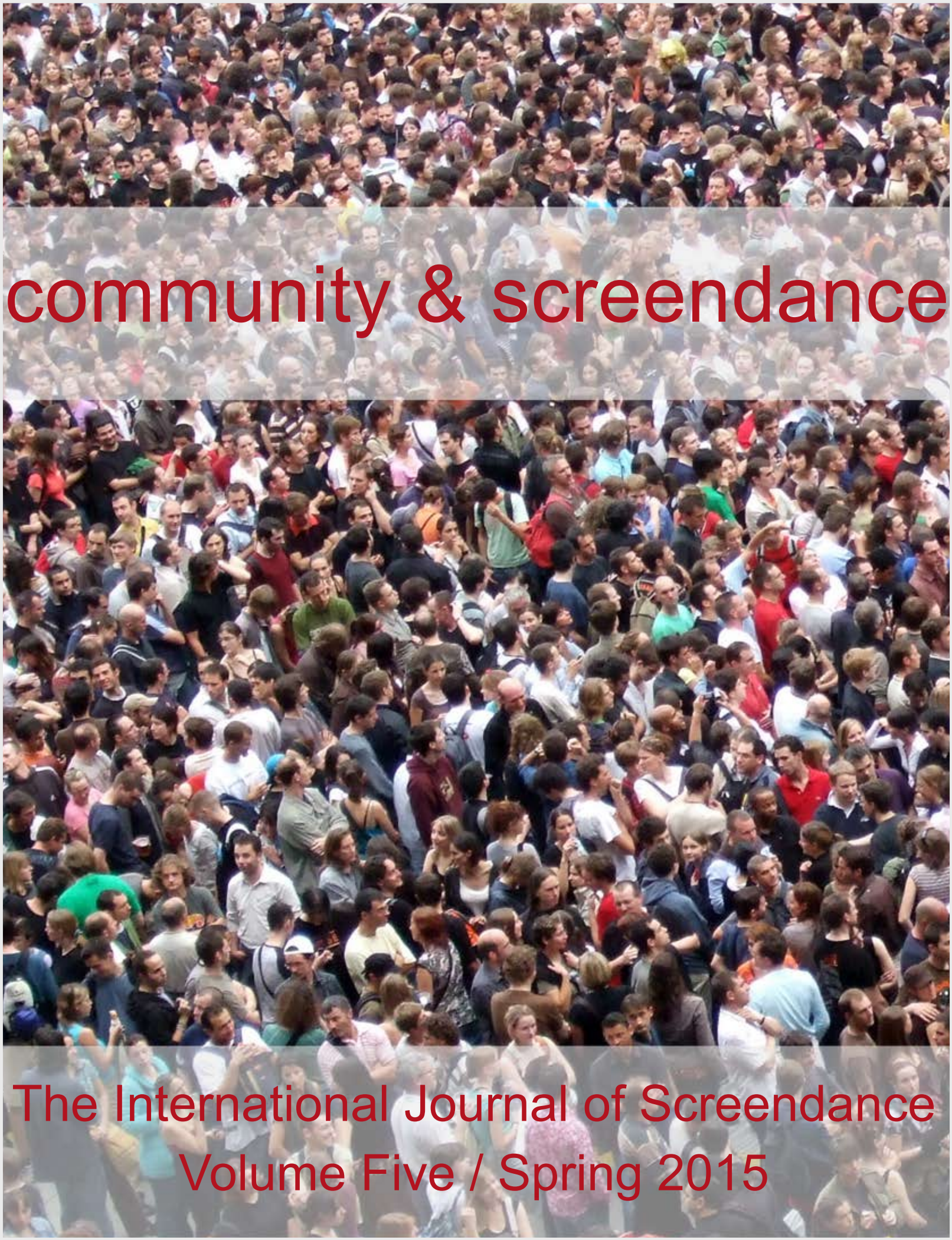

# community & screendance

The International Journal of Screendance
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## EDITORS

*Harmony Bench and Simon Ellis*

# The International Journal of Screendance
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# Editors' note: On Community, Collaboration, and Difference

*Harmony Bench, The Ohio State University*
*Simon Ellis, University of Roehampton*

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns 'we' into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, the foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.
>
> – Julia Kristeva[1]

When we put together the call for papers for this journal issue, inspired by prompts from Marisa Zanotti, we were thinking simply of what goes on beyond the frame. As Charles Atlas remarked in an interview, "I wanted to explore things that related to my life; less about the studio, more about what's outside the studio."[2] We were thinking of such questions as: What are the networks and support structures that enable each of us to do our work? What communities do we draw from creatively and intellectually? Who are audiences and interlocutors for our work? We were not explicitly thinking of global politics, and yet, a theme such as community invites us to reflect more broadly on the boundaries of the communities to which we belong or with which we identify, the stakes inherent in those identifications, and the mutual responsibility that attends investments in a community and its identity.

In the past weeks and months leading up to this journal issue, the 'international community' has expressed concern over Greece's financial well-being, Russia's operations in the Ukraine, Ebola outbreaks in West Africa, #blacklivesmatter protests throughout the United States, the drowning deaths of 900 souls trying to reach Europe from Libya, and thousands dead in Nepal after a devastating earthquake. Each of these scenes of chaos, vulnerability, catastrophe, and pain asks us to consider: what is community, and how far does it extend? What is the 'we' implicit in community as both its promise (premise) and its impossibility? How far can intention toward community reach before fellow-feeling transforms into xenophobia, or before the support we lend

each other out of care becomes our only means of surviving the logics of neoliberal economies?

Communities are dependent on exclusion. In order to recognize belonging, others must be seen as just that: other. The recognition of (or perhaps desire for) difference—in attitudes, voice, taste, race, gender, class, etc.—carries with it demanding and important ethical concerns for how it is that we—as individuals and in our various communities—make choices, including the choices that are made on our behalf, and those with which we are complicit through ignorance or silence.

So there is, on the one hand, the geo-political realm in which communities, identities/identifications, and ethical responsibilities are negotiated, and on the other, there are intellectual and aesthetic communities that grow within and across geo-political boundaries, as well as disciplinary boundaries. Not only are aesthetic communities informed by this larger geo-political backdrop, they take shape in relation to its hierarchies, its flows of information and economic resources, and the circulations of ideas and people it affords or curtails. The politics of screendance communities may differ in substance from those of nation-states, but they share the structural problems of access and economics.

Screendance's development as a hybrid discipline—emerging from choreographic, visual, and cinematographic thinking—has long been dependent on films presented as (more or less curated) collections at screendance festivals. These festivals are now fewer in number (particularly in the UK) and many artists are seeking alternative ways of creating shared spaces to present, watch, and talk about their work. At the same time, screendance is taking hold in undergraduate university dance programs around the world. These two developments—alternative or experimental platforms for presenting work, and screendance-specific higher education courses—mark a pivotal moment to explore how the nature of community in our discipline is changing, and how screendance might offer changes in the ways in which humans make, watch, and think together. In an era in which the social fabric has worn thin, artists have worked at building community and incorporated such work into the process of art-making. Collectively, we seek ways to sustain ourselves.

Early in 2015, artists Karen Christopher and Lucy Cash presented a scratch performance of a conversation at the University of Roehampton's Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies.[3] During the conversation they reflected on how the words 'carrying' and 'caring' are threaded together in the way they describe actions that involve two or more beings who are in relation to each other. It is the nature of this relationship—or these relationships—that is the subject of this volume. How might the screendance community express care? Can we even talk about a singular screendance community? How do screendance practitioners, scholars and students understand and express care that is distinct from other practices? If *IJSD* is also in part responsible for

offering support to the development of a disparate community, then what are the dangers implicit in our voice (as a scholarly and artistic journal) of homogenizing the type of thinking, writing, and practices that might accurately represent the work that is currently being done and made? To what extent is *IJSD* creating—or responding to—a community or communities?

The tangle of exclusion, otherness, self-awareness, and community that Julia Kristeva understands to be embodied within us when we recognize our difference demands that those involved in the collaborative practices of film-making attempt to recognize and understand personal voice, difference, authorship, influence, and power. This is particularly vital in the space and time of choreographic and dance film-making because these processes and their outcomes are watched and felt through the lens and legacy of bodily training, sensitivity, and attention.

This is not to say that screendance is necessarily corporeally-driven, but that the choreographic thinking that underpins screendance practices is extended or tested by our sensitivity to the compressing and expanding spaces between the skins of people-in-and-out-of-common.

> The numerous reoccurrence of performance in image, text, object, and echo-events ... suggest that every rendition of a performance, whatever its form, is itself a different event. ... This is not to deny similarities and continuities between times and between recursive forms—that, for example, a video recording of a performance event may substantively deliver the meaning and affects of the said event to new spectators—but rather it is to assert that the relation of the two events is marked by some evident and unknowable differences. Each event in each differently functioning form is produced in and by the complex intersubjective and inter-sensorial co-minglings of its participant-spectators/readers. Such contexts are not pre-discursive, and whether or not they involve 'solitary reception' (a 'single' body watching a pre-recorded body on a screen for example) they are inherently social: involving numerous subjectivities, numerous active beings in and of numerous times, diverging and converging in the times of the event of reading.[4]

Human beings seek to identify, connect, and converse with others. Not surprisingly, why we work together in screendance and the ways in which we work together are key. These methods are often face-to-face or side-by-side, but increasingly involve various forms of virtual exchange via screens—togetherness at a distance. The experimental nature of these communal exchanges is reflected in the distinct ideas that the authors in this volume test and reveal in their writing and work. It is fitting that in an issue devoted to broad issues of community in screendance, most of the contributions—including this editorial—are written by people in conversation or dialogue. Perhaps the

number of collaborative contributions also reflects complex contemporary economies of production in which our feeling of time is compressed, and we seek the company of others in order to make things seem imaginable or even achievable.

Anthropologist-philosopher Tim Ingold suggests such companionship is best nourished not in face-to-face communication where people "appear to be locked in a contest in which views are no longer shared but batted back and forth,"[5] but side-by-side when we are stimulated and provoked by similarly moving fields of view. Conversely, describing relational movement, Erin Manning stands toe-to-toe with her dancing other in the Argentine tango.[6] Together they are "looking for the holes"[7] or intervals that make the dancing possible:

> Relational movement means moving the relation. Moving the person will never result in grace, intensity of movement can only be felt when the in-between—the interval—created by the movement-with takes hold. This interval is ephemeral, impossible to grasp as such, essential to the passage from a step to a graceful movement.[8]

The key for both Ingold and Manning is perhaps not about the nature of the physical orientation between people—either toe-to-toe or side-by-side. Indeed it is not the people who comprise the relationship that are moved, but the relationship or the interval. The interval is adaptive, pliant, and able to express or "propel"[9] the dance. In order to understand the nature of the spaces between people in communities, and to develop sensitivity to these spaces, it is useful to imagine communal acts as being those that negotiate the *intervals between* participants, and *not* the participants themselves. In this situation, a community becomes a series of divergent opportunities—or affordances—for recognizing difference. Such communities in screendance would be recognizable by heterogeneity: alternate and distinctive voices around the world between which the spaces of screens are choreographed, and filled or opened out.

This volume of the International Journal of Screendance is the first *themed* version since the journal began in 2010. It contains contributions—articles, interviews, reviews and provocations and viewpoints—that reflect the diverse community of screendance practitioners, thinkers, and scholars. Each piece of writing in turn reveals distinct concerns for the subject of *community* in screendance, with collaborative creation, globality, and audience reception emerging as prominent themes.

Elena Benthaus explores the role of online communities and conversations in her analysis of the 'WOW-affect' amongst spectators of *So You Think You Can Dance*, and Karen Wood tests the ways in which audiences identify—and behave—as communities in her article, sorting through the role of empathy in viewing and interpreting screendance in "Audience as community: corporeal knowledge and empathetic viewing." Benthaus challenges the concept of kinesthetic empathy, which has fueled many considerations of how audiences interact with and respond to danced movement,

suggesting that spectacular or virtuosic dancing suspends an audience's ability to respond. One is simply left with 'WOW,' an utterance that evidences affective transmission without necessarily bringing empathy, understanding, or interpretation in its wake. For Wood's focus groups responding to experimental works for screen rather than commercial television, the empathic register is pronounced. It opens a space for the viewers' responses, developed through conversations that take the viewers beyond the moment of visual impact to one of interpretation. In "*Being a video-choreographer*," Heike Salzer and Ana Baer also consider the relationship between artist and audience, weaving Baer's history of making films and curating the Sans Souci Festival into a larger consideration of the ways in which screens are central to Baer's understanding of choreographic and curatorial practice.

Collaborative approaches to dance-making and dance-filmmaking abound in this issue. Mitchell Rose, Marisa Hayes, and Joséphine Garibaldi and Paul Zmolek specifically reflect on the global reach of collaborative practices in their contributions. In "Global Corporeality: Collaborative Choreography in Digital Space," Garibaldi and Zmolek offer a critical analysis of the ways in which screens, cameras, and freely available software might help shape a transcontinental community of dancers in Latvia and the United States. They speak frankly of the challenges they faced as they composed a multi-locational, multi-media performance while straddling continents and languages. In "Crowd-Sourced Filmmaking: Despair is Your Friend," Rose also outlines his experience of making the crowd-sourced film *Globe Trot*, detailing the labor of composing a film out of footage shot by videographers around the world into a coherent whole. Marisa Hayes also tells of how she coordinated the 'transauthorial exquisite corpse' process of creating a screendance in response to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Built in episodes with contributions from artists with diverse backgrounds and at varying stages in their careers, the resulting films modeled a form of collectivity in the making. Each of these authors approach the question of community through collaboration, finding in collaborative processes both the site of community, and, in some instances, its limit.

David Hinton and Siobhan Davies also contemplate the role of individual agency when constructing a single work from the contributions of many artists. In conversation with Simon Ellis, Hinton and Davies evaluate the process that unfolded around their recent work *The Running Tongue*, noting the successes of the project as well as the moments where their ideals of community were beyond what was practical or practicable. In conversation with Harmony Bench, Victoria Marks similarly calls out the notion of community as an ideal. As she notes in "Mobilizing Subjectivity," her 'Action Conversations' bring together individuals and groups of people that would not typically be in the same room. Marks asks what can happen when we truly acknowledge each other's differences—what are the ways we can come together, and what is needed to facilitate togetherness within and alongside difference?

In addition to two reviews—Hetty Blades on *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli, and Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros on *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by Mary Simonson—this issues contains the provocation *In the Forest Between Us* by independent artist Lucy Cash. In her writing, Cash recognizes that visiting the "edges of the unfamiliar" in her practice is made possible by various kinds of dialogue.

Such dialogues are at the heart of working together and cooperating in communities. For Brian Eno, our ability to cooperate—to imagine being in at least two worlds at once—is the "whole basis of human specialness."[10] Eno suggests further that it is through engaging deeply with culture—most obviously films and novels—that helps us imagine the feelings and experiences of others; they "rehearse us"[11] for the possibility that the world is not as we experience it.

In seeking out—and building—communities within which to explore, question and practice screendance, we are directly confronted by difference that introduces perceptual and experiential uncertainty. It represents a risk to be with others in order to explore the spaces between us, and to challenge choreographic thinking, but at the same time it nourishes our imaginations and makes surprise possible.

Part of *IJSD*'s remit is to help build a global community of practitioners, scholars and students who—together and apart—are willing to examine the intervals of choreographic and screen-based thinking and doing. Although the practitioners and scholars who responded to our call for proposals are primarily from the US and UK, we recognize the importance of our work—as artists and scholars—to foster globality. Perhaps a small part of this responsibility involves reading, watching, engaging, disputing, and responding to the openly available materials, ideas, and words in this edition of *IJSD*. In doing so you become part of the nebulous and diverse group of practitioners, academics and students who make claims about—and are claimed by—screendance's histories, cultures, practices, images and texts.

Finally, as part of our desire to make the membership of *IJSD*'s editorial board fluid and representative of the intersecting domains within which we work—both inside and outside of academia—we'd like to welcome two new people to it. Katrina McPherson is an independent artist, renowned screendance maker, and author of *Making Video Dance: A step by step guide to creating dance for the screen*. She is also one of the people—with original *IJSD* editors Claudia Kappenberg and Doug Rosenberg—who initially planned and made possible *IJSD*. Erin Brannigan is a senior lecturer in dance at the University of New South Wales and wrote *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*. Together Erin and Katrina have remarkable experience and understanding of the possibilities and limitations of screendance practice and theory. By encouraging a dynamic editorial board, we hope to ensure that the board—itself a small community of

artists and academics—is able to reflect and be responsive to changes in the practices, ideas, and work of the broader screendance community. Indeed, this is our hope for *IJSD*.

We are excited about this issue on community—the second published by The Ohio State University and the first under our stewardship. We hope that you find in its pages an articulation and reflection of our screendance communities. And we would like to take the opportunity to remark upon our own commitment to community.

When Doug Rosenberg and Claudia Kappenberg launched this journal, it was with the clear commitment to raise the visibility and discourse of screendance. We are proud to carry that banner forward. Now, however, we are watching the publication landscape changing around us, and new pay-to-play policies impacting artists' and scholars' ability to publish their work. We are committed to keeping *IJSD* open-access, and for us this means not only that readers will be able to access the journal's content without hitting a pay wall—it also means that we will not ask authors to pay to have their work reviewed or published. We are committed to serving all of our community—not just those with university affiliations or deep pockets. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve this community, and appreciate everyone's efforts toward support and sustainability.

Harmony Bench and Simon Ellis

30 April 2015

# Notes

[1] Kristeva, 1.
[2] Comer.
[3] "Karen Christopher in Conversation with Lucy Cash."
[4] Heathfield, 32.
[5] Ingold, 106.
[6] See Manning, "The Elasticity of the Almost."
[7] Ibid. 107.
[8] Ibid. 108.
[9] Ibid. 109.
[10] Eno, 357.
[11] Ibid. 357.

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# ARTICLES

# Hovering on Screen: The WOW-Affect and Fan Communities of Affective Spectatorship on *So You Think You Can Dance*

*Elena Benthaus, University of Melbourne*

In this article I argue that the television dance franchise *So You Think You Can Dance* (*SYTYCD*) fosters and encourages what I call affective viewing practices and communities of affective spectatorship, which are specifically related to the "WOW-affect" created by its affective bodies. I use the term 'affect' to indicate the relationship between screens, athletic/virtuosic bodies, sound, and movement as one of excessive stimulation, resulting in intensities, or affects, which are circulated between screens and bodies as particular moments of suspense. In this sense, affect can be located in the gap between the impact of a stimulation on the skin-surface and a more coherent, cognitive response to this stimulation. The WOW as an utterance in relation to the athletic/virtuosic screen bodies and their affective impact gives voice and physical expression to the excess of intensities as a not-yet-cognitive suspended response. The notion of the WOW-affect, combining the utterance with a specific affective impact, is closely linked to the vaudeville show aesthetics of using an intensely spectacular movement series at the end of a routine to 'stop the show' by stunning the audience and suspending their reaction for a brief moment in time. Hence, the WOW-affect is a particular reaction to the experience of movement. As Kate Elswit argued in relation to *SYTYCD*, the show "trains audiences in affective dance spectatorship."[1] According to her argument, this is achieved by contextualizing the dancing bodies within the narrative structure of the format as a whole, the narrative content of the dance routines, and audience attachment to the dancers as people. All of these observations are linked to the way in which reflective language is used throughout the show to narrate these various aspects and not about the movement itself or the dancing bodies. Whereas Elswit proposes that the show "does not privilege the experience of movement"[2] to create feelings in its spectators and does not examine the way the screen technology itself contributes to the experience of movement, I argue that the bodies in movement, enhanced by the screen technologies, create affective attachment via the WOW-affect. Furthermore, this affective attachment produces communities of affective spectatorship via the presence of the show not only on television but also on social media sites. This media presence, specifically the online presence of the show, fosters engagement across groups of people, who bond with each other in discussions of the affective bodies and performances as part of a constant feedback loop, which revolves around the WOW-affect and the engagement it

stimulates. My aim in this article is to discuss the relationship between the affective dancing bodies on *SYTYCD*, the WOW-affect that is created as an intrinsic part of the show, and the way the affective bodies and their virtuosic performances foster communities of affective spectatorship on social media sites that can be considered as dance fan communities.

