography is synonymous with danced movements, nor that it is epitomized in performance. Rather the choreography is also clearly contextual and materially built, involving many more moments and elements than the scaffold of performed steps. While my informants did not contest Forsythe's authorship of the choreography of *Duo*, they also understood choreography to be a matter of teamwork, in which Forsythe serves as a leader. While a choreography is titled, sold and performed as a unit of production, it is also a living, flexible and changing process. It endures and moves. As the longitudinal lifespan of the *Duo* project demonstrates, a choreography in-

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2 Translation by the author. This citation is from Forsythe's speech on receiving the 21<sup>st</sup> German Dance Prize in 2004. Forsythe cited in Harteweg, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, p. 62.

terweaves a shifting interplay of people, practices of working, and contexts—as *creative organization*. Here I speak about *Duo*, but also generally about Forsythe’s choreographies.

What is enacted and understood by the *Duo* dancers as ‘choreography’ is equally the steps, as a way of *being together* and *laboring*, on stage and in rehearsal. To work choreographically is a manner of communicating with one another, based upon histories of dancing together and the meaning accumulated in small gestures and signs. It is also a mode of exchanging and materializing movements. This intermodal practice is enacted through a rich sensorium of movement, communication and concepts—evident in the dancers’ testimonies, where they fluidly interweave words, gestures and sounds. The choreographic process is not about achieving perfection; it includes study of the minor varieties of change and difference with which a created work may vary in practice. The process also involves continual reflection—both explicit and implicit—on whether the choreography is still ‘right’ for the people and the times. In this regard, I share some aspects of what Gerald Siegmund has characterized in Forsythe’s choreographies, regarding the manner in which the performers develop “agreements” of how to act—also that a choreographic plan is never fulfilled in perfection, and in so doing, the dancers experience negotiation and take liberties.<sup>3</sup> I also share Siegmund’s idea that the symbolic realm is important in forming this common sense and subjectivity. Yet I differ from his view that choreography operates as a “machinelike” order separate from practice, as “text” and “law” that produces sociality.<sup>4</sup> In my view, choreography is much more a site where practices and organization merge.

My observations concur with comparable longitudinal studies of the choreographies of Alvin Ailey and Pina Bausch. Dance scholar Tommy DeFrantz has provided an insightful volume on the biography and work of African American choreographer Alvin Ailey (1931–1989), foregrounding study of changes of the piece *Revelations*. Through his close readings of this work in performance, DeFrantz describes how Ailey “rejected traditional concert dance conventions of ‘fixed’ choreography for a more fluid, generational model that not only accommodated but *expected* changes in performance standards.” He argues that this “paradigm shift” to the roles and representation of dancers allowed for an Africanist aesthetic and working process to thrive.<sup>5</sup> We have observed this also in *Duo*, in the way that dancers brought forth their talents and allowed for the generational re-birth of the piece. This suggests that an Africanist perspective on play and creation may also be fruitful for understanding groups—such as Forsythe’s—where western models of the artwork and performer are under question.

3 Siegmund, “Negotiating Choreography, Letter, and Law in William Forsythe,” p. 213; see also p. 206.

4 Gerald Siegmund defines choreography in one essay as follows: “Choreography appears to be a machinelike structure of relational differences, an inhuman symbolic language that, together with the bodies’ manifold possibilities of movement, produces a choreographic text.” Siegmund, “Negotiating Choreography, Letter, and Law in William Forsythe,” pp. 203–4. He also writes, “[...] choreography [functions] as a syntagmatic structure that the dancing body must follow. It must not be understood one-dimensionally as suppressing ‘the body’ or the freedom of movement, but as the very act of making subjectivity possible. [...] This enables the subject to escape from its solipsism and to become a social subject by attaching itself to a network of signifiers that *relate*.” *Ibid.*, pp. 211–2 (italics in the original).

5 DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations*, p. 81 (italics in the original).

A second study reinforcing the findings and methodology here is the research of Gabriele Klein on choreographer Pina Bausch. Through her concept of a “praxeology of translation,” Klein’s research of Pina Bausch’s ensemble looks at the many interactive junctures in which passing on, adoption and transfer take place within this company’s choreographic work. Emphasizing process, practice and betweenness with her concept of translation, Klein writes:

A dance production is thus a *permanent, complex process* of translation: between speaking and moving, moving and writing, between different languages and cultures, between various media and materials, between knowledge and perception, between company members developing a piece or passing it on, between performance and audience, between piece and dance review, between artistic and academic practice.<sup>6</sup>

With greater regard of the gap between audience and performer than I have considered in this study, Klein has similarly uncovered the multiple time layers and intercultural rifts negotiated in any one performance. Through my production analysis of *Duo*, showing it to be relational and changing, I come to parallel conclusions.

Within my investigation of *Duo*’s movement, I have revealed the way in which bodies, subjectivity, rhythm and relation intertwine in choreographic process. From my position, the choreographic movement of *Duo* is not held together through a force of organization ‘prior’ and ‘external’ to bodies, as some prescribed and imposed organization of obligated movements and fidelity. Nor does movement exfoliate from each dancer, from the ‘inside’ out—as if each individual would move through their historically acquired *habitus*, while reacting to the other. Rather, I show how movement in *Duo* is produced through mutual attunement to *relational* potential, which makes that movement different from how it would be if one dancer performed it alone. The choreography is enacted through the support of an array of practices (such as studying videos, marking movements, entraining, making notes, and so on), which require conceptualizing and sociality to decide together the right modus of work. This shows that choreography emerges through bodies that are individual-collective—shaped on the level of the individual, the dyad and the ensemble.

While *Duo* dancers experience relation profoundly in dancing *Duo*, my fieldwork showed that they are also artists who have a strong sense of their own individual bodies. Their bodies and embodied knowledge set them apart from other, non-Forsythe dancers. They also set themselves apart from one another, in a mutually beneficial way: a ‘Jill’ is not a ‘Regina.’ A ‘Brigel’ is not a ‘Riley.’ Their bodies place them at risk: if they are injured, they experience pain, and they may not be able to perform. While they engage in relational movement in *Duo*, they still carry histories of being western selves (having emphasized their bounded bodies, their coherent biographies, their roles as competitive workers and consumers, and so on). They also, of course, carry on with their activities as persons and citizens outside of the workplace. This makes their subjecthood a complex mixing of modes of relational constitution and modes of western individualism.<sup>7</sup>

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6 See Klein, *Pina Bausch’s Dance Theater*, p. 13, emphasis mine.