As audience attachment to the show is positioned as a personal affective experience, which then translates into a shared affective experience on the net, I want to start by considering my own attachment to the format. I first came across *SYTYCD* when I was studying and dancing in Melbourne and channel TEN started auditioning dancers for the first Australian season at the end of 2007 for its official launch in 2008. Dancers I knew and trained with went to the auditions, and two even made it into the Top 20. Soon after the first episode was broadcast I had to leave and go back to Germany. The dilemma I faced was how to get hold of the episodes in Germany. While searching for a solution, I discovered an American YouTube channel, on which the episodes were posted in 15 min segments alongside the American and Canadian seasons,[3] which is how I came across the American "original" for the first time and started catching up on the three seasons that had already been broadcast and posted. When YouTube deleted the channel and user profile due to copyright infringements,[4] the user created a private Facebook group to which people could only get access by "friending" the user and then being added to the group. As a result, this particular spectator-fan community moved from YouTube to Facebook, where members have been following the American, Canadian, and Australian versions and discussing the format and its content within a relatively stable spectator community ever since.[5]

My attachment to the show came about in two distinct steps: The first was personal attachment due to having dancers I personally knew on the show. The second was academic. After becoming familiar with the format and franchise as a whole and its point of origin, I became attached and interested on a scholarly level, due to the variety of dance and dancers featured on the show as well as the way the dancing was filmed. This resonates with Dee Reynolds's observation that identification for dance audiences of televised reality talent shows (she uses *Strictly Come Dancing* here) is facilitated by an emotional proximity between spectators and the dancers as people, rather than by their dancing moving bodies.[6] However, the question that arose from my continuing observations and attachment was how this attachment and engagement with the show, which I understand to be part of popular screendance rather than reality talent competitions, is facilitated by the dancing bodies and the screen technologies in more detail. In relation to this I am suggesting that the specific attachment to the suspended athletic dancing bodies creates a particular form of engagement with movements (watching movements and being moved), in which the practice of spectatorship and the identification with a community of spectators becomes affective. Indeed spectators move from a more passive notion of 'spectating' to the active practice of 'fan-ing,'

which involves a different form of spectatorship, closely related to affect as a trigger for active engagement across screens and sites.

## The WOW-Affect

For considering the way in which the dancing bodies and the screen technologies produce the WOW-affect and further facilitate attachment around these bodies and the participation and engagement with fan communities, the notion of WOW and its affective qualities need to be differentiated in more detail. When Henry Jenkins argues for the appreciation of the complexity and diversity of pop-cultural performances in his book *The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture*, he says, "consider the singular beauty of the word 'wow.' Think about the pleasure in forming that perfectly symmetrical phrase on your tongue. Imagine the particular enthusiasm it expresses—the sense of wonderment, astonishment, absolute engagement."[7] Jenkins specifically uses the term "wow climax" to describe the effects of pop cultural performances, a concept that he traces back to the vaudeville tradition, in which it was common to use a spectacular movement series or trick at the end of an act to leave the audience pleasurably speechless. As such it was an important tool for stopping, or suspending the show for a brief moment in time as a result of the audience's emotional reaction and applause. While Jenkins contemplates the particular pleasure and beauty of the word WOW and the way it 'rolls off the tongue,' he does not go into further detail about what specific verbal and physical manifestations the WOW as an affective response can entail. I argue that apart from being an expressive response to something too stunning, too spectacular, too intense, or too emotional to put into more elaborate verbal expressions, the WOW as an immediate physical-verbal expression hovers at the threshold of a more articulated, re-cognized, and verbalized emotional response.

In the season 4 Top 6 episode broadcast on the 24th of April 2014, *SYTYCD* Australia contestant Michael Dameski performed a highly athletic and virtuosic solo to the track "Unstoppable" by *E.S. Posthumus*, an independent music group from L.A. that combines classical orchestral sounds with drum rhythms and electronic music.[8] Announced by host Carrie Bickmore with the words, "he really is unstoppable, it's Michael,"[9] with the opening bars of the music, the camera cuts from a high angle long shot from the back of the studio to a full shot of Michael on stage. Alongside the opening bars of the track, featuring string instruments playing an eerie melody, Michael is building up intensity and tension with two slow steps forward and circular arm movements to prepare for the first virtuosic move, a back flip to a stretched leg forward bend on the floor. The camera, which focuses on him in a medium shot at the start, displays his face set in a concentrated warrior like expression and cuts to a full shot during the backflip sequence, while the music briefly pauses to start up again with a drumbeat the moment he lands on the floor to pick up the string melody again. From there he moves through a fluid floor sequence into side splits from which he rises to a standing position by sliding his legs together. During this floor sequence the music

slowly intensifies by drumbeats, added to underlie the string melody, which is being drawn out till the staccato constantly intensifying orchestra-drum-electronic music starts. In a similar way, Michael's movement quality slowly intensifies during the drawn out section culminating in him taking two preparatory steps forward to jump into the air momentarily suspending his body horizontally to the floor before catching the fall in a forward roll in time with the beginning crescendo of the music. His movements in the crescendo section become faster and more staccato as well and the solo ends with him doing four *à la seconde* turns into a sextuple pirouette landing on the floor.

This highly virtuosic and highly athletic performance resulted in a myriad of WOW reactions, both verbal and physical. The studio audience had already started screaming unintelligibly at the top of their lungs during the solo, while judge Paula Abdul cannot stop screaming, "OH MY GOD,"[10] judge Jason Gilkinson is captured merely clapping with a stunned jaw-dropped expression on his face, and the studio audience is chanting "Michael." The physical responses include extensive clapping, stomping of the feet, jumping up from seats and various other gestures of disbelief, including tears, literally stopping the show for a good 10 minutes, which were edited out for the actual broadcast. The moment ended with Carrie Bickmore summing up the reactions by saying, "you just blew us away. Wow!"[11] This moment not only exceeds the usual scripted applause of shows like this,[12] but is, for as long as I have been following the show, the only solo performance of the *SYTYCD* franchise that has gone viral by being shared across various forms of social media, fan communities, and news media sites, triggering more written out WOW responses in turn. Executive producer Nigel Lythgoe tweeted in response, "one of the best #DanceForYourLife Performances I have ever seen on #SYTYCDAU, or anywhere for that matter,"[13] which was retweeted 249 times and in combination with other tweets resulted in Michael's solo temporarily trending on Twitter. As a result of this solo and Michael winning the show, he was invited to perform this solo at the finale of *SYTYCD* US season 11. Referring to the social media hype surrounding his solo performance, Paula Abdul introduced Michael with the words, "but there is this one man, young man in particular, who harnessed a passion into a performance that was so breathtaking. Not only did everyone rise out of their seat, but everyone you could hear [she makes a gasping sound] that gasp and the video of his performance went viral around the world."[14] Considering these responses in relation to the WOW, the WOW-affect triggered by the dancing bodies on screen is immediately visible and audible in the on-screen spectators as part of the broadcast. This in turn heightens the experience of the WOW moment for the spectator-at-home and is an intrinsic part of the transmission of affect across screens, which I will theorize by drawing on Brian Massumi's Deleuzian take on affect and Sara Ahmed's notion of impression.

## Affective Bodies and the WOW Affect

Discussing the relationship between body, movement, and feeling, Brian Massumi notes that language as verbal expression is not in opposition but in a differentiated relation to what he describes as intensity/affect, and furthermore depends on its relation to image perception. According to Massumi, seemingly objective, factual language interferes with and decreases the sensational or tactile effect of images, whereas emotional utterances enhance their intensity. For Massumi, intensity/affect suspends linearity for a moment in time. This emotional state is a state of suspense, in which all of the body's senses are fully alerted, creating a moment of non-linear hovering before progressing to a more cognitive response. Intensity/affect is not passive, because suspense is a state of motion, vibration, and hovering in between states. Nor is it completely active, because the moment of suspense is not-yet directed toward a means or an end. It is an excess of linear progression and not-yet signifiable.[15] If it is not-yet-signifiable, intensity/affect is also unlike emotion, which is already signified, consciously expressed and fixed qualifications of content. Or, in Massumi's words, "it is intensity owned and recognized."[16] Thinking of WOW as a verbal expression or reaction to the intensity of performances (where performances are seen as stimulators), WOW becomes a verbalized excess of that intensity within the body. As such, it is not a specific emotional utterance, which gives voice to a cognitively re-cognized particular emotion, but an expression of excess of corporeal intensities. It is not yet directed toward a specific goal, but is an excess of affect, a suspended response, which hovers in between and before conscious cognition. This conception of an excess of intensities is linked to the moments of suspense, which Massumi locates in "the missing half-second,"[17] that is, the lapse of time between the stimulation of the skin and the conscious registration of that stimulation as a reaction to an action. As Massumi argues, "the half-second is missed not because it is empty, but because it is overfull, in excess of the actually performed action and of its ascribed meaning."[18] This notion of excess of intensities positions the body as the first instance of cognition before re-cognition (of emotion) sets in. The excess is the potential of possible expressions of these intensities. The moment in between this potential and conscious (re)-cognition is the missing half-second (which is constantly missing), or in other words every suspended moment in between potential and (re)-cognition. In relation to the affective capabilities of popular screen dance bodies, in the 'in-between-ness' of these two poles moments of suspense are realized, or corpo-realized by WOW movements of the virtuosic, athletic dancing bodies, which exude a corporeal athletic excess on screen. Going back to Michael's solo, the experience of intensity constantly increased during the performance due to the excessive physical virtuosity of his body and the excessive power of the music, culminating in the WOW as an expression of this corporeal and emotional suspended excess.

Linking displays of athleticism to spectatorship and notions of beauty and joy, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht sees intensity as a key aspect of the affective potential of what he calls "athletic beauty."[19] He not only refers to the intensity with which spectators become engrossed in watching sports and following a team or an individual athlete, but also the intensity with which athletes execute movements. Gumbrecht calls this "focused intensity,"[20] which is specifically linked to corporeality, the focus of the athletic body on what is ahead within the confinement of the event in question, and on the transmission of this intensity and focus to the spectator. For the performer/athlete it is about pushing and exceeding physical limits, hovering just at the edge of what seems physically possible. On *SYTYCD*, Michael's face as well as his body display the focused intensity Gumbrecht mentions. The intensity is written into the lines of his face and the visibly tense and high-strung muscles, all of which expresses something hovering in between grim determination and concentration and as a result gives him a warrior-like look. As an expression used in contemporary dance, hovering refers to a specific movement quality[21]—pushing movements to their extreme suspension, when the body's senses and muscles are fully alerted and tensed, and then falling off-center, transferring and continuing the flow of movement. Hovering provides the tipping point into new potential. Instances of suspended hovering in combination with hyper-virtuosic movements are an intrinsic part of popular screen dance performances as displayed by Michael in his solo. His body is constantly hovering and suspended in mid-air, resulting in a spectating experience of hovering on the edge of the WOW-affect before moving into more consciously cognitive territory. Hovering thus becomes a part of affective spectatorship, located in the gap of suspense where affective and possibly emotional potential is realized.

It is here, in the gap, where the screen-as-interface via the skin-as-interface becomes important for the transmission of affect.[22] The skin of the spectator-at-home works in relation to the interface-skin of the screen and the dancing bodies on the screen as a means of affective intensification. Sara Ahmed, elaborating on the notion of skin-surface-interface in relation to how affect, intensities, and emotions pass in-between bodies, positions emotions as being neither something within a subject nor without a subject, but occurring at the border between inside and outside. In other words, they are hovering.[23] This is something that happens at the surface of things, and with regards to human bodies, at the skin, which Ahmed pays particular attention to. As she notes, "even the most apparently direct sensations, or impressions are mediated, involve traces of past impressions on skin surfaces."[24] The skin is here established as the border between inside and outside that is made and unmade in the event of being im-pressed upon by experiencing sensations due to being in the proximity of other bodies or other skin surfaces. The key word that Ahmed uses in relation to skin surfaces is the word 'impression,' with the term 'press' at its core. 'Press' is understood as leaving a mark, or a trace "by the press of one surface upon another"[25] and relates to the 'impression' other body-skin-surfaces leave behind. To bring Massumi and Ahmed

together then, the moment in which the skin is im-pressed upon (stimulated) creates suspended intensities and potentialities of sensations that trickle into being emotionally im-pressed upon at what Massumi referred to as the deeper corporeal level (below the skin). It is here, below the skin, where affect and cognition hover for a moment before re-cognition of a possible emotional content eventually sets in. The trace of im-pression left behind is the tingling of the skin as a re-action to being im-pressed upon.

When watching Michael Dameski's solo for the first time, I felt the impact of the eerie string melody combined with the focused intensity of his facial expression and the 'ready-to-go' muscular tension of his body as a slight tingling of the skin at the back of my neck and the base of my scalp first. Once the staccato rhythm of the music, the pace and athleticism of his movements, and the on-screen audience's noise level picked up and built towards the final crescendo, the tingling moved down the skin of my arms resulting in goose bumps. The important observation here is that while the music in combination with the movements resulted in a tingling skin surface, the experience was even more intensified due to the noise level of the on-screen audience, which was part of the sound transmission of the screen and established proximity between my body, Michael's dancing body and the on-screen spectating bodies. Considering this, the skin is experienced as the point of 'contact' (stimulation) where transmission of affect occurs.

The WOW as a physical-verbal response to dancing bodies and an indicator of being in a suspended moment of being WOW-ed is linked to an affective response and to the transmission of affect across screen-interfaces and body-surfaces. Considering it as an affective reaction to movement, the WOW-affect expresses an excess of intensities within the body, without however being a specific cognitively registered emotional response. In contrast to the notion of kinesthetic empathy in which it is assumed that spectators always empathize with the choreographed moving bodies of a dance work by reproducing in one's mind the movement and feelings of the dancing body, I argue that the transmission of affect in relation to popular screen dance performances is located in the experience of a lack of empathy. In *Choreographing Empathy* Susan Foster challenges the idea that there is a natural connection between dancing and spectating bodies by revealing the constructed, mediated and historically specific circumstances of the connection between choreography, kinesthesia, and empathy by looking at the way that the meaning of these terms has radically shifted over time. As she argues, "to 'choreograph empathy' thus entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinaesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling."[26] As such, the three separate yet linked concepts of choreography, kinaesthesia, and empathy are responsible for constructing a particular corporeality in different social, cultural, and historical contexts, all of which are still linked to a sense of empathy, or fellow-feeling, as part of the dancer-dance-spectator relationship.[27] As Foster argues, "most crucially, they [the examples she uses]

demonstrate the many ways in which the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt, encouraging them to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis of their experience."[28] In this sense, empathy is not supposed to simply relate to feeling what someone else feels (the emotional and psychological aspect), but about the particular attention to and awareness of the physical changes during processes of empathy and in turn to power relations and communal relations between empathizing bodies. The kinaesthetic experience in her analysis is an important factor. It is still nevertheless based on the empathetic, fellow-feeling experience of the kinaesthetic corporeality of the dance in question and not on an affective experience of the kinaesthetic momentum and the possibility of a suspended response because of experiencing an excessive intensity due to excessive stimulation, all of which is part of the pleasure of watching popular screen dance performances. This pleasure and the resulting attachment to popular screen dance performances occur at the level of the transmission of affect, by being affected by the virtuosity and athleticism of the dancing bodies. In other words, the dancing bodies potential to WOW suspends both, a potential empathetic as well as a possible emotional response.

To return to Michael's solo, even after the tingling skin and the goose bumps subsided, the excessive intensity this performance left behind could not be connected to a specific emotion. I felt stunned and WOW-ed but not very emotional or empathetic but rather intensely affected and stimulated. To extend the argument further, the pleasure of watching popular screen performances occurs from being affected by the virtuosity and athleticism of the dancing bodies; not necessarily because the spectator-at-home can imagine to empathetically inhabit this particular athletic moving body, but because he/she cannot due to being WOW-ed. The WOW-affect, rather than functioning as an emotional or empathetic response, suspends emotion and empathy, building up sensation and intensity to hover before the tipping point into cognition. It is still a form of kinesthetic sensation, but based on affect and not necessarily based on empathy. The WOW as a verbalized response is indicative of an absence of empathy, because the spectator-at-home is wowed and stunned by the impossibility of imagining inhabiting this body while still experiencing the rhythms produced by the movements, the music, and the noise of the on-screen audience.

In his analysis of Kingston's dancehall scene that explores how movement, feeling, and affect are related and transmitted as rhythmic patterns of frequencies, Julian Henriques proposes that "affect is expressed rhythmically—through relationships, reciprocations, resonances, syncopations and harmonies."[29]. Rhythm is used here to describe the possibility of affect to transfer across media. Moreover, rhythm is related to a visceral experience of the crowd, experiencing the rhythm and vibration of the sound and its relationship to bodies in movement as "transsensorial perception."[30] The transsensorial experience arises from what is perceived via auditory senses and simultaneously experienced as kinetic movement of embodying rhythmic vibrations of sound in dance.

The vibrations created via sound and movements are in constant flow between bodies and it is this flow of vibration and movement that results in a transmission of affect across bodies and indeed, in relation to what I argued earlier, across screen and skin surfaces. In relation to popular screen dance aesthetics and its affective bodies, the transmission of affect does not solely rely on the visual images on screen for creating intensities and 'WOW' moments, but is produced through the combination of the visual images of the dancers' bodies in motion and the sound, or music, to which these bodies in motion are choreographed, and the additional noise/sound level of the on-screen audience. Hence, rhythmical kinetic patterns of moving bodies resonate with and alongside the rhythmical frequencies of the sound, which result in affective vibrations that are transmitted across screen and skin surfaces.[31] The screen and recording technologies serve as a magnifying glass and enhancer of these experiences, moving spectators from simply being WOW-ed to actively engaging with other spectators to share the WOW-affect and to move further into the cognitive processes of "making sense."

## Communities of Affective Spectatorship: Dance Fans and Joy-ful Objects

As indicated by the notion of the WOW affect, there is something sensuous, sensational, tactile, and contagious about watching the affectively athletic movements of the dancing bodies on *SYTYCD*. The contagious and affective capabilities are enhanced and magnified by the screen, in order to hover over and transcend the screen to affect the spectator-at-home into excess activity. In some cases this excess activity results in the active engagement with a spectatorship community dedicated to these affective viewing experiences. Due to the increasing online presence of the show in the last few years, changes in contemporary viewing practices, and the migration of viewers and communities to social media sites and the Internet,[32] personal engagement in the same space with others is replaced by the personal-virtual engagement of viewers across screens, in which online fan communities facilitate sociability and community around a specific text. Assuming that affective contagion stops with the mere 'passive viewing' of *SYTYCD* and interactive voting for favorite routines and contestants underestimates the active participation and engagement with its content beyond these acts. Specifically, it erases international spectators, who cannot vote because of their location outside of the U.S. Such spectators watch the show on their computer screens, the episodes of which are embedded in a closed, yet expanding Facebook group, as my anecdote from the beginning indicated. Considering the active engagement and participation with the show, with dance, and with other users within the community of the Facebook group, it might be more productive to think of the spectators as fans and of the Facebook group as a fan community, or a dance fandom. These dance fans are not just fans of dance, in which dance can be anything, but also

fans of dancers and fans of a specific type of dance-text, not just *SYTYCD*, but also popular screen dance texts in general.