7 Chris Fowler writes, “Our contemporary conception of the individual as indivisible is an influential construct [...]. However, there are still times when more relational personhood is brought to the

It for this reason that I see the choreography of *Duo* as a nexus of practices (including the dance movements that the dancers would call ‘the’ choreography), in which there is friction as well as enmeshment. The sustainment of *relational movement* in *Duo*, as I develop in section 7.2, provides the dancers with a new understanding of their selves, for it suggests that one is ‘brought out’ through other people: one’s partner, the choreographer and the audience.<sup>8</sup> Each *Duo* dancer is grateful to the difference between subjects that supports their partnership.

The movements of *Duo* are not expressive in the sense of linked to communication of stories, narratives and feelings; rather, they are—as some dancers told me—expressive of forms and qualities. These movements are cultivated through pictures and geometries, as well as insider-jokes, names and references. It is well known to Forsythe and the dancers that the inner experience of a dancer is relevant to performance but not communicated to the audience (that is, there is a disjunction between the aesthetic experience of the dancers and that of the spectators). The dancers generally do not focus or understand their work as communicating to the audience, though they understand that the gestalt of a performance must communicate something beyond their, and even Forsythe’s, control. Dancing *Duo*, and other works by Forsythe, is thus tacitly loaded with ‘inner’ experiences and feelings that are not discussed among the dancers, and perhaps not even articulable. The dancers take pleasure in their work, but also face an enormous athletic challenge when dancing *Duo*. In return, they receive affirmation from their partner, peers, the audience and Forsythe.

The high stakes of performing as a member of Forsythe’s ensembles were a central topic of discussion in my fieldwork, in terms of the anxieties and stress involved in performing. Burnout and exhaustion were common. The stakes of *Duo* were expressed in nerves, sweat and fear, as well as the development of strategies to overcome such anxieties so that one could enjoy the work. Most *Duo* dancers appreciated what they became in their partnership and through longstanding *Duo* experience, which also enabled them to better bear individual consequences of success/failure. The upshot of this was that the psychological and personal aspects of choreography are significant. One limitation of this study was the difficulty as a native ethnographer to critically report upon this psychology, as well as to find language for talking about desires that generally were unspoken in the company culture.

## Impact and Limits of the Study, Further Work

To close, I would like draw out of my conclusions a few simple remarks that clarify what the current manuscript has contributed the field of dance studies. The aim of this study has been to examine and model a case study of longitudinal choreographic practice, and

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fore when individuals recognize their debts to others and the effects that others’ actions have on them, or the conflicting forces within them, or the way that an experience provides a new and unexpected understanding of things.” Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, p. 17.

8 I believe this is true at large for dancers in Forsythe’s ensembles, and that *relational movement* is practiced throughout the repertoire.

thereby to enrich the theoretical discourse with a practical example. My aspiration has not been to model or to define choreography generally on the basis of this case study, nor to situate the example in a comprehensive review of the current dance discourse on choreography. It has effectively developed methodology to include the dancers' voices and analysis of their practices in an investigation of a choreographic project, and to chart longitudinal change—both aspects of which are not new but still novel within dance studies.

Two difficulties within case study analysis are that they can be dismissed as singularities, or easily become obscure within their idiolect. Through my research I have strived to preserve a critical view and to intermingle 'native' and scholarly language. I have also aimed to clearly note what aspects may be extended more broadly to Forsythe's choreographic work at large, or to the field of western contemporary dance. For example, within the Forsythe scholarship, my work has questioned the term 'collaborative,' showing how dancers were respected partners rather in 'cooperation' and illustrating how the model of authorship corresponded with a style of leadership. It has also demonstrated how choreography impacts the daily lives and subjectivities of dancers.

It is my hope that the general matrix that I have used in this analysis would be applicable to other studies of dance in which matters of choreography and subjectivity are the focus. My way of understanding choreography has emphasized the following interrelated layers:

- Dancers' practices (training, rehearsing, learning, creating, performing)
- The organizational, material, economic and cultural context of institutions and the choreographic market
- Processes of embodied subjectivity, relations and personhood
- Components of choreographic structure in performance

I believe that this framework would be applicable to studies of most occupational dance forms in western contexts. This balanced approach shows the complicated and intertwining factors that produce choreographic works and labor. These entwined operations may be missed by scholarship that foregrounds performance analysis or relies on testimony from only one or two positions within the team.

The picture of choreography brought forth by this study is a processual and relational one: choreography as a sort of enduring and creative composition of organization. *Duo* does not eschew all the 'traditional' features of choreographic practice—including the primacy of dancing bodies—though it does present these bodies as articulate and relational, not inarticulate and solipsistic. In the current world however, the term choreography is changing to mean new things. Outside of dance, it is being used to name the complexity of interaction and organization in political campaigns, teamwork, even social networking as choreography. This "expansion" according to Rebecca Groves, involves "borrowing from dance new ways of conceiving their own disciplines in terms



of organizational complexity and the relational, affective, and perceptual dimensions of embodiment.”<sup>9</sup> My view of choreography has also emphasized these aspects.

Forsythe—with his essay and also his term “choreographic objects,”—further adds to our discourse. He espouses, as I do, that choreography is not a static practice but a perpetually shifting one. He asks: “But is it possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principles, a choreographic object, without the body?”<sup>10</sup> By situating “choreographic objects” in the field of visual art, as works that render the movement and interaction of the spectator central (that is, a choreography without a trained dancer’s body or the resources of dance practice), Forsythe engenders another sort of relational choreography in which sociality is emergent. This is based, as I have suggested within the body of this manuscript, on Forsythe’s longstanding experience of crafting the conditions for creative interactions—in which dancers learn to value the relational potential of projects that perpetuate creative ways of repeating, assembling, investigating, reversing, attempting and moving.

The *Duo* project shows and reverberates with the tension between ‘traditional’ notions of choreography, tied to the practices of dance and the bodies of the dancer/choreographer, and the current ‘expanded’ approaches—in which relations, materials, affects, practices, concepts and complexity become composed. By proposing the notion of choreography as *creative organization* linked with experimental investigation of subjectivity, I wish to suggest that choreography is more than logistical procedures of dance planning, and thereby has great potential as a concept outside of dance studies. From my analysis, it is clear that even in *Duo*, a dance project, the choreography is not confined to the steps or the rules for action. Nor is choreography the power behind what the dancers must enact. Rather, the choreography is the entire organizational apparatus and network of people that enable and encounter the artwork. The choreographic is an unfolding nexus of practices, materials, concepts, beliefs and people.

One challenge with thinking like this is that the definition of choreography also begins to sound very general—as a big bundle of things happening together. With this case study, I have endeavored to demonstrate how a choreography (such as *Duo*) takes form because of the specific trajectory of collected elements and the particular history of practices merging. The *Duo* project was developed because of the distinctive movements (such as *showerhead*), the communication structures of each *Duo* pair, and the singularity of *Duo*’s structure (of entrainment, cues and alignment). Within this, dancing is essential: dance training, transnational dance histories and acquired dance *habitus*.