The notion of 'fans' in relation to dance practices does not really exist, or is not used when talking or thinking about dance audiences and the way that spectators perceive dance performances. It is more common to simply refer to dance audiences as simply spectators or the more 'culturally refined' terms aficionados or connoisseurs, or what Dee Reynolds differentiated as more or less dance-literate audiences, even when talking about popular screen dance performances.[33] In one of the earliest academic monographs dealing with fan cultures and a key text in fan studies, Henry Jenkins starts his account and re-positioning of fans and fandoms in his book *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* by starting with the *Oxford English Dictionary* meaning of the word 'fan,' specifically as being derived from "fanatic"[34] and as such indicating an emotionally invested, active, and processual state. As Jenkins further proposes, processes involved in being active as a fan, include creating a close proximity with the text in question, practices of reading and re-reading these texts, and social interactions drawing on and including the text.[35] These practices are processual because they involve a constant re-reading and re-engagement with the text, texts related to the text, and other fans. The circulation of information is here akin to a constant flow of movement in, with and through the text. Proximity to a text does not mean that spectators lose the ability to critically assess the text and become aware of potential entanglements, which might turn them into passive consumers. Quite the contrary, proximity as the state of being invested in and affected by a text creates and opens up the potential to see it critically. As Jenkins argues, "these relationships between readers and texts are continually negotiated and viewers may move fluidly between different attitudes toward the material."[36] This observation is made with reference to Roland Barthes's understanding of the open-endedness of texts as "a galaxy of signifiers."[37] In other words, the plurality of meanings or readings (because each reading of the text re-negotiates and re-positions the meaning of a text) exists in an endless, permanent present: a virtual sphere of possibilities not unlike the virtual and actual sphere of potential affects, hovering above, under and across multiple surfaces and interfaces.

Indeed, as Barthes noted, re-reading and hence, re-negotiation can be seen as an unruly, defiant, and resistant practice,[38] which plays with the text and its plurality of meanings and effects. Moreover, as I would argue, re-reading as a practice also plays with a plurality of affects in order to move further and beyond the surface of the text. As a result, both affects and fans are caught in a state of constant hovering between surfaces and interfaces. Instead of dismissing a text if it becomes uncomfortable or is changed to its disadvantage, fans stick with the material and this form of attachment is the basis for a constant renegotiation of the relationships between effects and affects and other fans. Considering this, the notion of being a fan of something is positioned as an experience with a high emotional involvement and investment; hence the notion of

fan always has an affective dimension. In his article "IS THERE A FAN IN THE HOUSE: The affective sensibility of fandom," Laurence Grossberg stressed this affective dimension, or sensibility, as a powerful aspect within fandoms of popular culture. Also arguing against the idea that audiences are passive consumers, he emphasized, "the relationship between the audience and popular texts is an active and productive one."[39] This relationship hinges on affective investment, in which the specific context of the fan text becomes soaked with affect.[40] This affective investment circulates, or rather hovers between fan, fan text (in the case of SYTYCD the dancing), and fan community, in which meaning is constructed within that space of in-between-ess.

In relation to Michael's solo, most of the comments reiterated the same point of being im-pressed with his athletic and virtuosic performance. Member fan K.B. wrote, "it gives me goose bumps every time I watch it J."[41] While M.B. noted a little further down, "watched it AGAIN for like the 11th time… still impressive."[42] Both the skin as the point of contact for the transmission of affect and the continuing potential for this im-pression when re-watching, or re-reading the performance are commented upon here. Moreover, none of the comments identify a specific emotion, only the stunning affective impact the performance leaves behind. Attachment and a sense of community are created within an active state of participation and engagement, which has been discussed in various studies of fandom, and indeed is a building block for engaging with practices of fan spectatorship.[43]

Returning to the act of viewing then, in contrast to the proposition that broadcast television viewing is less about viewing and more about the distracted glancing at the screen while doing other things,[44] fan-spectators choose to watch the episodes posted online consciously, as for some member-fans this is the only way they can access *SYTYCD* because of living outside the U.S. But even the American members of the group choose to view the episodes in the online segments because of their participation in a community of spectators who actively engage with the show and each other in order to share opinions, feelings, and knowledge about the individual aspects of the show and dance. The current number of member-fans in the group is 3277 and its number is constantly fluctuating as new members are added. So far I have counted members located in about 33 different countries and across all continents.[45] Some members' profiles indicate a dance background, either professional or recreational, indicating an accumulation of a variety of knowledges. One of these aspects is related to knowledges of the dance styles presented on the show, specifically Bollywood, or the as Ballroom qualified dance styles (specifically those adapted from a Latin American background). As O.D. a very active member-fan from India noted in the comments section underneath Ricky and Valerie's Bollywood routine from Season 11, Episode 9:

> It's actually very difficult to explain 'Bollywood'. Yes, it's usually energetic, involves a lot of hand and hip movements. But one essential quality is that there is an element of acting coz we literally translate the song (not usually

> only music) word for word through the dance. This is somewhat different from the styles that we see here. More than their dance, those fake expressions put me off.[46]

She later posted a link to an Indian Bollywood clip to show the difference from the *SYTYCD* routine. In this instance, being disappointed with the show's take on Bollywood and the confusion about how to describe this style and how it would look like in an Indian context motivated O.D. to share her knowledge of the style and the way it is understood in a different locality with the other members of the community.

In a similar instance, B.R. a member-fan from Brazil shared their knowledge of Samba when commenting on Malene and Marcquet's Samba in Season 11 Episode 6, resulting in a little exchange with O.D., the Indian member-fan:

> Yeah, but here in brazil we have the samba that people dance in carnaval (this one is more common for people to know), with costumes and lots of foot work but we also have the ballroom samba that we call 'samba de gafieira' and this is the one i'm comparing the routine with.
>
> Like this https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g-Tnic17RQ. (4.07.2014 at 13:58h)
>
> – BR
>
> Making people understand the subtle nuances of something that is so a part of your life and not theirs is extremely difficult as I know very well whenever they dance Bollywood. Thanks for trying to make us see. B. (11.07. at 6:40h)[47]
>
> – OD

As fans share their cultural knowledge with an increasingly globalized dance community on the Internet, they set images, affects, bodies, opinions, and comments in constant virtual flow, hovering on screens and in-between screens as part of the affective experience of sociability and community focused around the fan-text.

This flow and the resultant engagement with the content of the text is a critically engaged reading of *SYTYCD*, its virtuosic and affective dancing bodies, and the WOW-affect of the show as it has progressed through the seasons. From my own perspective and viewing experience, with each new season the show has not only become more glossy, which is partly due to the introduction of HD technologies, but also more generic in its virtuosity and athleticism. Due to the increasing virtuosity and athleticism of the contestants, the production of WOW-moments within the show has increased without necessarily producing a similar amount of attachment with the contestants and WOW-affects in relation to the routines on the side of the fan community. This can be specifically observed in comments reflecting on season 11 in comparison with earlier,

less glossy and generic seasons, specifically seasons 2-4. As G.Mc observed in relation to Tanisha and Rudy's Jazz routine (S11 Ep. 7):

> I fell into the SYTYCD youtube trap last night and was watching some clips from previous seasons and noticed the dancers were just on another level, and so was the choreography. Are the dancers from previous seasons more versatile or just more mature? Old choreographers less lenient/more creative? Or is it the fact that the dancers had more of a chance to develop over the season because they had more screen time? (11.07.2014 at 2:07h)[48]
>
> – G.M.c

In this and in other related comments it can be observed that the most active member-fans all refer back to earlier seasons in order to elaborate on the decrease of the affective-ness and the WOW-affect in the most recent seasons. Instead of decreasing the attachment to the show, however, it fosters the interest-excitement feedback loop in the show by being able to re-call, discuss and share earlier WOW-affects, bodies, and personalities. Part of the WOW-affect in these instances is the re-production of the WOW when re-watching, re-reading, and re-sharing routines within the community. As such the affective-ness of the WOW is created within the shared experience of the fan community and its critically engaged fan practices, in which FOX is discussed as trying too hard to please a mainstream mass audience in relation to the most recent seasons. Indeed, as member-fan S.B. noted in a comment, the show has become "too vanilla/commercial in order to please the masses (and get ratings)."[49]

## Conclusion: The Joy-ful Community

As demonstrated in this article, attachment with *SYTYCD* can be seen as an affective experience facilitated by moments of suspense and hovering, created by the WOW-affect of its dancing bodies. This experience is enhanced and further magnified by the potential of being part of a fan community in which the shared affective experience, resulting from an engagement with other spectator-fans, is facilitated through and across multiple screens due to the show's presence and availability on multiple different sites and media. The most powerful affective dimension that is shared here, even when aspects of the show are criticized, is the notion of joy and enjoyment, produced by actively engaging with other members of the fan community. The constant inter-action with each other and the dancing bodies intensifies the excitement about, and as a result, the enjoyment of these bodies and *SYTYCD* as a whole. In other words, the shared enjoyment and mutual excitement is multiplied with all those spectator-fans that watch the show and engage with the community. As a result, joyful attachment is created across a multitude of inter-faces and screen surfaces, in which the WOW-affect hovers and moves in between screens and fans. Feeling joy-ful, or being full of joy, means that this excess of intensities flows over and affects further active engagement and participation across screens, creating the notion of dance fans in relation to screen

spectatorship. In contrast to the WOW factor, which is circulated as a kind of brand of *SYTYCD*, the WOW-affect is created in a space of in-between-ness, motion, and hovering between fan text, multiple screens, and fan communities in which a multiplicity of voices are constantly re-negotiated.

## Biography

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## Notes

[1] Kate Elswit, "*SYTYCD* Does Dance Studies," 136
[2] Ibid. 135
[3] For private user-generated YouTube channels, it is not possible to upload more than about 15-minutes long videos onto the site.
[4] This was before FOX had its own channel and started posting the individual dances, but also before they encouraged this kind of online engagement with the show to gain momentum from it by also creating Facebook, then additionally Twitter and now additionally Instagram accounts for each season's Top 20 contestants in addition to online voting and creating an app. This development has been happening roughly since season 7.
[5] In this group, I am just following discussions and comments underneath the clips without contributing to get a sense of the flow of the ideas and emotions circulating about the individual dancers and routines. Because I'm a passive observer-participant in that group, I am not able to disclose the full names or identities of the members of that group in my quotes in this article and will just use initials.
[6] cf. Dee Reynolds, "Glitz and Glamour," 22.
[7] Henry Jenkins, *The Wow Climax*, 1.
[8] For a look at Michael's solo performance, see the following link. Unfortunately, the video does not include the audience's reaction at the end. A clip including this is not available on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js4R2Nc_NFA

[9] Carrie Bickmore, *SYTYCD* AUS S 4.
[10] Paula Abdul, *SYTYCD* AUS S 4.
[11] Carrie Bickmore, Ibid.
[12] Apart from comments underneath the video on the SYTYCD-MG fan community stating that about 10 minutes of audience reactions had to be edited out of the recording for the final broadcast version, this was additionally stated in a news item on Australian TV blog *tvtonight*, which is run by David Knox. See: tvtonight.com.au, "Breathtaking routine brings So You Think You Can Dance to a standstill." http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2014/04/breathtaking-routine-brings-so-you-think-you-can-dance-to-a-standstill.html
[13] Nigel Lythgoe. Twitter. 25/04/2014 at 06:20 hours. https://twitter.com/dizzyfeet/status/459683484739448832
[14] Paula Abdul, *SYTYCD* USA S11 E15
[15] cf. Brian Massumi, *Parables*, 27-28.
[16] Ibid. 28.
[17] Ibid. 29.
[18] Ibid. 29.
[19] Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*.
[20] Ibid. 51.
[21] I draw this notion of hovering in contemporary dance from my own practice and training as a modern and contemporary dancer. Various teachers I have worked with have used this expression to explain how the body is held in suspense as part of its movement processes. Even in moments of stillness the body hovers over, before and in between the next movement. In theoretical writings, the word is occasionally used, but not established as a specific concept.
[22] Massumi argues that stimulation results in increased intensity spreading across the skin as a "generalized body surface." *Parables*, 25.
[23] cf. Sara Ahmed, "Collective Feelings," 25.
[24] Ibid. 27.
[25] Ibid. 30.
[26] Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 2.
[27] cf. Foster, 13.
[28] Ibid. 218.
[29] Julian Henriques, "The Vibrations of Affect," 58.
[30] Ibid. 69.
[31] Because of the general noise level that is asked of and maintained by the on-screen audience as part of the taping experience, a silent, because mesmerized, on-screen audience is equally affective. During Ricky and Jessica's Contemporary routine in *SYTYCD* (USA) season 11, episode 6 the on-screen audience hardly made a noise. The beauty and serenity of the duet had a mesmerizing almost reverent effect, which could be felt through the screen and can be seen in the comments section in the FB group.

Producer Nigel Lythgoe was equally shocked by the silence because it defied what the studio audience is usually required and hyped up to do.
[32] cf. Jonathan Gray et al, *Fandom*, 7.
[33] cf. Dee Reynolds, "Glitz and Glamour," 20.
[34] cf. Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 12-13.
[35] cf. Ibid. 53.
[36] Ibid. 65.
[37] Roland Barthes, *S / Z*, 5.
[38] cf. Ibid. 15.
[39] Lawrence Grossberg, "IS THERE A FAN IN THE HOUSE," 582.
[40] cf. Ibid. 586.
[41] K.B. on the Facebook Group "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," 30th of April 2014 at 23:52h.
[42] M.B. on the Facebook Group "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," 7th of May 2014 at 19:37h.
[43] For more details on the study of fans, see: Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992); Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992); Lisa Lewis (Ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (1992); Jonathan Gray, et al, *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007); and Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006).
[44] cf. Shimpach, "Viewing," 74ff.
[45] By clicking on the "Member" tab, a list of all the members is available and it is possible to click on the individual names and thus access their profiles. Depending on the privacy settings of each individual member, if their "About"-section is publicly accessible, it sometimes includes their current location and other details.
[46] O.D. on the Facebook Group "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," 25th of July 2014 at 06:14h.
[47] "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," *SYTYCD* (USA) Season 11 Episode 6, July 2014.
[48] G.Mc. on the Facebook Group "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," 11th of July 2014 at 02:07h.
[49] S.B. on the Facebook Group "*SYTYCD* Mega Group," 31st of August 2013 at 06:26h.

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# Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing

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This essay focuses on community in the form of audiences, and in particular, screendance audiences. A specific focus is given to a collection of screendance experiences from viewing a selection of contemporary dance films. The term *screendance* is used in this research as suggested by Douglas Rosenberg as "stories told by the body" and "not told by the body."[1] What follows, for this essay, are theories borrowed from the discipline of audience and reception research detailing what we may perceive audiences to be and how the idea of 'audience' as a community may influence the way filmmakers approach the very audiences they hope to reach. Kinesthetic empathy will be used as a framework to understand the pleasures and displeasures that are experienced by the viewer from an embodied perspective. While considering kinesthetic empathy with audience and reception research, the main focus for this essay is nuancing the idea of audiences as a community that is enriched with corporeal knowledge. This knowledge reveals itself as empathetic and sympathetic viewing of the media.

Kinesthetic empathy can be loosely defined as the sensation of moving while watching movement, where the viewer can sense, as Ivar Hagendoorn points out, the "speed, effort, and changing body configuration" of the dancer, as if performing the movement themselves.[2] The word 'kinesthesis' is derived from the Greek word *kine*—movement—and *aesthesis*—sensation. Combining kinesthesis with 'empathy,' this concept emerges as an empathetic interaction between performer and viewer that embodies aspects of the performer's movement. This interaction is a sensory experience, perhaps facilitated by emotion, memory, and imagination.

This investigation into kinesthetic empathy and screendance audiences, described below, shows that the knowledge that the viewers are part of a collective, or indeed in the case of the experimental dance film audiences, are part of an immediate small collective, is a key factor in engagement with the viewed media. In focus groups created for this research, dance film viewers revealed that they experience enhanced attention to technical details. Therefore, I assert that the selection of films, with their different characteristics, create empathetic viewing experiences.

## Approach

Rather than 'audience' research, this essay engages in what is better termed 'reception' research as it focuses on processes involved in the reception of an artform and the resultant experience as reflection and memory. Audience research focuses on demographics such as gender, geographical location and mass consumption. Both William Sauter[3] and Matthew Reason[4] employ the term 'reception research' for their explorations into theatre audiences and their methodological enquiry. Although each has slightly different methodological approaches, their concerns encompass the collective and individual experience of audiences and the gathering of information on audiences' experiences through talk and other such methods, for example, drawing.

This type of reception research is qualitative and is used to examine individuals' interpretations of a particular phenomenon and, in this case, of particular media. According to John Creswell, qualitative research "begins with a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens,"[5] and studies a phenomenon through a specific approach to inquiry, collecting data, and analyzing this inductively for emerging themes.[6]

Through analysis of audiences' experiences of viewing dance on screen, I will show how empathetic viewing is created from the artistic aesthetic of dance made for camera. Qualitative reception research methods, focus groups, and diary writing were used to gather material on viewers' experiences of watching selected contemporary dance films.[7]

The films selected for the participants to view were shown in the following clusters: first, *Loose in Flight* by Rachel Davies, *Delia and George* by Shelly Love, and *Linedance* by Alex Reuben; second, *Flesh and Blood* by Lea Anderson, *The Wild Party* by Rosie Kay, *Three's A Crowd* by Andy Wood. These films were selected from the artists' portfolios of work because of the filmic techniques employed in their creative process. They cover a variety of techniques including narrative structures, defamiliarised camera angles, and animation. This variation will be one of the factors I take into account in my consideration of the conditions associated with the experience of kinesthetic empathy in audiences.

For this project, fourteen participants took part in four focus groups. Focus groups gather data from a group of people and encourage discussion and interaction amongst the participants that can be valuable when exploring experience. Four focus groups were arranged over two days, two each day. Seven participants watched three of the films and the other seven participants watched three different films. The room contained a projector, large screen and speakers, which allowed the films to be shown on a larger scale than a TV screen would have permitted. The three films in each set were shown, one after another, to each group at the beginning of the session. Each participant was given a notebook to jot down any immediate thoughts he or she had on

the films whilst viewing. After seeing the films, three exercises were conducted in relation to each film. The session ended with an open discussion about all three films.

Some problems arise when dealing with individual experiences. As a researcher, I rely on the viewers to externalize their experience and articulate this through talk or writing. I am asking them to discuss their experience of a feeling, sensation, emotion, or instinct that perhaps is indescribable using words. Group discussions can be one way of dealing with difficulties in expressing the inexpressible in addition to the opportunity to use other media, such as drawing as an alternative to talk-based methods.[8]

There are also moments where it is necessary to consider my own experiences of either participating as a performer or observing the screen media. By acknowledging my self-reflective thoughts, I hope to enrich the material and show an awareness of how my position as researcher has shaped the methodology. Indeed, my life experiences as performer, teacher, and researcher have impacted my stance in writing and affected my interpretation of the material. As Creswell notes, "how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research."[9] It is important to highlight this factor, especially since with writing on embodiment and experience, one can relate to an interpretation through one's own corporeal existence.