My approach has given testimony and terms to show the complex ways that bodies and subjectivities are produced in organized professional labor upon choreography—a choreography of choreographies. Two limits of this study are that I remain focused on production, without speculating on the reception of *Duo*, and also that I do not engage in comparative case studies of other choreographic works. The latter would surely have

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9 Groves, “William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography,” p. 118. The term “expanded” has been brought into the contemporary dance scene by Mårten Spångberg, who borrowed it from art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss’s essay, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (1979). See Manson, “Interview: Mårten Spångberg.”

10 Forsythe, “Choreographic Objects,” p. 90.

helped to define categories and terms for the theory of choreographic process more generally. It is my hope that this study might inspire dance scholars to further incorporate ethnographic methodology into their research, to include the voices of the dancers in our studies of what dancing *is* and what choreography might *become*.



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#### 5. Online Artistic Resources

##### Projects by William Forsythe:

*Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvzEl4d5\\_SdUe3B6EITEFSA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvzEl4d5_SdUe3B6EITEFSA))

*Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* (<https://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/>)

##### Further Dance Projects:

*Dance Engaging Science* (<http://motionbank.org/en/content/dance-engaging-science.html>)

*Everybody's* (<http://everybodystoolbox.net/>)

*Motion Bank* (<http://motionbank.org>)

*Sarma* ([http://sarma.be/pages/About\\_Sarma](http://sarma.be/pages/About_Sarma))

# Appendix

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## A. *Duo* Performance Credits

### *Duo*

Choreography: William Forsythe

Music: Thom Willems

Stage, Light, Costume: William Forsythe

### *DUO2015*

Choreography: William Forsythe

Music: Thom Willems

Stage, Light and Costumes: William Forsythe

### *Dialogue (DUO2015)*

Choreography: William Forsythe

Lighting Design: Tanja Rühl and William Forsythe

Costume Design: Dorothee Merg and William Forsythe

Sound Design: Niels Lanz

## B. *Duo* Dancers

### **Name, (years in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company), Nationality, Gender**

Regina van Berkel (1993–2000) Dutch ♀

Allison Brown (1997–2004) Canadian ♀

Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines (1996–1998) American ♀

Brigel Gjoka (2011–2015) Albanian ♂

Francesca Harper (1991–1999) American ♀

Jill Johnson (1991–1996, 1999–2004) Canadian ♀

Cora Bos-Kroese (2001–2003) Dutch ♀

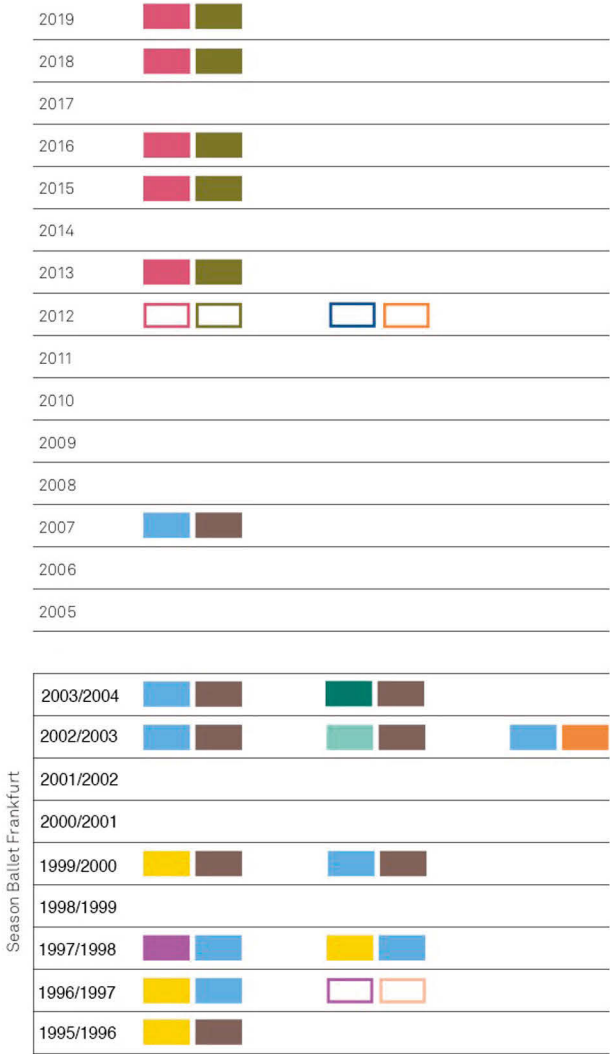
Roberta Mosca (2000–2013) Italian ♀

Parvaneh Scharafali (2008–2012) German ♀

Natalie Thomas (2001–2004) American ♀

Riley Watts (2010–2015) American ♂

### C. Visualization of Duo Pairs



-  Regina van Berkel
-  Allison Brown
-  Bahiya Sayyed Gaines
-  Francesca Harper
-  Jill Johnson
-  Cora Bos-Kroese
-  Roberta Mosca
-  Parvaneh Scharafali
-  Natalie Thomas
-  Brigel Gjoka
-  Riley Watts
  
-  rehearsal | no performance

*Diagram by Karin Minger*



## D. Artist Biographies

### 1. *Duo Dancers*<sup>1</sup>

**Regina van Berkel** was born in 1969 in The Hague (Netherlands) and received her dance training in the former young talents class of the Nederlands Dans Theater under the direction of Ivan Kramer, and at the Rotterdam Dance Academy. Van Berkel danced with Djazzex in The Hague, Jan Fabre in Antwerp, Saburo Teshigawara in Tokyo and William Forsythe at the Ballett Frankfurt, where she danced from 1993–2000. Together with Jill Johnson she was half of the original cast of *Duo* in 1996, performing the work from 1996–2000. For the last twenty years van Berkel has worked as a freelance choreographer and costume designer in close collaboration with the set designer Dietmar Janeck. This has given her the opportunity to work with wonderful dance companies such as the Nederlands Dans Theater, The Göteborg Ballet, Ballett am Rhein, ballettmainz, Gulbenkian Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and Introdans; as well as festivals such as the Holland Dance Festival, Steps Festival, Heiner Goebbels Festival, NJO Muziekzomer Gelderland Festival, and Reinbert de Leeuw Festival. Apart from her little living room in the train, Regina van Berkel has been based in Germany since 1993.