## What is an audience(s)?

From the advent of cultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s, audiences have become a popular area of research in the humanities and social sciences and there is now a vast amount of literature published on the topic, in particular on the television audience. There has been widespread debate concerning the effects of mass media on their audiences and how the media position themselves on key issues, such as politics.

An audience is commonly referred to as 'the audience' or 'it,' signifying a unified and singular consciousness.[10] The idea that an audience is constructed from many consciousnesses is not reflected in the general singular use of the word 'audience.' In this essay, I employ the plural form, 'audiences,' to represent the many interpretive communities that constitute a larger whole. While I acknowledge the power of a collective presence, intersubjectivity, and the desire to belong to a homogenous entity, I also value the individuality of the viewers and their interpretive strategies.

Reason discusses how the audience is thought of as a "communal body"[11] and how this communality is an essential element for many performers and spectators of live performance. It adds value to their experience, knowing that they are part of a unified presence. In addition to the desire for communality, however, Reason places importance on the identity of the individual and the subjective experience of the spectator. This has been emphasized by the broadcast media developments that allow audiences to fragment into sub-groups mainly due to the ownership of television sets

and recording devices in every household. Furthermore, Reason discusses how, when trying to understand what engages audiences, focusing on aspects such as each particular medium and its content reduces the audiences to passive viewers[12] rather than focusing on individual experiences that empower engagement. He states: "Each individual experience, in contrast, is to empower not only that individual as an active, engaged and consciously interpreting audience member, but also paradoxically empowers any voluntary engagement within a collective audience as a positive democratic act of communality."[13]

Helen Freshwater, theatre and performance theorist, supports Reason's claims and adds that it is important to recognize that the spectator brings "their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate pre-occupations to their interpretation of a production."[14] In addition, Martin Barker, who researches film audiences, asserts that spectators "bring their social and personal histories with them."[15] A parallel can be drawn here with Creswell's previous comments about how we bring our social, political and cultural interpretations to our research and, therefore, other activities (such as being an audience member) that require interpretation. Thus, audiences are formed from individual identification in cultural and social communities and identify with the communal act of "audiencing."

"Audiencing" is a concept initially borrowed from media studies and now widely used in audience research.[16] In the act of spectating, we are consciously active in various cognitive, sensory, and participatory modes of interpretation. Therefore, our subject positions and interpretative strategies (discussed further below) are an important point of departure, as one becomes an active audience member through choice. Audiencing is not context-specific, but is something that happens in spectating situations.

Screendance audiences differ depending on the context of the viewing medium and are a new challenge for today's viewing because of the fragmented way we can view media, for example, on the internet, on mobile devices and multiple platforms available in the home. Abercrombie and Longhurst, who are audience researchers, claim, "media consumption in the 1990s [was] essentially a fragmented experience."[17] In the 21st century, the "fragmented experience" is even more complex due to the multiple platforms available. Therefore, when discussing the dance films, I have to consider the viewers as having an individual experience but as also belonging to a larger, mass community of media-created imagined viewers[18] and how this affects their experiences. In addition, the viewers are part of a smaller audience, having their own individual experience and being part of a collective community for a selection of single viewings. This is similar to how one would view films at a dedicated dance film festival. However, for this research, the opportunity to discuss their experiences in the focus groups immediately with other viewers might change their experience and the meaning of that experience for them. Being part of a community and having an individual experience are not mutually exclusive, however, and one may even enhance the other.

According to Barker, there is a tendency among researchers to singularize the audience rather than engage with a variety of audiences who belong to different interpretive communities. As Stanley Fish, a reader response theoretician in literature studies, has argued, interpretive authority does not reside with the author; it could, rather, reside with the reader, or a community of readers. Interpretive communities experience collective understanding and shared meanings in the interpretation of a text. Interpretive communities exist in different forms and, as spectators, we can find ourselves taking different, and sometimes conflicting, subject positions *vis à vis* the same performance. A subject position is where we locate ourselves on a subject from a perspective that makes the most sense to us. Alice Rayner points out that when occupying different subject positions, "sometimes I hear you from my position as a woman, sometimes as a professor, sometimes as a mother, sometimes as bourgeois."[19] This can be the same for a dance audience member; one can be a dance enthusiast, feminist, mother, worker—all at the same time. People belong to such communities and show commitment and motivation to such activity, with a desire to experience a sense of belonging to a larger collective community. For Barker, viewing from a particular position additionally introduces an internal mental schema or "viewing strategy" to assess works of art, for example, which facilitates "making sense" of the artwork.[20] Spectators employ a viewing strategy that is drawn from their beliefs, motivations, competencies, expectations and values. Viewing performances through this strategy imparts meaning to one's life. Reason concurs with this view: "Spectators (both individually and collectively) actively interpret and place value upon what they see and experience. In doing so, they actively construct what the performance (and what being part of an audience) means to them culturally and socially."[21]

The consideration of viewing strategies and subject positions can be useful when exploring screendance audiences. These concepts can be employed to analyze individual and collective responses to the media and explore how audiences construct their interpretations. This may provide some fundamental information on how the use of different filmic techniques and narratives are experienced by screendance audiences. The next section will reveal viewers' responses to the media and consider the viewing strategies and interpretative communities that are uncovered.

## Viewers' responses to screendance

I will start this section with viewers' responses to the selected contemporary dance films screened in the focus groups. The following example illustrates the response of one viewer, Chantelle,[22] to *Three's a Crowd*,[23] and establishes her reader position. *Three's a Crowd* was independently produced and directed and is a low-budget film. The film contains one male and one female dancer doing an improvised duet in a derelict outdoor space. Their movement is accompanied by diegetic and non-diegetic sound; the non-diegetic sound is two pieces of tango music. Chantelle comments on where the duo's improvised struggle with each other reaches the floor: "[I] thought *ow*... they

seemed to be on a concrete floor and all that movement on the floor, I just kept thinking they are just going to graze themselves and it looked kind of very, very rough."[24]

Her reader position—as a mother, teacher and recreational dancer—and viewing strategy suggests caring and mindfulness of the surface that the dancers are performing on. Chantelle recognizes the contact with the floor and the possibility of injury to the performers. She sympathizes with the performers moving on the gravelly, uneven floor surface, and empathizes with the sensuous imagery that evoked a memory of the urban environment. This interesting slippage from sympathy to empathy shows a movement of heightened imaginative engagement. Reason and Reynolds suggest that kinesthetic empathy is an "embodied and imaginative connection between the self and the other," and kinesthetic sympathy is explained as an appreciation and admiration of the dancers' effort and skill.[25] In Chantelle's response, her corporeal knowledge is revealed through kinesthetic empathy and sympathy with the dancers in the image, which may show her investment in viewing the film. In addition, the way the camera moves with kinesthetic sensitivity with the performers may encourage this investment from the viewer, as Chantelle shares: "the way the camera moves in and out with the dancers, you kind of feel close." Chantelle displays a sense of anticipation at the potential for the performers to become injured, which may be experienced through the tactility of the haptic visuality of the image.[26]

In a further example, another viewer, Julia comments on a moment when she empathizes with Akram Khan's body's contact with the surfaces on which the performer was dancing. This film, *Loose in Flight*,[27] shows Khan dancing inside a derelict building and then quickly changes to a shot of him dancing outside in an industrial area. Julia says: "the sequence on the mat outside with the barrel jump into the… the fluidity and the lightness… and you're making that look effortless and yet you are dancing that on concrete." Julia's kinesthetic sympathy reaches out beyond the physical realms of Khan's musculature to the skin's superficial contact with the concrete surface on which he is performing. Therefore, Julia identifies with the inner mechanisms of the perceived movement and the tactile exterior of the body, using the proximal sense of touch. This experience is another example of what Laura Marks refers to as "haptic visuality."[28]

These types of experiences with their varying requirements of attention and focus, provide an insight into the micro-aspects of the reception of screendance, or the screendance viewer's emotional and sensorial experience of watching.[29] Jacqueline Martin and William Sauter describe the micro-aspects of the reception of theatre as emotional reactions and thoughts that occur when watching a theatrical performance.[30] Micro-aspects identified in this study may be challenging for the spectators to put into words: subtle and intricate, felt, tactile, and kinesthetic experiences can be difficult for viewers to express verbally.

Viewing dance is usually conducted with friends or family members and the fact that some of the viewers were friends seemed appropriate when trying to encourage a relaxed, natural setting.[31] Nevertheless, there is a certain pleasure in exploring topics in group contexts, as communities, and the viewers appeared to enjoy discussing the films amongst themselves and engaging in dialogue about their thoughts and feelings.

The film discussed here is Shelly Love's *Delia and George*, which depicts a couple at a table eating breakfast and reading the newspaper. The film progresses in reverse:

> J: Because there wasn't… it was… are we going backwards? What? So it set up an implication of a narrative and didn't quite deliver for me. I ended up feeling like: 'oh that's a clever idea, and that's a clever idea and I think this looks really nice' but… for me whatever the narrative was or was not, it didn't seem to me to be clear enough
>
> L: I had the same feeling, I wrote its very abrupt ending, irritating to feel like there's no conclusion… and you know, whenever expectations are disappointed there's a frustration, it's not always a negative thing because in fact I liked the way it made me question, you know, what I think dance is and I liked that question that came out of it but the experience of watching it was frustrating because of that…
>
> P: Do you think we were projecting the need for a narrative on to it?
>
> L: Yes. I think I was.
>
> P: I think I was too. But looking back now I'm starting to wonder if that was just me going 'oh look, there should be a narrative here'
>
> (J and P agree)

This example illustrates the viewers' experience of narrative as a story with characters and allowed me to consider how this can be a condition of engagement. In addition, narratives have logic and the viewers had expectations of finding a narrative within the film. However, in the hybrid form of screendance, the idea of dance as narrative can be structured with movement. Movement narrative involves choreography that constructs its own story. Aaron Anderson discusses movement narrative as when the "movement itself aims to convey a story or narrative."[32] Anderson analyzed the movement narrative of martial arts films and compared the movement within these films to dance. Fight choreography, its execution, and the director's desired response from the spectator require kinesthetic engagement, as does dance choreography. The spectator has a kinesthetic relationship to the martial arts expert executing the fight choreography; the movement projects power of the body. Although the spectator may not be able to perform the movement him or herself, he or she can kinesthetically appreciate the power and skill required to perform the choreography because we watch with an awareness of our own body. Similarly, choreography in dance films requires the

spectator to have a kinesthetic relationship with the performer. Comparable to martial arts films, dance film employs narrative strategies to encode narrative from the movement.

A further example from Lauren refers to making a narrative out of what we view and this is an act that audiences regularly participate in:

> I realize I try to make a narrative out of it or put one on it. And similar to you [referring to Julia], when I go to watch dance I think I can just appreciate the movement and I feel happy doing that but I'm sure subconsciously I'm doing something else.

In some abstract contemporary work, we may find a non-linear or *vertical direction*[33] narrative that we are then required to 'fill in the gaps.' Claudia Kappenberg states: "the absence of narrative and original context creates a void that can only be filled by the viewer."[34] Peter, in response to Lauren, captures the essence of meaning-making through narratives and stories in his comment: "I love that. I love that about everything that you can tell stories; a story in itself. And actually that's one of the things I love about dance, it's often so abstract, it's a challenge to find your way through it." Life, the way Peter describes it, takes the form of stories or we construct stories in order to make sense of life experiences. As spectators, we have certain expectations that narrative will provide character interaction and action-based movement. As viewers, we create the narrative to make it meaningful and engaging whilst in the act of audiencing. This may further contribute to our engagement and pleasure in watching screendance.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the material discussed is about a bodily experience and is felt, rather than articulated in words. Language is our primary mode of communicating and reflecting on experiences and words are the most flexible system for articulation. Reflecting through language creates an indelible impression on our memories. Yet, words can sometimes prove to be inadequate when describing the richness of an experience. Plantinga acknowledges the insurmountable task of language in determining the emotional qualities of film and music.[35] Reason also acknowledges the difficulty in the use of language as a reflective device when discussing experiences of watching live theatre and dance but also defends reflection as methodologically sound. He discusses the traces of experience, which, when discussed in a group context after a performance, affirm one's individual memory and suggests that for most people, conversation post-performance acts as part of the experience.[36] An Australian study conducted by Renee Glass on audience members of a live dance performance suggests that people,

> when given the opportunity to reflect on their own experience with the work, enjoy being asked their opinion, and the freedom to interpret the work in any way they want. Perhaps what is important is not being given

> pre-performance information, but the opportunity to reflect on one's own interpretation, understanding and connection with the piece.[37]

The viewers in the current research engaged in reflection after viewing the films. The conversations that took place between the viewers seemed to affirm their thinking and interpretation of a film. One viewer, Lauren, comments: "I'm getting more out of these films because I'm reflecting and talking about it."

As Glass[38] and Reason[39] assert, and as Lauren comments, reflection post-experience can provide a platform for engaging in aspects not yet realized through direct affect and can implant traces of the experience in one's memory. Equally, post-experience conversation acts as part of the experience and assists the audience members in articulating thought and sensation.

To summarize, viewers' post-experience reflective conversations may contribute to the screendance viewing experience by allowing articulation through language, which may enhance connection with the films. Using focus groups to set up this environment has shown that this gives viewers the opportunity to discuss with other audience members their interpretation and understanding of the films and how this may stimulate kinesthetic engagement. Kinesthetic response and language are crucial to screendance audiences, as the medium demands this attention. Screendance is attentive to narrative and choreographic structures and therefore requires interpretive communities to engage with and provide meaning to the artwork.

The focus groups conducted for this research have exemplified the importance of interpretive communities when experiencing screendance. The diverse subject positions found in such communities are rich with cultural and social aspects that are fundamentally motivating for screendance researchers. Researchers would do well to consider the fruitfulness of gathering screendance audiences to obtain material in order to better inform filmmaking practices. Embedded in these audiences are fertile interpretative communities that can contribute to expanding our body of knowledge and further research for the artform.

The research inspires further thought on how we want to construct our social worlds and what we want to be identified with. Furthermore, there is a sense of belonging to a community of people who, at that same moment of viewing a film, are potentially united in the experience. A community becomes much more engaged and invested in the media. Therefore, in addition to seeking kinesthetic pleasure from watching dance, we know that we will be part of a community of people interested in and identifying with aspects of dance, which constructs meaning around the role of watching dance on screen.

# Biography

Karen is currently a dance practitioner/ researcher/ educator. She works for the University of Wolverhampton as a Dance Lecturer and at the Centre for Dance Research at Coventry University, as a Research Assistant. Karen is also working on artistic projects, supported by Arts Council England, collaborating with other art forms, such as neuroscience, fine art, lighting design and music were she creates and performs in dance pieces for traditional and non-traditional spaces.

She has a keen interest in the inclusive training of young dancers and, in particular, how supplementary training helps to improve dancers' knowledge of their body and to improve performance. She obtained her MSc in Dance Science at Trinity Laban, London in 2006 where she continued to work until securing an AHRC studentship to further study a PhD in dance at the University of Manchester. Her recently completed PhD project investigated the experience of kinesthetic empathy when viewing dance on screen. She is also interested in how dancers acquire kinesthetic, embodied sensibilities and how this relates to improvisation and musical structure.

# Notes

[1] Rosenberg, "State of the Arts," 13.
[2] Hagendoorn, "Some speculative hypothesis," 79.
[3] Sauter, "Thirty Years of Reception Research."
[4] Reason, "Asking The Audience."
[5] Creswell, *Qualitative Enquiry*, 37.
[6] For the PhD thesis, a phenomenologically-informed approach was adopted to uncover individuals' lived experiences of the concept of kinesthetic empathy. The methodology was also informed by ideas of embodiment taken from embodied and social phenomenologies, aesthetics and cognitive research. This approach enabled me to describe the viewers' experiences of viewing screendance and to look for commonalities between experiences that allowed themes to emerge from the research material. Allowing themes to emerge is an essential feature of phenomenological inquiry.
[7] The gathering of information from viewers was conducted as part of PhD research completed at the University of Manchester in 2012. My PhD thesis was titled *Kinesthetic Empathy and Screendance Audiences*.
[8] Reason, "Asking The Audience."
[9] Creswell, *Qualitative Enquiry*, 179.
[10] Freshwater, *Theatre and Audience*.
[11] Reason, "School Theatre Trips," 8.

[12] Classic cultural theory takes the view that mass media imitates a "hypodermic needle" through which it"injects opinions and attitudes directly into the audience" creating passive viewers. Gripsrud, 28.
[13] Reason, "School Theatre Trips," 10.
[14] Freshwater, *Theatre and Audience*, 6.
[15] Barker, "I Have Seen The Future," 124.
[16] See *About Performance* 10, entitled "Audiencing: The work of the spectator in live performance."
[17] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory*, 33.
[18] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
[19] Rayner, "The Audience: Subjectivity," 4.
[20] Barker, "I Have Seen The Future," 134.
[21] Reason, "School Theatre Trips," 9.
[22] When a viewer is named in this paper, the name is a pseudonym and is therefore anonymous.
[23] Wood, *Three's a Crowd* (2007).
[24] All viewer quotations are taken from focus groups that took place in February 2010.
[25] Reason and Reynolds, "Kinesthetia, Empathy and Related Pleasures," 23.
[26] Haptic visuality values the proximal senses of touch, feel and smell over the distant senses of seeing and hearing and evokes the sensory network. For more on haptic visuality, see Marks, *The Skin of the Film*.
[27] Davies, *Loose in Flight*.
[28] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*.
[29] Macro-aspects relate more to demographical information and generality of the behavior of audiences.
[30] Martin and Sauter, *Understanding Theatre*.
[31] However, having friends discuss the films in this setting may also have an adverse affect and could impede the research by gently persuading their friends to think from their view.
[32] Aaron Anderson, "Fight Choreography," 3.
[33] The opposite notion to horizontal movement or linear narrative is what Maya Deren terms *vertical direction* and is characterized by more "ephemeral elements of mood, tone and rhythm" (Haslem 2002). Erin Brannigan (2002), refers to Deren's association of the vertical movement with 'poetic structure.' This is concerned with quality and depth.
[34] Kappenberg, "The Logic of the Copy," 29.
[35] Plantinga, *Moving Viewers*.
[36] Reason, "Asking The Audience."
[37] Glass, *Observer Response*, 107-8.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Reason, "Asking The Audience."

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# Global Corporeality: Collaborative Choreography in Digital Space

*Joséphine A. Garibaldi and Paul Zmolek, Idaho State University*

While in residence Spring 2014 in Riga, Latvia we directed *Global Corporeality: Collaborative Choreography in Digital Space*, an international intermedial collaborative choreographic project between dance students of the Latvian Academy of Culture (LKA) and Idaho State University (ISU). This provided an opportunity to explore the collaborative possibilities of establishing a virtual community on the internet, where Latvian and American students could work together in composition by interacting online in real time in physical and virtual space. What resulted was a choreographic process and culminating event that existed in time and space in three simultaneous, interconnected performances—each containing elements of the other two. The web-streamed video performances captured the projected performances of live dancers on two different continents, creating an unending, self-referential performance loop. Each of the three simultaneous performance locations were different: in Riga, Latvian dancers performed with a live switched video projection of Latvian/US dancers; in Pocatello, Idaho, the US dancers performed with a projected video of the event; and the live switched video of the two cross-continental performances was available for public consumption on the internet.[1] This article poses the initial concerns that formed the project, presents the process (providing links to YouTube recordings of each session), outlines some of our difficulties and discoveries, and explores some theoretical implications that emerged from *Global Corporeality*.