**Allison Brown** was born in 1967 in Morocco and is of Canadian citizenship. She trained at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and The School of American Ballet, before dancing with the New York City Ballet, Twyla Tharp and Dancers, Pretty Ugly Dance Company and Saburo Teshigawara's company KARAS. She danced with the Ballett Frankfurt from 1996–2004, dancing *Duo* from 1996–2004. Since that time, she has worked as a choreographer, teacher and ballet master—setting the work of William Forsythe internationally. She has taught since 2011 at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main. In 2019, she was appointed Professor of Ballet for contemporary dancers at the Center of Contemporary Dance at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln. She currently lives in Frankfurt am Main.

**Cora Bos-Kroese** was born in 1967 in Amsterdam and began dancing in South Africa at the age of seven. She studied dance at the Lynne Harisson School of Dance in New Zealand, the Royal Ballet School of London and Het Koninklijk Conservatorium in Den Haag. She danced for Nederlands Dans Theater II (1986–1988) and Nederlands Dans Theater (1988–2001) and returned there as a ballet master from 2005–2007. Bos-Kroese was a member of the Ballett Frankfurt from 2001–2003, performing *Duo* in 2003. Since 2004, she has also produced her own choreography within the platform C-scope, co-founded with photographer Joris-Jan Bos in The Hague. In 2003 she also co-founded the summer arts festival BIARTECA together with *Duo* dancer Roberta Mosca in Piemonte, a project

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1 These biographies were developed in dialogue with the artists, based upon text from the archival programs of Ballett Frankfurt, the 2019 online program for the presentation of Forsythe's *A Quiet Evening of Dance* at the Shed, and the artists' websites. The material has been revised and cited with permission of the artists. See "A Quiet Evening of Dance." <https://theshed.org/program/66-william-forsythe-a-quiet-evening-of-dance>.

which continued until 2017. She currently produces her own choreography under C-scope projects and sets the works of Jiří Kylián internationally. Bos-Kroese lives in The Hague.

**Brigel Gjoka** was born in Albania and started dancing at the Tirana Ballet School. In France he studied at the Ecole Supérieure de Danse de Cannes-Mougins and danced with Cannes Jeune Ballet. He was a member of Le Ballet de l'Opéra national du Rhin, Staatstheater Mainz and Nederlands Dans Theater before dancing in The Forsythe Company from 2011–2015, where he learned *Duo* in 2012. Gjoka performed *DUO2015* in the international farewell world tour of *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* and William Forsythe's *Quiet Evening of Dance* (2018–2020), both produced by Sadler's Wells Theatre of London. From 2014–2020, he was artistic director of Art Factory International based in Bologna, Italy. As a choreographer, dance teacher and professional stage dancer, for the last decade Gjoka has travelled the globe, performing in the most renowned dance festivals, but also creating new projects for dance companies and festivals and teaching dance workshops. Currently, Gjoka resides in Germany.

**Francesca Harper** was born in 1969 in New York City. She trained at the Joffrey Ballet School, The School of American Ballet and with Barbara Walczak. Her mother, acclaimed dancer Denise Jefferson, directed The Ailey School and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Francesca attended Columbia University for a summer before joining the Dance Theater of Harlem's junior company and then the main company. She danced in the Ballett Frankfurt from 1991–1999, learning *Duo* in 1997. After the Ballett Frankfurt, she returned to New York City. There she performed on Broadway in numerous musicals, appeared on film and on television, and established her own company—The Francesca Harper Project—and continued making her own work (from dances to films and theater productions). Harper enjoys her appointment as a professor at the Juilliard School in New York City and continues with The Ailey School, and Fordham University's BFA program. Harper is also Artistic Director of the Movement Invention Project® (MIP®) of New Jersey, where she encourages young artists to explore beyond their extremities and enhance their creativity.

**Jill Johnson** was born in Toronto and is a graduate of Canada's National Ballet School. She was a soloist dancer at The National Ballet of Canada from 1987–1991/1996–2000, and a dancer in Ballett Frankfurt from 1991–1996/2000–2004. Regina van Berkel and Johnson were the original cast of *Duo* in 1996 and Johnson performed the work from 2000–2004. After Ballett Frankfurt closed, Johnson moved to New York City, where she created her own work and served on the faculty at Princeton University, Columbia University, The New School, the Juilliard School and NYU, among others. Since 2011, Johnson has held the position of Director of Dance, Founder/Artistic Director of the Harvard Dance Project, and Senior Lecturer of the faculty at Harvard University. Johnson has set William Forsythe's ballets worldwide, including *Duo*, for the past two decades and also choreographs for film, television, theatre and opera productions. She is a collaborator and performer in Forsythe's newest production, *A Quiet Evening of Dance*, which

premiered in London at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 2018, and is since touring worldwide. Johnson is currently based in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Roberta Mosca** was born in 1974 in Biella, Italy. She trained at the Scuola de Teatro alla Scala Milano and the John Cranko Schule in Stuttgart. Before joining the Ballett Frankfurt, she danced with the Vienna State Opera, in Florence with Eugene Poliakov, in Leipzig with Uwe Scholz, and in Reggio Emilia with Amedeo Amodio and Mauro Bigonzetti. She was a dancer in Ballett Frankfurt from 2000–2004, dancing *Duo* in 2003, and a member of The Forsythe Company from 2005–2013, reconstructing *Duo* in 2012. Mosca, in partnership with *Duo* dancer Cora Bos-Kroese, established and directed the festival BIARTECA in Piemonte, Italy from 2003–2017. In 2015, she founded the independent space AUTOBAHN–WILLIAM WILLHELM CAFFEE–DALLAS in Rosazza and, in 2018, the B-Yoga studio in Biella. From 2016–2018 she was a member of the artist group HOOD. Since 2013 Mosca has lived in Rosazza. She additionally works as a freelance artist, performing and teaching internationally.

**Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines** (also known as Bahiyah Hibah) was born in 1974 in New York City. She trained at the Baltimore School for the Arts and received her BFA in Dance from The Julliard School. Before joining the Ballett Frankfurt, she danced for Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Donald Byrd/The Group and Creative Outlet Dance Theatre of Brooklyn. She was a member of Ballett Frankfurt from 1996–1998, performing *Duo* in 1997, and thereafter a dancer in the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 1998–2004. Since that time she has worked primarily as an artist on Broadway, performing in *The Color Purple*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Pal Joey*, *Rock of Ages*, *Memphis*, *Chicago*, *Evita*, *After Midnight*, *On The Twentieth Century* and *Moulin Rouge!* She currently lives in New York City.

**Parvaneh Scharafali** was born in 1978 Tehran, Iran, and grew up in Germany where she began studying classical ballet at Dr. Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main. She studied classical ballet and contemporary dance at the Hamburg Ballet School and became a member of the Hamburg Ballet under the direction of John Neumeier. Scharafali was a dancer with Nederlands Dans Theater from 2000–2008, during which she and her partner were nominated for a Golden Swan award for their interpretation of *Duo*. She was a member of The Forsythe Company from 2008–2012, reconstructing *Duo* in 2012. Thereafter, she returned to Nederlands Dans Theater from 2012–2017. Scharafali currently works as a freelance performer and teacher worldwide. She is a collaborator and performer in Forsythe's newest production, *A Quiet Evening of Dance*, which premiered in London at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 2018, and is since touring worldwide. She currently lives in The Hague.

**Natalie Thomas** was born in 1979 in Crescent City, USA and was raised in Santa Cruz, California. She trained at the Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre, University of North Carolina School of the Arts and the Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Thomas danced with Nederlands Dans Theater II and Komische Oper Berlin before joining Ballett Frankfurt, where she danced from 2001–2004, performing *Duo* in 2004. After the close of Ballett Frank-

furt, she moved to New York City to study acting at the Maggie Flanigan Studio and to work with The Wooster Group. She then worked as an actress for film, television and theater, including playing the role of Lady Macbeth for one year in Punchdrunk's hit theater show, *Sleep No More*. Thomas's film highlights include *Everything's Gonna Be Pink*, directed by academy-nominated Roni Ezra, *Rover: Or Beyond Human*, directed by Tony Bland, and *Any Other Normal*, directed by Brock Labrenz (formerly of the Ballet Frankfurt). Television credits include *Blindspot*, *Law and Order*, *Law and Order SVU* and *The Guiding Light*. In 2019 she finished her studies in screenwriting at the International Film School Cologne. Thomas currently lives in Köln and writes for the Netflix show *How To Sell Drugs Online (Fast)*.

**Riley Watts** was born in 1985 in Bangor, Maine, USA. He began his training in competitive gymnastics and later in classical ballet at the Thomas School of Dance under Ivy Forrest. He studied dance at the Walnut Hill School for the Arts and received a BFA in dance from the Juilliard School in 2007 where he won a Princess Grace Award. Watts danced with Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Bern Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater II before joining The Forsythe Company, where he danced from 2010–2015. Watts learned *Duo* in 2012 and performed *DUO2015* in the international farewell world tour of *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* (2015) and in William Forsythe's *A Quiet Evening of Dance* (2018–2020), both produced by Sadler's Wells Theatre of London. After the closure of The Forsythe Company in 2015, Watts moved to Portland, Maine. There he currently acts as a dance curator, advisor, and producer, and created Portland Dance Month in coordination with several local arts organizations. His creative work focuses on the intersection of embodied consciousness and dance improvisation, ranging in mediums from live performance installations to video and sculpture.

## 2. Other Cited Informants

**Cyril Baldy** was born in Woippy, France in 1980. He studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris from 1993 to 1997. After this, he joined Le Jeune Ballet de France, his first professional company. From 1998 to 2002, he danced for Nederlands Dans Theater II and Nederland Dans Theater I under the direction of Jiří Kylián. In 2002, he became a member of Ballett Frankfurt, continuing with The Forsythe Company from 2005 to 2014. Since 2014, he works as a freelance choreographer, teacher and dancer. Baldy is co-artistic director of SAD and, from 2016–2018, was a member of HOOD. Baldy also sets Forsythe's works internationally, including *Duo* at CCN – Ballet de Lorraine in 2015. He currently lives in Frankfurt.

**Dana Caspersen** was born in Minnesota, USA in 1964. She studied and performed at the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, and subsequently trained with Maggie Black, Kim Abel and Erick Hawkins, among others. Her first company was the Duluth Ballet (now the Minnesota Ballet), and she danced for three years with the North Carolina Dance Theatre before joining Ballett Frankfurt in 1988. She was a dancer, text author and choreographer in Ballett Frankfurt from 1988–2004 and in The Forsythe Company from 2005–2015. Caspersen received an MFA in Dance from Hollins University

and an MSc in Conflict Studies and Mediation at the Woodbury Institute at Champlain College. Her choreography and installations, frequently in collaboration with William Forsythe, have been shown internationally. Her current work integrates practices from conflict engagement and choreography. In 2015, she published *Changing the Conversation: The 17 Principles of Conflict Resolution*, which has been translated into eight languages. Caspersen is based in Frankfurt, Germany, and Vermont, USA.

**David Morrow** was born in Rhode Island, USA in 1952. He studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, and then worked as a freelance musician in New York City, engaged as a pianist at New York University, the Martha Graham School and The Ailey School. Morrow joined the Ballett Frankfurt in 1989, working until the close of The Forsythe Company in 2005 as a répétiteur, composer and occasional performer. He has composed and performed the music for Forsythe's pieces *Wolf Phrase II*, *De-creation*, *Ricercar*, *Three Atmospheric Studies (Part I)*, *Clouds after Cranach (Part II)*, *Fivefold* and *Yes We Can't*. Additionally, Morrow has collaborated with diverse choreographers and artists within Europe—including choreographers Stéphane Fléchet, Verena Weiss, Xin-Peng Wang, and most recently Paula Rosolen, with whom he developed the biographical piece *Piano Men* in 2013. From 2015–2018, Morrow was a répétiteur at the Hochschule Mannheim. Morrow currently resides in Rüsselsheim, near Frankfurt am Main.

### 3. Choreographer and Composer

**William Forsythe** was born in Rhode Island, USA in 1949, and has been active in the field of choreography for over 45 years. He is acknowledged for migrating the practice of ballet from classical repertoire to a diverse range of discursive platforms. Forsythe's deep interest in the fundamental principles of composition has led him to produce a wide range of projects, including visual arts installations, films, and web-based knowledge creation. He was appointed resident choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1976. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as director of the Ballett Frankfurt, after which he founded and directed The Forsythe Company until 2015. While his balletic works are featured in the repertoire of every major ballet company in the world, he consistently focuses on works of varying scale that model his continued interest in the economies of public presentation.<sup>2</sup>

**Thom Willems** was born in 1955, in Arnhem in the Netherlands. He has collaborated with choreographer William Forsythe on over 60 ballet scores. He studied at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague: composition with Louis Andriessen and electronic music with Jan Boerman and Dick Raaijmakers. Willems started working with Forsythe when he became director of the ballet of the Frankfurt Opera in 1984. Sixty-six companies in 25 countries have performed Forsythe/Willems ballets, including The Mariinsky Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Paris Opera Ballet, Teatro alla Scala Milano, The Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera

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2 Official biography provided by William Forsythe.