## Global Corporeality: Collaborative Choreography in Digital Space

The primary intention of this project was to explore the potential of available consumer technologies to make intermedial dance work(s) that crossed cultural and international distances. Utilizing laptop cameras for input and projectors for output, the exchange was facilitated through Google Hangouts on Air, which was selected for the ability to broadcast live and record to YouTube.

Entering into the project our intentions were to:

- Continue to explore the limitations/possibilities of our creative methodology, which we call *Dialogic Devising*, in order to collaboratively create intermedial performance works

- Explore the possibilities of subverting commodified virtual community applications (in this case, we used Google "Community") to build a corporeal and virtual creative community
- Model the utilization of ubiquitous consumer-level technologies for DIY ("do it yourself") production of creative work for our students
- Create an international, intermedial work in order to bridge corporeal and virtual realms.

## Dialogic Devising

As performing artists, our practice is based in the rich oral tradition of human-to-human interaction. Whether through real or virtual space, fostering productive collaborations to make work we consider meaningful is at the core of our art-making practice.

The roots of *Dialogic Devising* are pedagogical, developing out of content-based approaches[2] we have utilized as artists-in-schools and as instructors for teaching methods courses. We draw inspiration from Paolo Freire's theory of dialogic action,[3] perceiving artists as agents of cultural change. Through dialogue and interaction with others, a creative community is created to solve problems through interactive play.

Through a dialogic process of research, brainstorming, writing, free association, creative writing assignments and exchange, we create text, which we then edit. We identify resonant words and then pair them through chance operations to terms connected to aspects of the elements of movement to manipulate body parts, movements, pathways, time, space, energy, and sound. By this process, performers create source movement physically integrating text rather than pantomiming text. Movement is developed through standard choreographic manipulations, taught to other collaborators, and then structured into a cohesive whole. Text is incorporated in either live spoken word or recordings within the sound score.

For many years, and more recently in digital space, we have been refining and expanding this creative method in various cultures and countries for trained as well as untrained dancers, actors, singers, and visual artists of different ages and abilities. While text is the starting point for our creative methodology it is considered an equal actor to sound, image, and movement. We allow words to be signifiers layered with other signifiers without necessarily providing a linear narrative.[4] This layering of information is analogous to the online DIY tech environment where delay, low resolution, and low bandwidth may contribute to unavoidable "noise" through degradation of successive feedback loops and/or as additional devices are added into the process.

What we have also discovered is that dialogic devising resembles the very similar interactive hypertextuality of digital space where tangential ideas and additional information burst forth from many nodes of activity.[5] Rather than presenting a linear

narrative, the work (and the process) is multi-directional with multiple centers of activity filtered through varying points of view sharing space and time.

LKA dancers with projection of ISU dancer, image by Paul Zmolek

## Collaborative Virtual Community

Community is typically anchored to a specific space and time by identification with place and collective narratives of individuals based in memory, perceptions of the present, and projections of the future. This is particularly relevant to the ontology of virtual community where the paradoxical relationships of the real, live, and mediatized share past, present, and future in the space of technology. Regardless of physical or virtual space, the essential characteristics of community include a sense of membership, shared interests, interaction, and reciprocity. Whether meaningful relationships are forged is entirely dependent upon the agreed upon parameters of the community and whether interactions occurred between individual members. Identifying an interaction as meaningful is complicated at best. Our assumption is that some sort of change has taken place in the space of the interaction. What is meaningful is determined within the space of the interaction. What is important is the in-between space and time where change occurs. As artists, pedagogues, scholars, and as global citizens, this is what is essential: how to collaboratively generate the making of communal work and, through that interaction, experience change.

Following Richard Schechner's expansion of Victor Turner's work,[6] performance articulates the in-between transgressive spaces of structure/anti-structure. We attempt to foster an egalitarian sense of *communitas* amongst our collaborating performers with the hope that a *liminal* state may be attained and, as is true in efficacious ritual, the art may catalyze a transformation within the performers and/or the audience.

Establishing syncretic creative communities that simultaneously exist in physical and digital space may assist these efforts. In digital space, the "'inbetween' space of intermediality"[7] presents a liminal space of performance.[8]

## The Process[9]

We recruited four students from Idaho State University (ISU) who had experience in our devising method. Latvian Academy of Culture (LKA) assigned eighteen students to participate in the project. Each institution provided dance studios, a video projector, amplification/speakers, online access and some technical assistance. Without dedicated camera operators or adequate cabling we decided to use laptop-based cameras instead of external camcorders.

We met as a group online for a total of eight two-hour collaborative sessions and one culminating event. Each session consisted of three performances occurring simultaneously in Pocatello, in Riga, and on the internet.[10] The culminating event in Riga was documented with a separate dedicated external camcorder.

In order for us to interact online, we established a Google+ environment, including a newly formed private Google Community and Google Drive, which provided cloud space for sharing text, audio, photo, and video files.[11] After introducing the Google+ environment, the theme of 'communication' was suggested as the starting point. To flesh out the theme, we began with a brainstorming session free-associating the concept and phenomena of communication and creating a list of the words and phrases from which each participant chose eight significant words.[12] Significant words are defined as those metaphoric words that resonate with multi-layered meanings and, for whatever reason, are attractive to the participant. The selected words became our final distilled list from which we would generate the source material for 'communication.'[13]

From this reduced list, students were asked to create a four line 'rhythm verse' with each line including one of their significant words loosely following the structure of the *Daina*,[14] the traditional Latvian folksong. Additionally, students were asked to write freely 'what is significant about the word' and to provide visual context, students were asked to post one photo that evoked their 'sense of place.' From the significant words and the 'sense of place' pictures, devising prompts were provided to generate movement material. The students were then asked to record audio and/or video vocalizations of their 'rhythm verses' using readily available software (e.g. GarageBand, iMovie, etc.).

During the second session, the students explored the medium through improvisational prompts that facilitated physical and virtual interaction with each other. At ISU, with only four collaborators, two laptops were placed in stationary positions in the studio. At LKA, one laptop served as the live switching bay. As the improvisation continued, dancers added additional devices—laptops, tablets, and smart phones—to the

Hangout, providing multiple points of view that had rich artistic potential. Of particular interest were the shots that included live dancers, projected dancers, and the image of both in the studio mirrors.

After this session, the ISU dancers commented they felt frustrated in their attempts to develop meaningful improvisations with their international partners because the image would switch in what they felt was a very short time. To develop their improvisation they wanted the image to stay with their partners rather than switch to themselves. To best facilitate the internet performance however, switching needed to occur on a relatively quick basis to highlight the various activities that were occurring, as well as create choreographic layering between the live and projected dance. To facilitate the interaction for the dancers, then, it would require much slower switching that emphasized the action in each respective remote site.

In contrast to our typical creative process based in numerous private rehearsals prior to public performance, all sessions of *Global Corporeality* were publicly streamed via Google Hangouts. This performance of process complicated the on-the-fly editing or switching decisions for the Hangout audience that were, at best, a compromise. The purpose of *Global Corporeality* was to use the technology to bridge international distances and make work collaboratively and physically in real time facilitated through meeting in digital space. The seduction of the image of mediatized bodies, the self-imposed pressure to satisfy both present and future audiences, and the need to use the technology to directly support the collaborative process were always at odds with each other.

As we continued to work, we found that time was necessary to facilitate the choreographic process. Contrary to the accustomed 'high speed' internet, the corporeal interaction via internet was extremely slow. Participants needed to speak slowly while articulating their speech. The space between dialogic call and response expanded as we allowed for delay and lag to settle. To compensate for small screens and limitations of the cameras' depth of field, full body movements were translated into gestures transposed to hands and fingers. All of us had to temper our frustrations, mindfully and intentionally exercising patience with the process, the technology and each other.[15]

## Facilitating the Collaborative Virtual Community

*Global Corporeality* continued our investigation into the possibilities and limits of Dialogic Devising, which we have previously employed with trained and untrained dancers from various backgrounds in the United States, Italy, and Finland.

Any collaborative effort requires the participants' trust in each other, trust in the process, and trust in the director(s). We have found that developing trust from participants who are accustomed to more traditional authoritarian, single-author creative processes often takes time even in face-to-face interactions. This is

compounded when the director of the venture is a guest artist from a different culture.[16]


Projection from Hangout session on LKA student's face, image by Taisija Frolova

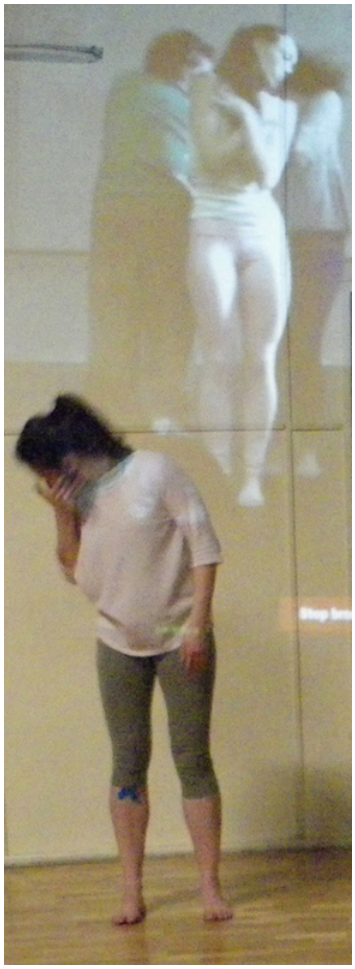
The larger group in Riga made it easier for the less outgoing members of their group to 'hide' and more difficult for the four ISU participants to develop relationships with each of the LKA students. Though all the Latvian students spoke and wrote English at a competent level, their first languages were Latvian, Russian, Norwegian, and Finnish.

Participants reported that they felt the nine-session project would require more time, perhaps up to a full year, to fully develop a sense of trans-site community. Few participants actively engaged in the opportunity to develop relationships outside of the scheduled sessions through interactions on Google Drive despite the efforts of a couple of participants. Some of the students began to use their already established personal Facebook pages to facilitate communication between collaborators. The Google+ site provided several very useful communication tools, but it did not provide access to personal details made possible by Facebook 'friending.'

Online communities typically consist of isolated individuals sitting alone at their keyboards connecting through cyberspace with other isolated individuals. *Global Corporeality* attempted to create one community of two separately sited groups. With the LKA group the difficulties of attempting to utilize technology designed for individual interface were clear: only one person could be actively engaged while the other seventeen crowded around the 13-inch screen to see the ISU participants, which severely limited full-body involvement. Projecting images of the overseas collaborators created a desire to dance with the images on the screen that, in effect, turned their backs to their differently-sited dance partners. As previously noted, employing multiple

devices allowed the LKA students the opportunity to participate as camera operators framing multiple points of view, however this pulled them out of a full-bodied interaction to collaboratively create the movement.[17]

The first sense that a LKA-ISU community was being created occurred after the break-out sessions where small groups taught their movement to each other. Smaller groups facilitated greater intimacy between participants; they could be closer to the device that served as the portal for dialogue, they could see each other, hear each other, and so on, and experienced reciprocity more directly. This is when the use of multiple devices to host different Hangout sessions was particularly effective. Whereas scheduling more than one session per week and/or utilizing a more familiar social networking application may have encouraged more connections to be created earlier in the process, the fact that the dancers seemed the most fully engaged in the embodied experience of teaching and learning each other's movement is unsurprising.



LKA dancer with projected ISU dancers, image by Paul Zmolek

The LKA students had a different experience than the ISU collaborators. The large group in Riga was responsible for dancing, choreographing and creating rhythmic scores. The small group in Idaho had the additional responsibilities of facilitating the technical aspects of their site. While the ISU students were sometimes distracted away from the dancing by having to trouble-shoot the video and audio, their involvement in the technical aspects of the process led to several suggestions for staging the movement that made best use of the cameras and the projection of the digital image.

We were very pleased by the ability to extend the range of our creative devising methodology through Google Hangouts and social media. However, it is doubtful that the collaboration would have been as fruitful without collaborators who were familiar with our method of *Dialogic Devising*.

We observed that there were varying levels of engagement amongst the individual participants at each site. Whether selected by audition, invitation, appointment or self-selection, the effort invested by collaborators in remote sites of corporeal collaboration via the internet is essential.

To strengthen the collaboration, the issues regarding scheduling of sessions, staffing, initial training and bandwidth would need to be addressed. Social media (e.g., Facebook) could be used to hasten the process of developing trust and communication between participants.

After the project several LKA students went on to create their own sound scores for their personal choreographies. The 3rd year curriculum at LKA limited the use of video within their own choreographic works until the following year so we are unsure of how much they absorbed from this project. ISU collaborators, who have previous experience working within our intermedia projects have already created their own projects using variations upon our creative methodology and consumer-grade technologies. Some of the students have maintained and developed the international connections forged through this project. Time will tell if they pursue future collaborations.

## Conclusions

*Global Corporeality* was an exploration of whether our method of *Dialogic Devising* could be successfully applied by utilizing technology to merge two existent physical communities in separate locations into a third community in mediatized virtual space.

Online communities created through social media consist of individuals interacting in multiple cross-referenced interactions or nodes facilitated by a web of interconnections. Community members act simultaneously as observers, participants, producers and critics of the multi-networked content. To make use of the potential of the technology an internet dance community should likewise have a web-like structure, consisting of multiple individual producer/consumers collaborating as choreographer/dancer/videographers. For *Global Corporeality*, the technology provided

portals for two-way communication between two groups, a higher tech version of the children's game of playing telephone with two cans on a string.

The *Global Corporeality* community we created only existed because of the in-between space that virtual space provides. This virtual community is no less *real* than the community gathered together to participate in the ritual of rehearsing in the studio. The community ties are forged through the process of dialogic devising where we create and recreate versions of ourselves through text, image, movement and sound. What results is a real, physical Barthesian sense of *presence*, where real is present in the image of the mediatized body.[18] What is real has less to do with corporeality and more to do with time and space. The mediatized is real in as much as the real is real, only different.[19] Questions of real in philosophical treatises that imply questions of what is meaningful or not seem somewhat moot to practitioners of digital/real syncretic performance. Simply put, the ontology of the real, live and mediatized has evolved beyond the spectre of the simulacra.

Live streaming is the live broadcast of an actual event; on-demand viewing provides a record of an actual event available for later viewing. In discussions of what is live and what is real, time is the centerpiece. Whether it is live or mediatized is not the issue. According to Steve Dixon, "In phenomenological terms, it must be agreed that liveness has more to do with time and 'nowness' than with the corporeality or virtuality of subjects being observed."[20] Dancing with a mediatized body in virtual space is no less live than dancing with body in physical space.[21] This suggests that digital performance also has real, physical consequence. Digital performance will not replace live performance as the new "liminal norm"[22] of performance, rather it offers opportunity to expand what the normative may be.

On demand viewing of screendance implies the reproduction of the mediatized body for the visual consumption of the viewer. That is not to say that the visual image does not have presence, rather, it has become an end product meant for consumption. This assumes that screendancers, in an expression of late capitalist post-modernity, capitulate to the post-human condition where mediatization reduces agency to consumable product. *Global Corporeality* strove to fully exercise active agency by subverting commodified virtual community applications through the building of creative community that functioned both corporeally and virtually. Rather than presenting a fractured identity that is most often characterized by virtual reality and post-modernity, *Global Corporeality* was able to unify and mobilize one collective whole made possible through the available consumer technology and the multi-directionality and multi-nodality of virtual space.

*Global Corporeality* is just a starting point. It demonstrates the potential for using internet video/sound/social platforms for facilitating and staging remote site collaborations. Creating a collaborative community via the commodified Google+ space

where all information is shared/sold and data is mined to capture the consumer presented concerns not normally confronted when devising solely in real time and real space. We are intrigued by how performance is being redefined through the simultaneous acts of gazing and submitting. The instant record/replay/feedback loops made easily accessible by Google Hangouts on Air that becomes instant (re)surveillance of one's own activity and self-reflection works simultaneously as public reflection. After returning to Idaho in October 2014, we began facilitating *Laptop Performance Laboratory (LPL)* to continue exploring this work. With two participants in Idaho and individual collaborators located in England, Finland, and Latvia, *LPL* will hopefully avoid the problems created by large groups noted above and, through the utilization of individual interfaces, make more use of the potential of the medium. We are excited to continue exploring the possibilities and invite you to join us: http://callousphysicaltheatre.weebly.com/laptop-performance-laboratory.html.

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# Biographies

2013/2014 Fulbright Scholar in Latvia, **Joséphine A. Garibaldi** devises original transdisciplinary and intermedial performance works, environmental and site-specific installations, video, photography and sound scores. Co-Artistic director of Callous Physical Theatre, since 2004 CPT has produced over 20 original performance, installation and digital works including *Stories from the Park*, *Grass is Green*, and *LIVE* in Riga, Latvia; *The Rule of Life* and *Appartengono* in Assisi, Italy; *Cagevent: Sometimes it works, Sometimes it doesn't* Helsinki, Finland; the contemporary opera *Double Blind*

*Sided* and the permanent 5500' environmental installation *Birch Loops* in Hameenkyrö, Finland. Garibaldi is former owner/director of Barefoot Studios in Tacoma, WA garnering the Margaret K. Williams Award for Excellence in the Arts and AMOCAT Award for Arts Outreach. Garibaldi and Zmolek directed Omulu Capoeira Performance Group in San Francisco and founded Omulu Capoeira Sul in Los Angeles creating collaborative works with masters of Taiko, Flamenco, Kathak, Capoeira, and Congolese dance.

**Paul Zmolek** is an award-winning interdisciplinary dance artist/educator whose dance/theatre/opera/performance/video/sound/ installation works have been featured throughout the Western US as well as Latvia, Finland and Italy. As co-Artistic Director of Callous Physical Theatre, Paul collaboratively devises physical theatre based in choreographic craft. Past work includes collaborations with masters of Capoeira, Kathak, Flamenco, Taiko, Congolese and Chinese dance and music. Highlights of his performance career include creating title roles for the world premieres of three Frank Zappa ballets and performing in works by Paul Taylor and Anna Sokolow.

# Notes

[1] The default setting for Hangouts automatically switches video to accompany the dominant sound source. We opted to manually switch by clicking upon the in-screen windows that display each source.
[2] See Crandl and Tucker, 187. Content-based dance pedagogy derives from the cross-disciplinary teaching methods developed by language educators.
[3] See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
[4] *Dialogical devising* can be seen as a variation of postdramatic theatre. See Hans-Thies Lehman's *Postdramatic Theatre*, for an excellent exegesis on this tradition.
[5] See Landow, *Hypertext*.
[6] Richard Schechner's "Entertainment/Efficacy Braid" connects Theater and Ritual form while differentiating their intentions. Schechner maintains that ritual must have real, irreversible actions. Victor Turner questions whether industrial/post-industrial societies can actually go from *liminoid* to *liminal* and truly have efficacious rituals.
[7] Barton, "Paradox as Process," 575-601.
[8] For this project we contented ourselves with exploring whether this technology could effectively facilitate collaborative dance-making. The question arises remains whether virtual, entertainment, consumer-based technology can facilitate a liminal state leading to efficacious ritual performance. For this project we set our sights somewhat lower, striving to explore whether this technology could effectively facilitate collaborative dance-making.

[9] For access to video documentation of *Global Corporeality*, go to http://callousphysicaltheatre.weebly.com/global-corporeality.html

[10] The three performances were live, occurring simultaneously in time yet, due to the delay created by non-instantaneous transmission of images and sound through the internet, each performance was concurrently in present and past tense. These simultaneous past/present corporeal/digitized performances present an interesting paradox when one considers the definitions of "live" performance. See Dixon 127-130 for a concise discussion on the phenomenology of liveness.