House Covent Garden, the Vienna State Opera, the Semperoper Dresden and Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon, among many others.<sup>3</sup>

## E. Fieldwork Overview

### 1. Duo Performances Attended

Title	Location	Date	Program/Context
<i>DUO2015</i>	Rome	2 Apr. 2015	<i>Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress</i>
<i>Duo</i>	Nancy	12 May 2015	Opera National de Lorraine
<i>DUO2015</i>	Paris	17 Sep. 2015	<i>Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress</i>
<i>DUO2015</i>	Paris	18 Sep. 2015	<i>Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress</i>
<i>DUO2015</i>	Paris	5 Sep. 2015	<i>Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress</i>
<i>DUO2015</i>	Paris	6 Sep. 2015	<i>Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress</i>
<i>DUO2015</i>	London	6 Oct. 2018	<i>A Quiet Evening of Dance</i>
<i>Dialogue (DUO2015)</i>	Paris	9 Oct. 2019	<i>A Quiet Evening of Dance</i>

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3 Official biography from Thom Willems. In: [https://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/compose\\_r\\_main?composerid=100187&ttype=BIOGRAPHY](https://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/compose_r_main?composerid=100187&ttype=BIOGRAPHY).

## 2. Interviews

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Brigel Gjoka	Dresden	5 Mar. 2016
Brigel Gjoka	Dresden	6 Mar. 2016
Roberta Mosca	videoconference	13 Sep. 2016
Jill Johnson	videoconference	21 Oct. 2016
Jill Johnson	Boston	6 Dec. 2016
Allison Brown	Frankfurt am Main	23 Sep. 2016
Riley Watts	Bern	11 Jan. 2017
Allison Brown	Bern	23 Jan. 2017
Allison Brown and Cyril Baldy	Bern	24 Jan. 2017
Cyril Baldy	Bern	25 Jan. 2017
Cyril Baldy	Bern	26 Jan. 2017
Regina van Berkel	Frankfurt am Main	22 Apr. 2017
Regina van Berkel	Zürich	5 May 2017
David Morrow	Rüsselsheim am Main	25 Jul. 2017
Brock Labrenz	Bielefeld	28 Sep. 2017
Roberta Mosca	Bielefeld	28 Sep. 2017
Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts	Bologna	25 Oct. 2017
Kora Bos-Kroese	phone	19 Sep. 2018
Francesca Harper	phone	20 Sep. 2018
Thom Willems	phone	21 Nov. 2018
Dana Caspersen	videoconference	19 Dec. 2018
William Forsythe	videoconference	30 Jan. 2019
Bruni Marx	phone	7 Feb. 2019

### 3. Talk-Through Sessions

Artist	Location	Date	Key Performance
Allison Brown	Frankfurt am Main	23 Sep. 2016	1997
Allison Brown	Frankfurt am Main	11 Nov. 2016	2015
Jill Johnson	Boston	6 Dec. 2016	2015
Riley Watts	Bern	11 Jan. 2017	2015
Riley Watts	Bern	15 Jan. 2017	2016
Allison Brown	Bern	23 Jan. 2017	2003
Allison Brown	Bern	23 Jan. 2017	2016
Cyril Baldy	Bern	25 Jan. 2017	2002

### 4. Data Review Sessions

Artist	Location	Date
Roberta Mosca	videoconference	27 Apr. 2018
Allison Brown	videoconference	8 May 2018
Riley Watts	videoconference	22 May 2018
Regina van Berkel	videoconference	21 Jun. 2018
Jill Johnson	videoconference	28 Jun. 2018

### 5. Studio Sessions

Artist	Location	Date
Allison Brown	Frankfurt am Main	22 Sep. 2016
Allison Brown	Frankfurt am Main	23 Sep. 2016
Jill Johnson	Boston	6 Dec. 2016
Riley Watts	Bern	13 Jan. 2017
Riley Watts	Bern	14 Jan. 2017
Allison Brown & Cyril Baldy	Bern	24 Jan. 2017



## 6. *Duo* Rehearsal Observation

CCN – Ballet de Lorraine, April 21–23, 2015

## 7. *DUO2015* Workshop Observation

*DUO2015 Workshops*

Arts Factory International, Bologna Italy

Oct. 23–27, 2017, & Oct. 28–29, 2017

Taught by: Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts

## 8. Feedback Session

*Dancing Together Workshop*

University of Bern

Oct. 24–25, 2018

Participants: *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts, and Forsythe dancer Katja Cheraneva

## 9. *Duo* Dancers Interview

The following topics were explored in the semi-structured interviews with the *Duo* dancers:

- describe how they came to join the Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company
- describe what was important to them in *Duo*
- narrate their experience of creating, rehearsing and performing the piece chronologically
- compare, when possible, different versions of *Duo*, and differences between dancing *Duo* versus other pieces
- describe and compare working with different partners
- describe their experiences teaching *Duo*
- tell what, if anything, can go wrong in doing or teaching *Duo*
- describe and reflect upon their interactions with Forsythe in making, rehearsing and performing *Duo*
- tell more about their professional history, their reasons for joining the company and their first year in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company
- describe key aspects of the culture of Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company and how it compared to other workplaces
- describe an aspect (i.e., the movement, setting, light, music, costumes and breathing) of *Duo* from the 'inside'
- describe the choreographic structure that they interpret or an aspect of that structure
- reflect further upon *Duo* (i.e., Does gender matter in *Duo*? Why did the choreography change over time? Who is the author of *Duo*? etc.)

## F. Archival Videos Studied

### 1. Archival Sources of *Duo* Creation Rehearsals

File Name/Date	Contents and Rehearsal Location (duration in minutes)
1996 01 02 A	first rehearsal in the foyer (60 min), followed by rehearsal in studio (110 min)
1996 01 02 B	excerpt of the first day rehearsing in studio (58 min), followed by the second day rehearsing in the studio (84 min)
1996 01 06	second day rehearsal in the studio continued (70 min)
1996 01 10	stage rehearsal (80 min), followed by rehearsal in black costumes, projected to be from between January 16–19 (101 min)
1996 01 15	stage rehearsal (80 min) followed by technical rehearsal on stage in gold costumes (125 min)
1996 01 19	dress rehearsal on stage in black costumes (16 min)
1996 01 20	run-through on stage without costumes, day of premiere (16 min)

### 2. Selected key performances of *Duo*

Date	Location	Dancers
January 20, 1996	Frankfurt	Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson
May 8, 1997	Frankfurt	Regina van Berkel and Allison Brown
March 9, 2000	Frankfurt	Allison Brown and Jill Johnson
June 29, 2003	Cologne	Allison Brown and Roberta Mosca
September 12, 2013	Weimar	Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts
date unknown 2015*	London	Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts
August 6, 2016	Paris	Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts

\* Sadler's Wells did not date this archival video. The performers believe it was a performance in London in summer 2015, placing it chronologically after the version I saw in Rome in on April 2, 2015, and before the second set of performances I watched in Paris in September 17–18, 2015.

**3. Duration of *Duo* key performances (in seconds)**

<b><i>Duo</i></b>	<b><i>DUO2015</i></b>
January 20, 1996: 770s	(date unknown) 2015: 899s
May 8, 1997: 832s	August 6, 2016: 1009s
March 9, 2000: 741s	
June 29, 2003: 756s	
September 12, 2013: 561s	

## G. Employees of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company

The table reflects data from the Ballett Frankfurt (2002) and The Forsythe Company (2006), denoting full-time employment, part-time employment, short-term contracts and guest contracts.<sup>4</sup>

	<b>Ballett Frankfurt</b>	<b>The Forsythe Company</b>
Artistic Director	1	1
<b>DANCE</b>		
Dancers	30–40	16–18
Ballet Master/Rehearsal Director	2	1
Ballet Trainers	short-term	short-term
Physical Therapist/Masseur	0–1	short-term
Sports Scientist/Trainer	0	0–1
<b>ARTISTIC PRODUCTION</b>		
Composer	guest	guest
<i>Répétiteur</i>	1–2	1
Artistic Assistant of Forsythe	1	combined with tour management
Dramaturg	1–2	1
Artistic Consultation/Special Projects	0–1	0
Costumes and Dressing Rooms	3	1 plus short-term
Makeup	2–3	short-term

4 Ballett Frankfurt data source: Program, *The Vile Parody of Address, Duo, N.N.N.N., Quintet*, November 21–29, 2002, Frankfurt Opera House; The Forsythe Company data source: program for *Human Writes*, September 8–15, 2006, Festspielhaus Hellerau).

	Ballett Frankfurt	The Forsythe Company
<b>TECHNICAL PRODUCTION</b>		
Technical Director	1	1
Producer	0	1
Coordination	1	0
Stage Manager	1	combined with tour management
Sound Design	3	2 combined with video design
Lighting Design	1	1
Technical Production	1	2
Tour Manager	1	1
Video Archiving	1	combined with video design
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>		
Administration Director	1	1
Press/Public Relations	1	1
Marketing	1	0
Administrative Assistant	0	1
Personal Assistant of Forsythe	0-1	1
Subscription Service	1	0
Assistant in Press/PR/Marketing	0	1 part-time
Multimedia/Web Master	1	short-term

## H. Nationalities of Dancers in Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company

These statistics were compiled based upon study of official programs from Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company and communication with the individual artists. The nationalities of dual citizens are listed twice.

<b>Dancers Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company</b>	
Total Members	155
Men	75
Women	80
Dual Citizens	11
English Native Speakers	87

<b>Europe</b>	<b>Citizens</b>	<b>Dual Citizens</b>
Albania	1	
Austria	2	
Belgium	2	
United Kingdom	9	2
Denmark	1	
Netherlands	5	
France	10	1
Germany	14	5
Greece	0	1
Hungary	2	1
Italy	7	1
Russia	2	
Spain	5	1
Sweden	1	
Switzerland	3	2
Turkey	1	

<b>North America</b>	<b>Citizens</b>	<b>Dual Citizens</b>
USA	58	5
Canada	6	
<b>South America</b>		
Argentina	1	
Brazil	1	
El Salvador	1	
Venezuela	0	1
<b>Middle East</b>		
Kuwait	0	1
<b>Asia</b>		
Japan	2	
Korea	1	
Tibet	1	
Philippines	1	
<b>Australia &amp; Oceania</b>		
Australia	6	1
New Zealand	1	

## I. Calendar for the 1995–1996 Ballett Frankfurt season

Tokyo Tour (Oct. 4–8) — *ALIE/N A(C)TION*

Montreal Tour (Oct. 13–14) — *Eidos:Telos*

Frankfurt Opera House (Nov. 18–26) — Premiere by Saburo Teshingwara

Frankfurt Opera House (Nov. 30, Dec. 1–3) — *Eidos:Telos*

Reggio Emilia Tour (Dec. 8–9) — *Eidos:Telos*

Guest Production: TAT (Dec. 15) — Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker/Rosas

Frankfurt Opera House (Jan. 20–28) — Premiere: *Six Counter Points*

Frankfurt Opera House (Feb. 2–4) — *Eidos:Telos*

Guest Production: Frankfurt Schauspielhaus (Feb. 9–11, 14–17) — Nederlands Dans Theater

Rennes Tour (Feb. 20–23) — *Firsttext, Enemy in the Figure, Of Any If And*

Frankfurt Schauspielhaus (March 1–4, 8–10) — *Limb's Theorem*

Bregenz Tour (March 15–16) — *Six Counter Points*

Guest Production: TAT (date unknown, March) — Michael Simon

Munich Tour (March 22–24) — *Limb's Theorem*  
 Tokyo Tour (April 4–9) — *Eidos:Telos*  
 Frankfurt Opera House (April 26–May 1) — *The Loss of Small Detail*  
 Paris Tour (May 6–11, 14–18) — *Limb's Theorem, Six Counter Points*  
 Mulhouse Tour (May 22–23) — *The Loss of Small Detail*  
 Frankfurt Opera House (June 6–8, 10) — *Balletabend*  
 Amsterdam Tour (June 20–23, 27–29) — *ALIE/NA(C)TION, Eidos:Telos*  
 Rome Tour (July 3–6) — *Six Counter Points*

## J. Annotation Categories and Symbols

The annotation takes the form of compound variable names noting three types of information: first a symbol for the primary mode of entrainment (section 2), followed by a symbol for the subcategories of entrainment (section 4) and ending with a symbol for the mode of transformation (section 5).

### Notation:

primary mode of entrainment + subcategories of entrainment + mode of transformation

When the dancers' activity differs, the dancer variable names can be added to specify who is doing what.

### 1. Dancer Symbols

*Duo* dancer on left (i.e., stage right) — B

*Duo* dancer on right (i.e., stage left) — W

### 2. Modes of Entrainment

#### Primary Modes of Entrainment

u unison

c concurrent motion

tt intermittent motion/turn-taking

o solo

br break

z other

### 3. Transitions

Transitions or modulations occur between changing modes of entrainment. To notate these, the notation takes the form of compound variable names listing three types of information: the style as prefix, followed by the sign and relationship between partners as suffix. For readability, an underscore is used between the first bit of the information and the second and third.