[11] You will need a Google+ profile and permission to enter this site: https://plus.google.com/communities/112911744546209856759?partnerid=gplpo. For permission, please email: CallousPhysicalTheatre1@gmail.com

[12] For this project we did not make any attempt to correct perceived misunderstandings, mispronunciations or cultural "lost in translations." What was uttered was what was used. For example, one choreographic section was built on the misspelling of "misunderstanding" during our brainstorming session. What was written down was "miss understanding"; the section we built, then, was named *Miss Understanding*. Another example was the pronunciation of "gibberish." In American pronunciation, we pronounce with a soft "g." One of the LKA students pronounced *gibberish* with a hard "g." What resulted was *gibberish* with a hard "g" utilized within a lyric for a song that the performer composed and recorded for her dance composition—a perfect solution evoked for the word *gibberish*.

[13] For a detailed description, you may view the course website: www.isu.edu/~garijose/Pages/Course%20Syllabi/LatviaGlobalCorporeal/Global2014.html

[14] Latvian folksongs are short. They typically appear as four-foot trochaic quatrains. Occasionally the dactylic meter is used. For a very valuable resource, see "Latvju Dainas," 14.

[15] Due to limited bandwidth and screen space on Google Hangout, we decided to de-emphasize the exploration of multiple points of view and instead focused on using the technology as a portal for communal and corporeal interaction. This provided time for student collaborators to work more directly with each other online to develop their choreographies.

[16] In our 2011 collaborative project *Appartengono (A Sense of Belonging)* with the tiny community of Costa di Trex outside of Assisi, Italy, we felt that the participants did not fully trust us and the process until the last meeting before the exhibition of the work. http://callousphysicaltheatre.weebly.com/appartengono-ginestrelle.html.

[17] When wearable devices akin to Google Glass become cheap and widely used it is conceivable that isolated individual collaborators could function fully in a virtual screen dance community. Until then it seems that the ideal staffing would be to have several small cells of dancer/camera operators which would allow each participant to actively participate both corporeally as dancer/choreographer and virtually through the digital interface, thus providing perspective as active object/subject.

[18] See Barthes, *Camera Lucida*.

[19] Dixon, 127.
[20] Ibid.
[21] See Kozel, *Closer*, 213-268.
[22] McKenzie, *Perform or Else!*

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# PROVOCATIONS AND VIEWPOINTS

# Crowd-Sourced Filmmaking: Despair is Your Friend

*Mitchell Rose, The Ohio State University*

OK, now stay calm! I want you to push the red lever forward… SLOWLY!!!

If the pilot of a 767 died, could you land the plane while the control tower talked you through it over the radio? I've always been fascinated (obsessed) by the idea of getting people to do complicated things, remotely, via instructions. And that's what I wanted to undertake when I made my new crowd-sourced film, *Globe Trot*.

I got 54 filmmakers in 23 countries (representing all seven continents including Antarctica) to each contribute two seconds of precise footage that I edited together. 15 months of work, resulting in a 3-minute film. Have a look.

A second impetus for this project was experimentation I've been doing the last few years in what we could call "Hyper-Matchcutting"—films where every adjacent edit is perfectly aligned in position and continuity. My first foray into this was my film *Advance*.

Of course there's nothing new in this. Buster Keaton did it so brilliantly 90 years ago in *Sherlock, Jr.*

And I experimented more with this in my film *Contact.*

Film is about change, and I found that these Hyper-Matchcutting explorations only heightened that dynamic of change, keeping the spectator engaged. The story is progressing but the characters and locations are shifting—don't blink because the new is unfolding.

The question then was, could I make a Hyper-Matchcutting film in which I applied this notion of remote collaboration? Could I get distant filmmakers and performers to collaborate at a high level of complexity … via instructions? My idea was to take a dance and assign four counts of it to filmmakers around the world. They would teach these four counts to someone, film it, and send me the footage for assembly.

And I wanted to use non-dancers. The premise was: Anyone can learn two seconds of even complicated choreography if you take the time to teach them and work with them. Three seconds? That may be pushing it. But two seconds… probably. I like seeing non-dancers perform sophisticated choreography, a bit awkwardly, but trying their best. And my hope was, that seeing people all over the world participating in a single

choreographic thread, there would be a sense of unity in it—a sense of the democratization of dance.

My original plan was to enroll ten filmmakers around the world—sort of a who's who in dance-film—and have them each shoot 10 phrases. But knowing that each phrase might require several dozen shots until you get a good one, it seemed unreasonable to ask these 10 filmmakers to do this much work–particularly since I couldn't pay them what they'd really be worth. Even a pittance, times 10, is a lot.

But then I got an idea! Why not crowd-source this? Instead of getting 10 people to commit to doing 10 phrases, get a lot of volunteers to each do one. Sure, just crowd-source it! That'll be simple! Right.

The first step was to choreograph the dance and I enlisted Bebe Miller, my colleague at Ohio State University. I described to her the quality of movement I'd like the dance to have: a simple non-technical jauntiness. In the studio Bebe sketched out some movement and the project assistant, Ellie Escosa-Carter, followed along, learning and recording. I was amazed by the speed with which Bebe can work. It's often said that there should be no self-censorship when brainstorming, and it felt like our choreographic sessions were a sort of brainstorming. Movement would pour out of Bebe with great spontaneity, and then we'd go back and refine and shape the form.

Bebe Miller (L) and project assistant Ellie Escosa-Carter choreographing *Globe Trot*. (frame grab)

Next was testing the editing effect, to see if the concept was working visually. Ellie and I grabbed people walking around the university and taught them a little movement very quickly.

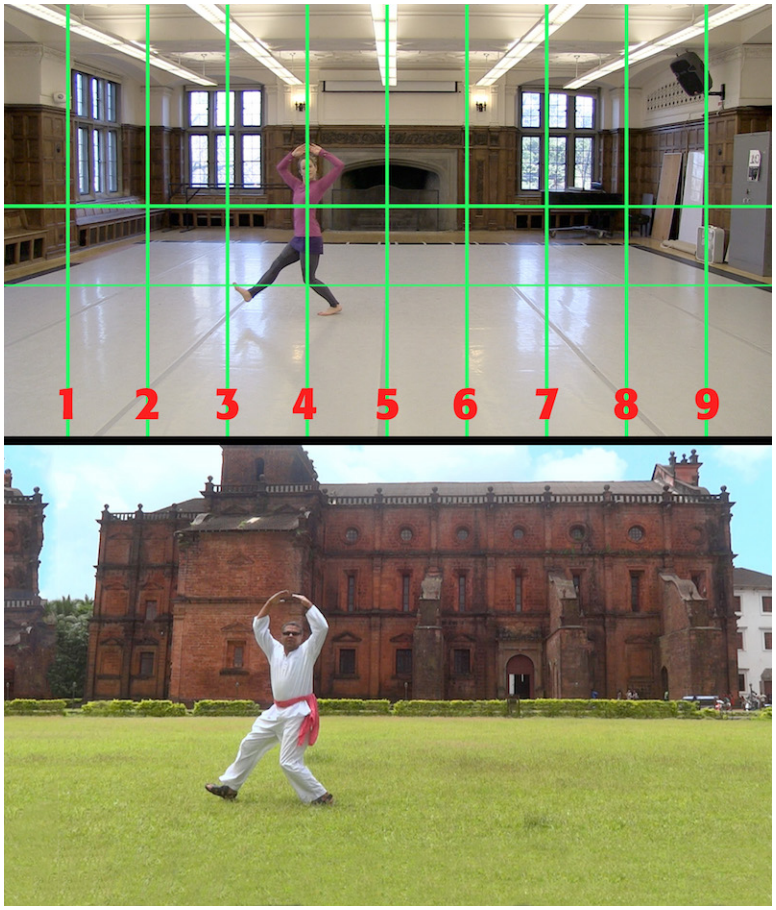
Then I had to create a manual to train the filmmakers. The challenge was to make it as concise as possible. I could have gone into excruciating detail—and oh, I can do that—but I'd be working with volunteer filmmakers who'd lose interest if I just gave them

dozens of pages to read. You can see the manual and training materials here: http://www.mitchellrose.com/globetrot/

The next challenge was finding filmmakers around the world to participate. It's not easy finding people to work just for love and it was months of searching ... more accurately, groveling ... utilizing social media and contacts from dance-film festival curators.

Eventually I had found 54 filmmakers.

Each filmmaker was sent their four-count phrase and a kit of materials that included a spreadsheet that showed where the performer should be in the frame. The frame was divided into ninths ...




Ellie Escosa-Carter in an image from the Globe Trot manual compared to performer Krishna Kapadia in Goa, India. (frame grabs)

... and so if you were assigned Measure 4, Counts 2, 3, 4, 5, your chart would show you that for those counts the performer should hit marks 5, 6, 6, 5.

A deadline of two months was set. The clips began to roll in. And I panicked. The first shots I got were incredibly off—placement wrong, choreography wrong. Utterly unusable. I feared all this work was for naught.

But then a few more came in, and though not perfect, they were close. Close enough that a little dialogue with a filmmaker willing to reshoot could get what was needed. And so began The Summer of Emails as I sent over a thousand emails offering critiques of footage and clarifying instructions for the filmmakers.

Some filmmakers sent in a few clips, some sent in dozens (God bless them). And eventually I got enough to work with—561 shots for the 111 the film needed. Imperfect placement? That's inevitable. But I could tweak the clips in editing.

I can't tell you the affection I feel for my filmmakers. Why would they do this? I don't understand it. But they stuck with it—this community around the world who've never met—and they delivered.

I'm very happy with *Globe Trot* and the film means a lot to me. I've made 25 films over the course of my career. I've done funny, I've done dramatic and conceptual and beautiful… but I've never done joyous. And it feels good to do so in a celebration of humanity. I remember when I first showed a rough cut to Bebe, her reaction was, "I love people!" That's exactly the response I want.

This technique of Hyper-Matchcutting has the effect of creating equalization. When a new image takes the place of an old image, with the same continuity of action, it says, "These things are equal." And that's what I hope the message of *Globe Trot* is—that people, all over the world, are equal.

## Biography

Prior to becoming a filmmaker, Mitchell Rose was a New York-based choreographer. His company toured internationally for 15 years. Eventually he was drawn more to visual media and chose to become a filmmaker, entering The American Film Institute as a Directing Fellow. Since A.F.I., his films have won 69 festival awards and are screened around the world.

The New York Times called him: "A rare and wonderful talent." The Washington Post wrote that his work was "in the tradition of Chaplin, Keaton, and Tati—funny and sad and more than the sum of both."

Mr. Rose tours a program called The Mitch Show, an evening of his short films together with audience-participation performance pieces. In 2009 he toured The Mitch Show in Kosovo as a U.S. State Dept. Cultural Envoy.

Mr. Rose is currently an assistant professor of dance-filmmaking at Ohio State University.

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# Transauthorial Screendance: Stravinsky's Exquisite Corpse, or Brief Notes on Creating an International Omnibus Project

*Marisa C. Hayes, Co-director, Festival International de Vidéo Danse de Bourgogne/Body Cinéma*

Four contributions to the *Sacre/ilège(s)* project by (top left to bottom right): Diana Heyne, Maurice Lai, Guy Wigmore and Franck Boulègue. Photo courtesy of Festival International de Vidéo Danse de Bourgogne/Body Cinéma

In honor of the first centenary surrounding the pivotal composition and ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rite of Spring)* in 2013, Franck Boulègue and I coordinated a collective screendance project entitled *Sacre/ilège(s)*. Created in collaboration with 65 international artists, we sought to explore the ongoing presence of *Le Sacre du*

*Printemps* internationally and to harness its wide reaching artistic influence in order to create an omnibus cycle of films. While hundreds of stage versions of *Le Sacre du Printemps* exist,[1] it has rarely been imagined for the screen and is normally identified with an individual artist's vision (Stravinsky's music, Nijinsky or Pina Bausch's choreography, among others). Diverging from these familiar components seemed a fitting tribute to a production whose original look and sound shook the cultural landscape of its era, affecting multiple generations of artists thereafter. This provided the impetus for our first foray into transauthorial screendance and raised a number of questions on the nature of collaboration, community, and authorship: What forms of collaboration are possible for the screen today? Does collaboration itself form a community? Does collaboration represent a compromise on the part of the individual artist or does it simply construct a larger authorial composite? Despite the significance of these questions throughout the history of art—and moving images in particular[2]—these subjects are rarely addressed or explored at screendance platforms today.

Working with the Vienna Symphonic Library of Austria and Jay Bacal—who recreated Stravinsky's orchestral score of *Le Sacre du Printemps* on a computer—we divided the music into 13 sections that were assigned at random to international artists from a range of creative backgrounds who responded to the project's online open call. This simple process formed a virtual and intentional community of artists based on a shared interest in both *Le Sacre du Printemps* and the notion of creating a collective work. Artists committed to a project in which they are featured side by side as part of the same film is in contrast to the ubiquitous festival model, which typically features short works of screendance independent of one another. In addition to the work created, the project generated a number of unsolicited online exchanges among artists regarding research undertaken and responses to creating the project. Although rooted to an array of media and working styles, the artists' shared participation provided a foundation for communal dialogue across geographic boundaries and artistic practices, which begs the question, why are there not more opportunities to forge collaborative working relationships in the screendance community?

Project artists were given total liberty in the creation of their contributions save our request not to alter the music, which served, in this case, as a unifying feature. Upon completion, all portions of the film were assembled to create a full-length version of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Due to the high number of participants, the project generated five complete cycles of the piece, a total of 65 film segments (or what anthology filmmakers[3] call "episodes") from over 25 countries. Designated by the letters "S," "A," "C," "R," and "E," the five versions[4] can be viewed interchangeably in a number of flexible formats, yet opportunities to screen or exhibit all five cycles together have been scarce based on the short films screening model common at most screendance platforms around the world.

In addition to artists who regularly engage the term screendance to describe their practice, the project received contributions from both groups and individuals who identified as performance artists, video artists, filmmakers, animators, dancers, photographers, writers, students, sculptors, new media artists, or a combination of the above. As a result, the broad range of work featured in *Sacre/ilège(s)* provides not only a global panorama of contemporary screendance, but also reveals the diverse layers of media and practices that inform its complex and on-going histories. Indeed, our inspiration for creating an omnibus work of screendance can be traced to collective experiments from various media and eras, particularly the surrealist *Exquisite corpse* method and Miranda July's *Joanie4Jackie* VHS zine.[5] The former began as a game in the early 20th century to create two-dimensional drawings or writing experiments that assembled successive artists' contributions in a composite work. Miranda July's open participation project was a chain-letter series born of the 1990s DIY film movement that involved compiling and distributing VHS anthologies of moving images contributed by women filmmakers. While the *Exquisite corpse* method represents a more traditional vision of collaboration and community in terms of physical interactions,[6] *Joanie4Jackie* also sought to build an audience and artistic community utilizing the portability of video to spread its tagline, "You always suspected it and now you know it's true: girls and women are making movies every day."

In 1948 film theorist André Bazin harshly dismissed films composed of multiple sketches or episodes as "a bastard and phony type of film if ever there was one."[7] Yet Bazin's emphasis on the individual filmmaker or "auteur"—which created his distaste for the omnibus model composed of multiple artistic contributions and perspectives—downplays cinema's traditional collaborative nature. In the book *Omnibus Films*, David Scott Diffrient describes this as a failure to appreciate the "carnivalesque mishmashing of elements that has the latent capacity to level social fields, demolish aesthetic hierarchies, and provide alternative visions of life free from conventional rules and restrictions."[8] Diffrient further states that omnibus films are hybrid productions by nature that thwart established filmmaking traditions by removing conceptual, thematic, and aesthetic boundaries: "such thresholds may be literal or figurative, spatial or corporeal…"[9] He argues that omnibus cinema's transgressions offer a vast array of aesthetic, ideological, and structural perspectives, among others, that propose a "remarkable democratic alternative"[10] to filmic conventions. Omnibus films amass an array of artistic approaches that collectively allow the viewer "to taste the world,"[11] echoing the surrealists, particularly André Breton's statement on the *Exquisite corpse*:

> What exalted us in these productions was indeed the conviction that, come what might, they bore the mark of something that could not be begotten by one mind alone and that they were endowed, in a much greater measure, with a power of drift that poetry cannot value too highly.[12]

These thoughts reflect one of the *Sacre/ilège(s)* project's central goals that resulted in its open participation policy towards artists of all media and levels of experience.

*Sacre/ilège(s)* is, to our knowledge, the first omnibus work of screendance and a model we intend to continue exploring through future collaborations (including plans for a *Danses Macabres* omnibus in 2015/16). The project has drawn mixed reactions from audiences, some of whom echo conventional dissatisfaction with transauthorial projects described in *Omnibus Films*, focusing on what they perceive as a lack of consistency or unified artistic vision. We would argue, like Diffrient, that the omnibus film presents "intratextual complexities"[13] affording audiences the opportunity to consider multiple visions and approaches within the screendance community. Omnibus and other collective projects can in fact be unified through their lack of uniformity, creating a space to be "imaginatively inhabited"[14] by audiences and appreciated as a dynamic network of exchange. While *Sacre/ilège(s)* was certainly not an attempt to create a community of artists based on any single shared aesthetic or working method, it was an exploration that engaged the collective sharing of artistic processes, research, and screen space. How might screendance benefit (or not) from the Dadaist stance that the value of art is not in the work produced, but in the act of making and collaborating?

While each contribution to the *Sacre/ilège(s)* project could potentially be viewed alone, each film as a whole would be visibly incomplete if one portion were to be removed. The 13 episodes that comprise each cycle of the project therefore collectively occupy a space often deemed a site of single residency (*auteur* theory[15]). As individual short films continue to dominate the screendance festival model—an approach that rarely demonstrates curatorial strategies or innovative presentation formats that encourage meaningful dialogue—it is long overdue to not only ask, but to actively explore alternate reflections of the screendance community. Instead of presenting separate films as if they existed in a vacuum, how can screendance programs reflect shared themes, research, collaboration, spheres of influence, spaces, and/or working methods, among others? In lieu of eschewing seemingly incongruent practices and/or media, screendance curators, artists and viewers must collaborate to facilitate experiences that allow for deeper study and an inclusive definition of screendance for it to thrive. The alternative is stagnation within the same hegemonic format, thereby limiting both the art form itself and the possibility of fostering a wider community of scholars, viewers, and artists.

## Biography

Marisa C. Hayes is an artist, writer and curator whose work explores the intersections of experimental filmmaking, choreography and literature. She is the founding co-director

of the International Video Dance Festival of Burgundy and Body Cinéma, a dance-theatre company. Her screendance collaborations with Franck Boulègue have been featured at festivals and galleries in over 20 countries and received a Susan Braun Award from the New York Dance Films Association and Pentacle Movement Media's video dance prize. Marisa's writing on screendance, dance history and film studies has been published in a variety of books and journals in the UK, USA and France.

## Notes

[1] See Stephanie Jordan and Larraine Nicholas' database, *Stravinsky the Global Dancer*: http://ws1.roehampton.ac.uk/stravinsky/
[2] The question of authorship in moving images compared to other art forms is well explored in the section "Cinematic Authorship" in Gaut's *A Philosophy of Cinematic Arts*.
[3] Noteworthy collaborations that resonate with this article for their collective experimentation in multidisciplinary practices include the episodic films: *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947) and *8 x 8: A Chess Sonata in 8 Movements* (1957). Produced and conceived by Hans Richter, artists such as Jean Cocteau, Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, Fernand Léger, and Many Ray, among others, each contributed segments to the films.
[4] The five cycles of the project can be viewed online at the following links:
- S: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipYM9QyBnAM
- A: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZ21hy6J5HI
- C: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3fh81LhIeI
- R: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_puuBRmlro
- E: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUZt_-lYDjs
[5] See http://www.joanie4jackie.com/
[6] The exquisite corpse method was originally derived from a parlor game. Its process of physical exchange is described throughout André Breton's *Le Cadavre exquis, son exaltation*.
[7] André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, 332.
[8] Diffrient, *Omnibus Films*, 65.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Idem., 66.
[12] André Breton quoted in *La Revolution surréaliste*, p.12.
[13] Diffrient, *Omnibus Films*, 32.
[14] Ibid.
[15] See Joël Magny's article "1953-1968: de la 'mise en scène' à la 'politique des auteurs.'"

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*Sacre/ilège(s)* S (2013). Dir. Body Cinéma/multiple directors. 36:25 min., digital video. France/multiple countries.

*Sacre/ilège(s)* A (2013). Dir. Body Cinéma/multiple directors. 36:25 min., digital video. France/multiple countries.

*Sacre/ilège(s)* C (2013). Dir. Body Cinéma/multiple directors. 36:25 min., digital video. France/multiple countries.

*Sacre/ilège(s)* R (2013). Dir. Body Cinéma/multiple directors. 36:25 min., digital video. France/multiple countries.

*Sacre/ilège(s)* E (2013). Dir. Body Cinéma/multiple directors. 36:25 min., digital video. France/multiple countries.

# In the Forest Between Us

*Lucy Cash, Independent Artist*

**Scene 1**

*Let's say, both of you find yourselves in a place deep inside an unfamiliar forest. The comforting trail of breadcrumbs you left behind is already a vulnerable memory. Ahead lies difficulty and wonder in equal measure. Time moves differently here and as if summoned from nowhere you encounter an inhabitant of the forest. It could be a bear, or a crow or a deer. Perhaps it's a fox. Yes, a fox—a bright smear of red in the soft greys and greens. Startled, you stop moving and as the fox looks at you and you look back at it, its presence stirs a sense in you. Something incomprehensible—outside of what you know – something strange and exhilarating and unfathomable—beyond any language. You look at each other—three sets of eyes held in a long exchange. And then the fox is gone; the spell is broken. Neither of you have any words to describe what has just happened. Yet the encounter sustains something between you; and the shadow of the fox, accompanies you. You start walking again and without trying to name what has passed (because you can't) you recognise that this encounter is what you were looking for.*

My practice is driven by a need to begin with the familiar in order to find the edges of the unfamiliar: the savage and ridiculous, wayward and preposterous that make up the place where something—however small—has not already been captured and classified and tamed. The brink that is both exhilarating and uncomfortable.

Coming from a background in collaborative performance making, I like to find this boundary through dialogue, through exchange.

Within this exchange as a necessary condition, there is an unspoken trust in your fellow dialoguer, and an acceptance of forgetting as well as remembering. This is a small but significant feat, as it is the forgetting or the remembering of, for instance, breadcrumbs that establishes or de-stabilizes what grows between you moment by moment. It's interesting that the original meaning of trust is 'strong' and that when we give and receive trust it creates a bond of strength that in the best creative relationships allows space for dependence, independence and what we might call 'interdependence'. In biology interdependence exists in many different kinds of contexts and in in varying modes between different kinds of organisms. For me, thinking about these ideas temporally as well as spatially makes the metaphor of the forest in relation to a practice that seeks the not-yet-known strongly resonant. And whilst the incomprehensible, (in the sense of the place not contained by what we know) cannot be summoned to order,

a practice through dialogue might seek to track the kind of conditions that could allow its appearance. For example, in an exchange with a collaborator, the 'blindspots' in my understanding are frequently revealed, allowing me to move to a fuller assimilation of an idea. Through this fuller understanding of what is already known for myself (as well as what is known for her), it's possible to clear space for the unknown to appear.

Matthew Goulish wryly describing the beginning of what became the performance company Goat Island with whom I was an associate member 2005 - 2009, reminds me how the edge of our personal community extends temporally as well as spatially. He writes,

> in 1987, we invited Tatsumi Hijikata, legendary Japanese dancer and founder of Butoh, to join our company. His death in 1986 made him available. He accepted, and he often visited our rehearsals in the form of a ghost, taking part in discussions, delicately responding to our starting point.[1]

Perhaps Hijikata by his ethereal nature also reminds us of the ongoing conversation we have with the parts of ourselves that remain hidden, as well as the unspoken residues that collect between individuals within a collaborative project.

To tread carefully for a moment: my pursuit of the incomprehensible doesn't intend to privilege the subconscious imaginary or fetishize the irrational or eccentric. Instead, by dealing with different materialities and the ethics and ecologies that these produce I intend to follow wherever I can the moments in which new kinds of relationships and subjectivities come into being. Whether this is the unexpected meaning generated by the combination of sound and image within a moving image work, or the more prolonged exploration of dependence and independence that takes place when two artists attempt to generate a collaborative work together.

**Scene 2**

> You make a seal with an individual or a series of individuals and this seal creates an involuntary contract which writes itself according to the chemistry between you.
>
> As you work together in a studio as we have, you sense and test what the rules of this contract are. You discover what is possible and the further you test, the more you learn about what is possible.
>
> In this way the working arrangement is much like a particular view of fate or the possibilities that life at large presents. There is a constellation of prefigurations, but there is also a set of variables, and those rely on how you manage to use what is there practically and emotionally and magically in front of you… Everything we had mentioned or focussed on, acted upon us,

> even the incidental played a part in how we activated the ideas in the room.[2]

These are words the performance-maker Karen Christopher wrote in relation to a week of research we carried out in February 2015.

The way of tuning the 'prefigurations' and the 'variables' is often the difference between the-thing-we-can't-name-but-whose-appearance-we-desire and hitting our heads against the brick wall of what's already known and familiar. Can we anticipate the unexpected? Will we recognise the unrecognisable?

To surrender to this 'seal' is what's required. The seal is an act of dependence. The root of which contains movement. Dependence is 'an action growing out of another action' Dependence feels responsive, confronting, inexplicable, fragile and resilient. It feels spatial, but I wouldn't know how to draw it. Glancing outside my window, the complexity of cloud shapes drifting through a sky of blue and gold feel like they might offer a temporary illustration. If so my dependence might look like this:

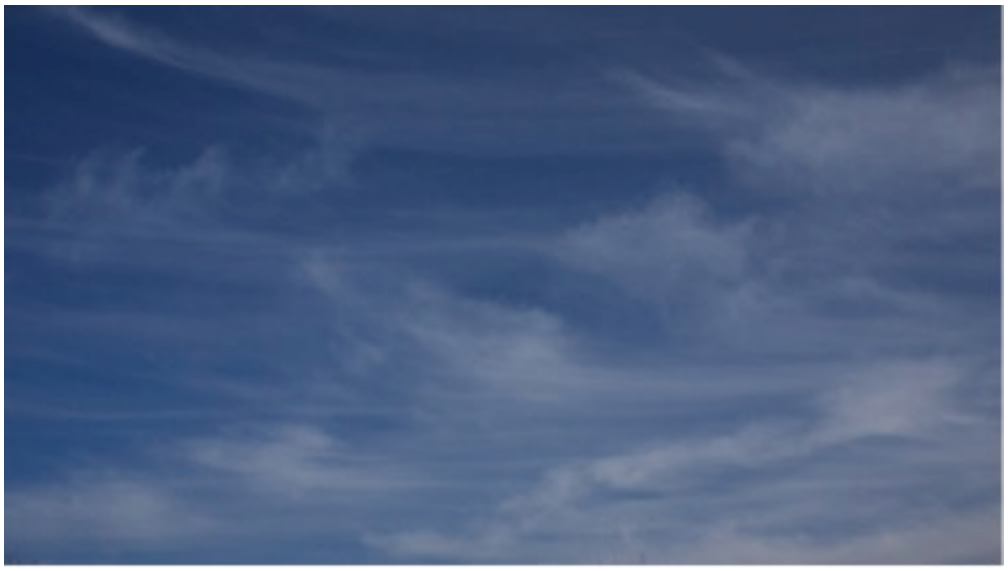

Photo: Lucy Cash

A pause. I have a Skype call with Veronica Thorseth[3]—a dancer in Bergen, Norway—who in 2014 invited me to take part in a series of conversations with a group of Norwegian artists (from visual arts, theatre and dance) about site-specific work and the relationships between making work and its context and environment. She talks about how the conversations we had last year are still being referred to by the members of

the small dance community in Bergen. We acknowledge the gratitude we both feel for the perspective offered by the other on our separate communities.

I think about all the rigorous generosity I've been lucky enough to experience in the dialogues that have sustained me over the last ten years—in particular an on-going connection with the choreographer Christina Ciupke in Berlin. In 2011, curious to articulate elements of this conversation in another form, I asked Christina whether she would be willing to experiment on an unfunded moving image work. She agrees and we call the work *Conversation Piece #1 (Palm Trees of Hackney)*.[4]

The piece explores the relationship between the process of looking, thinking and then responding to a particular idea within a specific frame. The frame is both cinematic and also conceptual—relating to the particular curiosities and concerns which form the foundation of our on-going dialogues. It explores the relationship between stillness and movement—both in the outside, everyday world, and in the movement of our thoughts. The film was made within a specific duration of time, (two days initially, and then a further week) in which we exchanged neighbourhoods, formulated and filmed a journey through our borrowed neighbourhood and then constructed a film.

Usually we are together in our different neighbourhoods and so when I go alone to Kreuzberg, I experience this part of the city differently. I observe previously unseen elements and notice new details whilst familiarising myself with a particular route around Christina's apartment block. I try to get beneath the surface of the city, whilst thinking about the frequent conversations I have with Christina about movement and pattern. Christina comes to London and does the same in my neighbourhood. We then place our individual thoughts and images next to each other, in an edit, seeing if we can trace the path of our thoughts.

We show the work in "Still Moving," an exhibition at Siobhan Davies studios and contextualise the film as an invitation to the viewer to follow their own thread of attention through our exploration of conversation in different forms. I describe the work like this:

> As an artist working on unconventional collaborations with many different kinds of people, I'm often fascinated by how the most fruitful collaborations begin with a very particular kind of conversational exchange—the form of which is full of movement. The conversation meanders, takes a walk, changes rhythm … all the while revealing delicate and particular patterns of thought. It's almost impossible to document this kind of conversation—its quality is as much in the silence and rhythm of the pauses as in the words themselves. When I take a walk in a city, I often notice how my rhythm of thinking is affected by what I see and how what I see is affected by my quality of thinking: my imagination continually shifting between remembering one thing or imagining an other (perhaps from a fragment of

conversation I overhear) whilst all the time perceiving other things all around me.

This project blurred the edges between dependence and independence. Our independent observation of particular, partially familiar places felt fragile, resilient, obstinate, solitary, self reliant and responsible. It felt spatial, but I wouldn't know how to draw it. Glancing out of my window, the blue and gold sky offers this in the way of a diagram for independence:

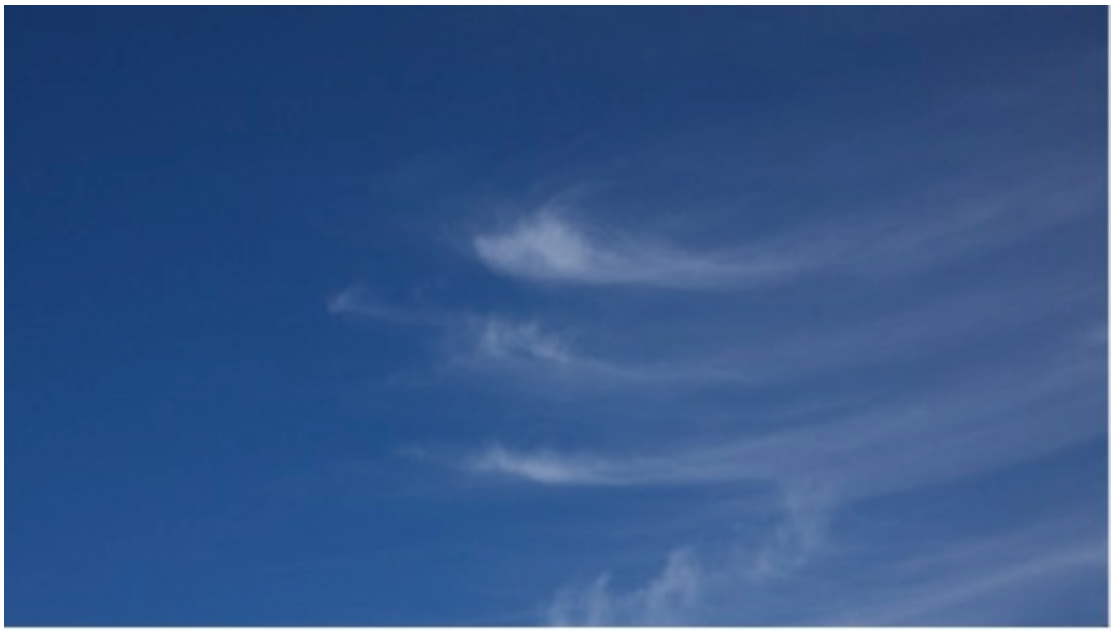

Photo: Lucy Cash

**Scene 3**

*A large table in an apartment. A group of five women talking animatedly. Sheets of paper with scale drawings and lists in the space between them.*

Back in the early 2000s when there were more Screendance festivals in the UK, or when if you were an independent artist it was still possible to get funding to visit a festival abroad, I would regularly fall into conversations with a group of extraordinary women—all making Screendance work. This group usually comprised of Becky Edmunds, Claudia Kappenberg and Chirstinn Whyte. We often sought refuge from what we perceived as a sensory overload, (MTV style screenings of up to ten or more short films in fast succession) in the bar, or outside of the venue to catch some fresh air or smoke a cigarette. We were united in our frustrations and desires for something different—for some other way of engaging with this form that is called Screendance and for a

different balancing of attention and demand. Our conversations circled around making connections with other art forms or renaming Screendance altogether. (In the latter regard we playfully plotted a séance with Maya Deren in order to seek her advice!).

Then in 2009 I was fortunate enough to receive a fellowship from South East Dance. I knew that what I needed most at that point as an independent artist in London was to have the resources to enable a more frequent coming together of this group of women—to temporarily establish a community I was craving. So I invited Becky and Claudia and Chirstinn to form a curatorial group and to create a festival with me. Sitting somewhere between a choreographed exhibition and exhibited choreography, this curation called "What if …" took place at Siobhan Davies Studios, through an invitation from Gill Clarke at Independent Dance. Having extended her invitation, Gill joined our curation and our exhibition / festival was folded into the line of 'What' festivals that she originally initiated.[5]

This dialogue enabled us to do something that we'd never done before—curation—through the delicate and rigorous application of our shared knowledge. For an extended moment, we agreed, as a group of individuals to an 'interdependence' that took place around the worktable in the living room of my apartment. Since we were not originating new work together, we were never dependent on one another. Our decision making process evolved and responded to the constraints and possibilities of fixed parameters (the works of art we chose to include, our consideration of the audience / viewer's experience and the particularities of the space, (Siobhan Davies Studios) that housed the festival. We gathered around the table because we wanted to and because we shared a temporary aim. So the quality of our listening and our speaking was undiluted by the kinds of obligations and responsibilities that a more long-term, institutionalised work place might have demanded. We were amateurs—but only in the sense of loving what we were doing.

These few examples hint at the many artistic collaborations which I've been lucky enough to experience and which have shaped and re-shaped the imaginary edges of myself as profoundly as the more somatic ways I've lived in my body (dancing, training, travelling, filming) have left their mark on my physicality. Their constituent parts drift between words, silences, shared activities and incomplete gestures.

I've shared intuitive split-second exchanges with others that have unfolded in my mind over months and years. (In fact one such exchange on a dance film shoot led me to marry my now husband!) And I've had long and meaningful dialogues over years which when they have quietly ended due to inevitable shifts in circumstance, interest or economics, have rapidly faded in my thoughts—leaving a palpable but unnamable residue. Having formed a life through these dialogues or collaborations, I know they can be as rich and intense in their emotional quality as any love affair. *And they require the ability to hold, but not hold onto.*

An image of myself as a cartoon character pops into my head: an animated Lucy with layers of collaborative residue vibrating around me like the pencil lines visible in a 'line boil'[6] around a hand-drawn character. *The lines are only visible when I'm standing still.*

Outside of the different kinds of collaborative making I have participated in, there are other kinds of dialogues or exchanges with peers, participants, students, writers-of-books-I'm-reading and artists-of-many-kinds-some-of-whom-I've-never-even-met which all form the landscape of my work and practice. They are the soil and the nourishment that allows me to flourish. They are also my creative barometer—providing unspoken feedback on my ability to accept, initiate, invent, respond, recognise and to be inside and outside as well as in-between. These exchanges are the foundations of what I think of when I think of my community. These dialoguers describe my dependence and my independence, I live my life in relation to these others. This is both the difficulty and the wonder. And despite technology's offer of almost limitless potential connection and despite the very real daily need for recognising our relationship to the ecologies of people and places we live in, to *really* experience ourselves as interdependent continues to be confrontational.

The writer and Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term 'interbeing' to describe the implicit interdependence of all elements—known and unknown—of the universe we live in. He writes:

> If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. "Interbeing" is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix "inter-" with the verb "to be," we have a new verb, inter-be.[7]

Responding to the invitation to write this small essay has itself subtly re-shaped my edges—it's pulled me in different directions and created the space for me to acknowledge what for me ultimately sustains any life in art-making: the funny, banal, provocative, profound, idealistic, cynical, hopeful, despairing, jubilant, contemplative, fearful, courageous attempts to exchange ideas that we believe in.

## Biography

**Lucy Cash** (lucycash.com) is an artist and moving-image maker. She works with an expanded sense of choreography and an interest in extending choreographic thinking

beyond dance in order to offer more haptic ways of relating to the world around us. In 2009 she received a screendance fellowship from South East Dance from which she developed a collaborative curatorial platform – *straybird* (straybird.org). *straybird* has created a series of innovative curations including two festivals at Siobhan Davies Studios in 2010 and 2012 (What If… and What Matters) and a mobile curation for Dance Umbrella – Stray Gifts (2013). In 2013 Lucy was awarded the first research residency at the Foundling Museum, and in 2014 she collaborated with Sheila Ghelani on Some Patterns of Current – a Dance in Libraries commission. She regularly mentors other artists, as well as teaching at various institutions (including Roehampton University, Tate Modern, Falmouth University and Siobhan Davies Dance).

## Notes

[1] Matthew Goulish, *39 Microlectures*, 10.
[2]Karen Christopher's writing was presented at a research sharing on Tuesday 24th February, 2015 at Roehampton University. www.karenchristopher.co.uk
[3] As well as making her own work, Veronica runs Wrap Arts Centre with Leo Preston: http://wrap.hdu.no/
[4] Here is a link to the film https://vimeo.com/21504871
[5] Gill began the "What" Festivals in 2009 www.independentdance.co.uk/film-and-video/ The website for "What If…." is currently offline. The website for the second festival curated by straybird (Lucy Cash and Becky Edmunds) can be found here: http://straybird.org/whatmatters/
[6] In hand-drawn animation, each frame of a character's movement is created by a separate drawing—fractionally different from the previous one. The 'boil' occurs through the slight imprecisions that occur between the outlines of these line drawings. In early animation these were considered imperfections. Now, when so little animation is actually hand-drawn some animators even add boil in to create a sense of authenticity.
[7] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Heart of Understanding*, 45.