**Notation:**

Type\_signrelation

**Type:**

cue an indication to begin

align alignment: a moment of connection in which the dancers relate signs to stay in sync and affectively connect

prompt an articulation

**Sign:**

i inhale

e exhale

m the same movement

mn different or related movements

p short pause, same pose

pq short pause, different or related poses

ps extended pause/stretching/fermata, same pose

x stomp – sound of hitting the floor

h hit – sound of hitting one's body

v vocalization in language (i.e., a spoken word or phrase)

**Relation:**

W dancer W initiates and dancer B listens-responds

B dancer B initiates and dancer W listens-responds

Wb dancer B actively following dancer W

Bw dancer W actively following dancer B

t together

Q unknown (when a cue is heard but the speaker could not be identified)

**Examples:**

cue\_mB movement impetus initiated by dancer B

cue\_imW inhale and motion impetus by dancer W

align\_pst a suspension of the same pose, by both dancers

prompt\_vQ snake one of the dancers, although it is not clear which, says "snake"

cue\_eWmB an exhale impetus by dancer W and a movement impetus by dancer B

align\_xWb a call and response stomp, with W starting and B following

align\_pBw dancer B influences the timing of the shared pose

align\_pqWb dancer B influences the timing of the related pose

align\_mnt different movement aligned in time together

align\_xt synchronized stomp

#### 4. Subcategories of Entrainment

There are both simple and complex subcategories of movement entrainment. The primary mode of unison (u) without any subcategory, implies unison facing the same direction, typically side-by-side

##### **Simple subcategories of unison:**

- us unison with spatial development (i.e., different facings)
- ur unison with mirror symmetry
- ul unison with level development
- ulu partners change level together, level change up
- uld partners change level together, level change down
- uf unison with falling development

##### **Complex subcategories of unison, with combinations of spatial development, mirror symmetry, level and falling:**

- usr unison with mirror symmetry and spatial development
- ulus unison with level change up and spatial development
- ulds unison with level change down and spatial development
- ulur unison with level change up and mirror symmetry
- uldr unison with level change down and mirror symmetry
- ulusr unison with level change up, spatial development and mirror symmetry
- uldsr unison with level change down, spatial development and mirror symmetry
- ufs falling unison with spatial development
- ufr falling unison with mirror symmetry
- ufsr falling unison with spatial development and mirror symmetry

##### **Simple subcategories of concurrent motion:**

- cn canon
- cns canon with spatial development
- cnr canon with mirror symmetry
- cnsr canon with mirror symmetry and spatial development

##### **Simple subcategories of solo:**

- oB solo for dancer B
- oW solo for dancer W
- oWb solo for dancer W with dancer B improvising framing
- oBw solo for dancer B with dancer W improvising framing

## 5. Modes of Transformation

These categories describe *how* the movement is performed in relation to the choreographic sequence. They may be applied to any primary mode of movement alignment, with the exception of break and other. When no mode of transformation is listed, it is implied that the movement is repeated similarly to the previous historical record (i.e., the steps are 'set'). When only one dancer is listed, it is implied that the other dancer is performing that entrainment mode as choreographed, without transformation.

### Primary Modes of Movement Transformation:

- m modification of sequence
- a adaptation of sequence
- I improvisation of sequence

### Subcategories of unison:

- um unison with modification by both dancers
- umB unison with modification by dancer B
- umW unison with modification by dancer W
- ua unison with adaptation by both dancers
- uaB unison with adaptation by dancer B
- uaW unison with adaptation by dancer W
- ui improvised unison by both dancers
- uiB unison with improvisation by dancer B
- uiW unison with improvisation by dancer W

### Subcategories of concurrent motion:

- cm concurrent motion with modification by both dancers
- cmB concurrent motion with modification by dancer B
- cmW concurrent motion with modification by dancer W
- ca concurrent motion with adaptation
- caB concurrent motion with adaptation by dancer B
- caW concurrent motion with adaptation by dancer W
- ci improvised concurrent motion
- ciB concurrent motion with improvisation by dancer B
- ciW concurrent motion with improvisation by dancer W

### Subcategories of intermittent motion/turn-taking:

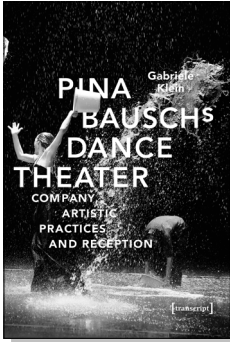
- ttm modification of intermittent motion/turn-taking by both dancers
- ttmW modification of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer W
- ttmB modification of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer B
- tta adaptation of intermittent motion/turn-taking by both dancers

- ttaW adaptation of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer W  
 ttaB adaptation of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer B  
 tti intermittent motion/turn-taking with improvised movement  
 ttiW improvisation of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer W  
 ttiB improvisation of intermittent motion/turn-taking by dancer B

**Subcategories of solo:**

- oBm modified solo for dancer B  
 oWm modified solo for dancer W  
 oBa adapted solo for dancer B  
 oWa adapted solo for dancer W  
 oBi improvised solo for dancer B  
 oWi improvised solo for dancer W  
 oWb solo for dancer W with dancer B improvising framing  
 oBw solo for dancer B with dancer W improvising framing  
 oWbm modified solo for dancer W with dancer B improvising framing  
 oBwm modified solo for dancer B with dancer W improvising framing  
 oWba adapted solo for dancer W with dancer B improvising framing  
 oBwa adapted solo for dancer B with dancer W improvising framing  
 oWbi improvised for dancer W with dancer B improvising framing  
 oBwi improvised solo dancer B with dancer W improvising framing

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Gabriele Klein

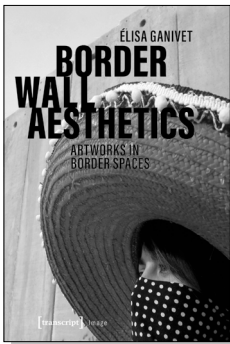
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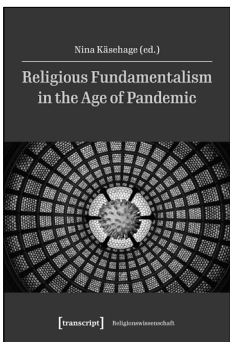
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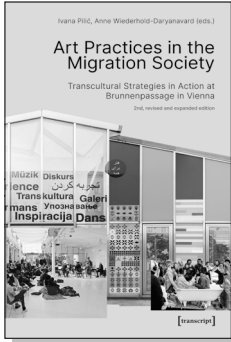
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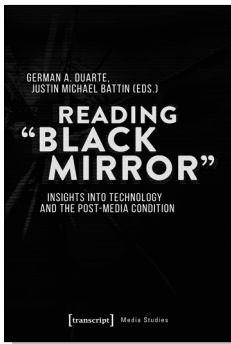
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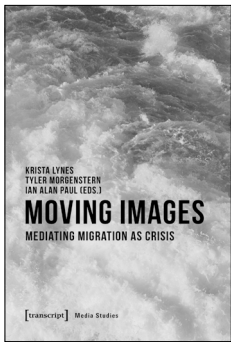
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