## References

Goulish, Matthew. *39 Microlectures in Proximity of Performance*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. Parallax Press, 2010.

# INTERVIEWS

# *The Running Tongue*: Collaboration, Choice, and Community

*Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, in conversation with Simon Ellis*
*Thursday 6th February 2015*

*The Running Tongue* is a new film installation work by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton. It features a woman—Helka Kaski—running continuously and then appearing or jump-cutting into different and very brief scenes—or "visions"—that have been developed with Davies and Hinton by more than 20 independent dance artists in the UK. Such a large-scale collaboration resulted in a complex series of negotiations between the artists. In this interview, Davies and Hinton discuss *The Running Tongue* with IJSD co-editor—and one of the artists involved in the project—Simon Ellis.

Simon Ellis—Can you talk about how *The Running Tongue* started?

Siobhan Davies—David and I have known each other for thirty years and have always wanted to work together. We made *All This Can Happen* in 2012.[1] And after that we both wanted to work together again and an opportunity to make this second piece arrived. *All This Can Happen* was made by a very few people and made in this same meeting room.[2] It was an intense experience, we made the work using only found footage of film and photographs many from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. This meant an enormous amount of research—which was an unknown excitement for me—to explore the past in images. Later we worked on the careful editing and juxtaposition of all the materials. We built up such a thickness of concentration in this room, it was a hermetic experience and, while I always thought of my contribution as a choreographic one, I had not worked with any dance artists for those nine months. I had missed those exchanges with dance artists so when we began to think of this new project we both wanted to work with more people, to have more traffic in this room.

SE—So you're saying that one of the starting points for *The Running Tongue* was that if only three of you were in this room for *All This Can Happen*, then how do you somehow crack it open a little bit or provide access to other people?

SD—Yes and be in conversation. Little did we know how much conversation it was going to be! We were intrigued to ask movement based artists to use their own practice and with that make a still screen image.

When I helped to make *All This Can Happen*, I had never made a film. I had to rely on my choreographic learning to be of any use at all.

David and I wanted to work with dance artists who could apply their bodily, conceptual and choreographic learning, and their use of imagery to this different medium. It was a way for me to continue and share the experience I had had when working on the first film.

David Hinton—I'd like to pick up on something to do with our relationship, which also relates to *The Running Tongue*, I think. The way I met Sue was that I made a *South Bank Show* about her. It was in 1983 and I made a documentary following her through the process of making a piece. It was an important moment for me, as it was the first thing I had ever done that was in any way related to dance. One of the reasons I wanted to do it was as an education, because I had got a sense that contemporary dance was interesting but I knew nothing about it. Part of the beauty of making documentary films is that it is a way of educating yourself. That's always been part of my attitude to film making—it's a way of learning—and this is again the case with *The Running Tongue*. Through talking to 20-25 different dance artists I am learning a huge amount. It may be a sort of bonus aspect of the job, but it matters a lot to me to be learning through doing these things.

SD—That matters to me a lot as well.

DH—In a way, *All This Can Happen* was about collaborating with the dead—everybody in the film is dead, Robert Walser who wrote the text is dead. For me, it was fantastic to work that way. There's this fundamental poetry about film, which is that it can bring to life long gone moments in time. A moment in 1890 can suddenly come alive again on screen and I always find that incredibly moving. But a huge part of the impulse for *The Running Tongue* was about going the other way—let's communicate with life around us, with people who are living now, and let's think about what's going on in the world right now.

Initially *The Running Tongue* was going to be a much more humble piece than it turned out to be. A large arts centre in Australia called Carriageworks saw *All This Can Happen* and that prompted them to commission Sue and me to make something as part of a new exhibition. The commission they were offering was quite modest, but then Siobhan Davies Dance as an organisation came in and said we will make this into a bigger production—so that's my good fortune.

*The Running Tongue*, image of Helka Kaski, courtesy of Siobhan Davies Dance

SE—Could you say a bit more about these 20-25 people and how they fit in with *The Running Tongue* and how they fit with you?

SD—In *All This Can Happen* we were very drawn to the idea of isolating one frame and that a lot of information can happen within one frame.

In *The Running Tongue* we continued this sense of isolating frames. We wanted to give each artist a single frame and for them to fill that frame with an event, create a scene following rules or requests which David and I had constructed in order to give some coherence to the whole work. We called the frame each of the artists were going to make a "vision". We needed to devise a system in which the rules helped each artist to go through the eye of the needle in terms of rigor but also give them the freedom to explore what their practice could bring to a particular moment in time.

SE—Just to be clear when you say frame, you mean the spatial aspect. It is not a single moment in time, but it is a spatial frame played out over—or expanded to—ten seconds.

DH—This work is very definitely related to *All This Can Happen* because it continues our interest in movement that is broken down into still images. It all goes back to the origins of cinema and the earliest investigations into how movement might be rendered in photographic images. When we set to work on *All This Can Happen* our biggest inspiration was Étienne-Jules Marey. Together with Eadweard Muybridge, he was the great pioneering figure in terms of photographing movement and then playing the frames back in a way that gives an illusion that the movement is happening right in

front of you. We are very interested in the fact that all movement in the form of images is an illusion, and that what we are actually seeing is a sequence of still frames. We got very interested in these Marey films that are very brief. A long Marey film might be 48 frames long, which is 3-4 seconds. When you get into that way of thinking, 10 seconds becomes a pretty epic length. It is 250 frames, and if you think that every frame is, in itself, individually interesting, then two hundred and fifty is a hell of a lot to play with.

So, with *The Running Tongue*, our original conception was that we would start with a burst of action that lasted ten seconds. The 100-yard sprint presented itself as exactly the right kind of thing.[3] You know, Usain Bolt running for only ten seconds is also an epic thing. Say you take something like that, think of it as 250 frames and give each one of those frames to an artist to add their own information to that frame… That was the original plan, to collaborate with 250 dance artists! Then reality started closing in on us and we ended up with just over 20 artists, but the original impulse is still there—this whole idea of each individual frame being interesting and giving different artists individual frames to work with.

SD—But also thinking of it as a miniature. A single frame as a miniature, a compact place for an event to happen in amongst a stream of action. A moment or moments not easily seen by the human eye. What captured me was the level of detail which might be glimpsed by filling one arrested frame of a film before streaming back to normal frame rate.

SE—As these different "visions" have developed and evolved, how have you developed a sense of wholeness of the work?

DH—From my point of view, the coherence of the work should derive from the proverbs: the fact that we are asking every dance artist to use their own sensibility but we are also asking them all to work from proverbs collected in a book by Mineke Schipper called *Never Marry A Woman With Big Feet*.[4]

SE—So each vision is based on a proverb from Schipper's collection, and all the proverbs are about women in some way?

DH—Yes. The original conception was that in these 250 frames you could create a kind of biography for the woman that you were seeing in the frames. So you take a woman, you watch her running 250 frames and you then offer each individual frame to an individual artist and each artist is providing part of her biography. Over the 250 frames you could, in fact, have a narrative that tells the whole story of her life. So you've got 10 seconds of a life and, at the same time, you've got a whole life. But actually the logistics of making the whole of that idea work have proved too demanding.

*The Running Tongue*, vision by Matthias Sperling

SD—Working with making a whole life would have taken freedom of choice away from the dance artists. We could have been more prescriptive with the artists by, for example, choosing a proverb for each one, and then a subject: childhood, young love, spinsterhood, witchery, etc. We didn't do that and so the choice for them as artists led us to think of a less linear strategy. Although we did provide a quite strict structure, we were always thinking about how much freedom we could give people within that structure and where that was possible and where we thought, for the sake of the whole film installation, that was not possible.

DH—This is the nub now. The nub of the whole collaborative enterprise is: at what point do we dictate to people and at what point do we allow freedom? It's a never-ending negotiation.

SD—It is something we think about all day. It's not something that we just invented in the beginning.

DH—And it comes down to every detail in every vision; you know, do we want the sky a very bright blue or a duller blue? Should we decide or should we let the dance artists decide? We worry at every level of the process about which decisions are ours and which decisions are theirs.

SD—I occasionally thought of the image of a microscope, of having microscopic eyes.

With a naked eye we see what we can but with the single frame we can go into the detail of how each vision has been constructed using collage. Every decision led to another decision. When we first introduced the structure and methods to the dance

artists, we thought initially that it was fairly simple, but the further we went into the work more decisions were necessary—infinite if we weren't careful—as all of these decisions began to shift and push at our initial plan. We needed to think how to maintain our core structure as well as include what the artists were introducing to us.

We had not realized how many small but important decisions were a necessary part of vision-making. So many original ideas for the visions were being challenged and stretched, and we were trying to expand with it and maintain the initial values. Where we thought there might be a handful of decisions we seemed to discover hundreds. We were trying to negotiate not only the thing we thought we were making but what it was becoming.

I would like to say how much I have enjoyed every relationship that I have had with each of the artists. Each one brought us different insights into how work can be imagined. I can also say that we have tested each other in terms of how much we've asked each other to do.

SE—So how have you gone about negotiating that line between making a decision or leaving it to the artist? Where are the lines between agency and community?

DH—The fascinating thing about this project is that it is not only about decision-making. With every artist you have to negotiate cultural difference in the sense that each individual has a whole culture of their own regarding their work. They have a whole set of attitudes about what they're going to think about and what they're not going to think about, what's important to them and what's not important to them. And then there are differences between Sue and me too! Obviously, we have our own different preoccupations.

SD—And then there's the animators Magali Charrier, Noriko Okaku, Tony Comley, and Rachel Davies, and the sound artists Chu Li Shewring, Raoul Brand and Zhe Wu.

DH—So every vision is a massive negotiation.

SD—There are moments in which communication was very clear and there are always moments where either an artist or myself have understood too late and realised that each of us has such different ways of hearing and receiving information. Someone has left the room or the phone is put down or an email read and I have thought, "Oh damn we are not quite connecting here."

We have needed to be good listeners. Each artist contributes with a different emphasis, a different attention, which we need to be on the look out for. Also negotiating even just how much time the work is taking. Each of these independent artists has very different timetables. We try to appreciate when, for instance, a term begins for those that teach, or when someone is preparing for a performance. We want to be sensitive to each artist but I also know we have been demanding.

DH—This is important because with everybody there's a massive negotiation about how much energy they're going to put into the job.

SE—*The Running Tongue*: it's not a film installation, it's a way of life.

DH—Well, that's what is so interesting because for Sue and me it is a way of life, but for all the dance artists it's a very small part of their professional life, which they have to fit in around much bigger commitments. So that causes a lot of stress and strain.

SE—When you speak about it so frankly, those constant negotiations sound extraordinary. It's also because there's something fascinating about the complexity of those relationships in a small group and the threads that extend out into this larger group of people. Yet one of the things I remember Efrosini Protopapa[5] and I talking about was our sense of community as a group of artists in *The Running Tongue* …

DH—Yes, it's non-existent.

SE—Yes, non-existent, except occasionally you'd pass someone as you were leaving this room.

SD—In a way this is a sadness to me. I knew you were going to talk in this interview about community and I thought the people involved in *The Running Tongue* are more like a spider's web because I think we can sense that there might have been conversations and connections but they are not collected or shared.

DH—It's a great example of how practical things always overwhelm idealistic things. For example, early in the process, Frank Bock[6] suggested all kinds of interesting ideas about how the whole group might get together and do sessions together and all that sort of thing.

SD—Which we were not against!

DH—Which all sounded wonderful. But when the actual practical logic of the work takes over it becomes incredibly hard to make those things happen.

SD—There do seem to have been *Running Tongue* conversations when some of the artists have met up outside the studios and exchanged concerns, and I think become happier as they hear how other people have found it difficult, absorbing, irritating! I hope I have heard that this process has brought a fresh look at what making can be, although David and I don't hear a lot, we are stuck in this room. We have gone through a mammoth learning process that we had not imagined ahead of time. It's a lot larger …

DH—Because, of course, it starts off in this golden glow of thinking, "Oh we're giving these artists this wonderful opportunity to make something that's really good fun. And its really interesting for them because it's so different from what they normally do." But

then the work goes grinding on and on, and there's still more to do, and you start to suspect that people are feeling quite burdened by it. But you don't know.

SD—I'm sure that's partly to do with individual circumstances and partly to do with expectation. I think the majority of people have gone, "Hell, but OK, I've done something I would not have except in these circumstances."

It's difficult because none of the individuals have seen any of the other visions really and they haven't seen the whole. So my fear is that they will go, "I had no idea that I was contributing to this" and with that we just have to be brave and go for it.

It is also going to be a surprise for us when we see it all together. David was very interested a while ago, and I think I agree with him, that the cohesion is the proverbs. But for me, having gone through the process up to the point that we have—and I haven't seen it put together since November when there were only ten visions—I think that the emotional cohesion for the audience will be drawn from Helka Kaski[7] and her experiences. She appears in over forty visions, sometimes central to the vision, sometimes passing through them. I have felt that she is one woman and many. She lives in the present and also lives in the repeated scenarios that women experience. She also challenges those scenarios. I think that my responses are plucked by her staying power.

SE—One of the experiences that I had [as an artist in *The Running Tongue*] was of being responsible for certain things and the recognition of being a very small part of a much bigger thing. I would send you—it didn't even involve physical contact or coming in—some video or images, and they would be *released* to someone else. The first time I turned up and Magali Charrier had put my first vision together and all this work had been done by someone else. It was a slightly wondrous thing. As an independent artist I'm used to doing pretty much everything by myself and the idea that something would happen whilst I wasn't present or wasn't making it happen opened my eyes to a whole other way of working.

DH—This relates to what I was saying before about this idealistic dream. We felt we were giving everybody a fantastic opportunity because what we were saying was: "You dream something up and we will make it exist."

SE—How does that feel now?

DH—Well, it is fascinating how people respond, because some people will immediately get it and think, "Oh, all I have to do is imagine something, and then there's all these other people who will turn it into an image." But some of the dance artists were immediately thinking, "Oh, my God, now I've got to learn how to use Photoshop." They are so used to doing everything themselves—and so used to being practically and physically involved with everything they do—that the idea of just dreaming something up doesn't come into their realm of thinking about making work.

SD—I think that as individual artists we learn by going through a process and one part of the process leads to the other. In this instance the dance artist might miss part of the process and have to catch up because somebody else—the visual artist using animation—was in charge of that part. So that missing link was either a joy or it was a disruption. I am hoping that in the main they didn't find this stressful and if they did then we'd go try again. But they would have to go through a period of adjustment with themselves; a negotiation to get to the next place that another artist had taken them to, another visual artist. So the process of doing wasn't always consecutive so I imagine that was challenging. Not in a negative way always but definitely a hiccough.

SE—Have you experienced a similar situation before? Have you thought, "This reminds me of this?"

DH—No and I think the important thing about what we are doing is that it is a really experimental work. I've never ever been in circumstances like this.

SD—I have tried to include artists as co-authors in past work, in fact I have always done it on a certain level, to recognize those artists who are bringing work to the table. I am very lucky to work within that structure. It is important to me to help create situations like that. But working within this project feels very different and I think that it is because often dance is made through a range of processes, feedbacks from physically doing something, there seems to be more air between deciding, making, doing and performing. We have to use the time it takes to breathe in and out, to raise or lower an arm.

In *The Running Tongue*—with each vision a 10-second frame—we needed many elements to exist at once, and David and I asked that movement should be considered a luxury, so spare but precise decisions needed to be made often at the same time. Where should a figure be exactly in what pose? How does that pose and no other communicate? What relationship are they to another? In what speed do they move? How does all of this work in a collage? The language felt very precise.

We do use precision in our dance practice, but I also enjoy the spaciousness of performed movement. Precision seems hyper-condensed in the films I have been involved in; every millimeter in a frame can be thought about, as well as every millisecond. No waste!

I think that what has made it exciting as a new medium for me—and this is where I learn a lot from David—is to notice what is going on at an exact level with color, texture, movement, timing, performance, idea, concept, recognition, audience. To do this within a tiny amount of time certainly feels like a different kind of archaeological practice that we put ourselves through in order to make each vision.

SE—The distinction that you are making between the air or the spaciousness of being in the studio, do you think it is about the particularities of the sense of time and the way

time is being organized in *The Running Tongue* or is it about working in front of a screen and the kind of *compression* that isn't necessarily particular to this type of project?

SD—I think there is something about compression but I counterpoint what I have just said with the idea that I think a dance artist who has practice behind them actually has the tools to do this work with film or photography. But there is something to do with the compression. I think dance-artists have exactitude in our durational timeline as performance makers or dancers, but in *The Running Tongue* we take the exactitude through a different eye of the needle in order to arrive at this still image. So one of the things which supported me—and I hoped I managed to get across to the other artists—is that if you look at painting from pre-history to now when a visual artist has chosen which part of an action to capture, what knowledge went into choosing that particular moment? Whether it's on a Greek vase, a renaissance painting or whether its Stanley Spencer or Tracey Emin. There is a long line of accrued knowledge about human expression in movement that has been stilled. So there's something about knowledge in the world that is knowing when is the right moment to capture a human gesture. Experiencing everybody else's work through doing this has made me want to look more deeply at this understanding. I feel like we have had the opportunity to look at that extraordinarily throughout this project.

DH—Film has got absolutely nothing to do with that. There's no openness at all in film. Everything is highly determined, completely specific and requires a decision. You can't leave anything unresolved. Somebody has got to make the decision: is the wine bottle going to be there, or is it not going to be there? Do we want to move it two inches to the right, or two inches to the left? Everything has to be decided and determined.

SD—To add to that, I think that so many things are decided in performance in terms of the structure that you wish to take your performance through at that moment. I think we do have an exactitude but it is tempered by the full experience of performance, and this includes everything that can happen in a performance: your relationship to the audience, the space, yourself, the material and whatever else. We both have exactitude but there is something very different, there is some other element that comes into play when you are working with the screen.

SE—It is a different set of constraints. It is curious that when you were talking about performance I was thinking about *gathering* and the way in which performers gather, and an audience gathers, and what you have done here is the gathering has been in series and sometimes it has been virtual where you have been contacting people and material has been uploaded. It has been absent this sense of a singular gathering; it has been multiple gatherings and it is fascinating as a way of making something.

SD—And where we have done this well enough—where we have provided the structure well enough—I feel there's a sort of equality being generated as we have tried to bring

everything in it's different ways up and through and into the making of this film installation.

We have also been in a position of adding, with respect, to each of the individual artists' work. This is because of practical things like, for example, filming it at the right resolution or finding something that is copyright free. So there are ways in which we wanted to honor the work but also things we had to alter.

DH—A big part of what we are trying to do is give dance artists control over the image. I have worked in dance now for a long long time and normally the way it works is that dance artists are used as choreographers and performers, but, in the end. it is someone in the film world who actually controls the image. We are really interested in investigating what happens if you hand over control to the dance artist and say, "This image belongs to you, what do you want to see in it?"

*The Running Tongue* will be installed at Carriageworks, Australia as part of a new major exhibition 24 Frames Per Second, 18 June – 2 August 2015, for full details visit www.siobhandavies.com

## Biographies

Director **David Hinton** has made many television documentaries, twice winning a British Academy Award, and his dance films have won many awards, including a Prix Italia, an Emmy, and the IMZ Dance Screen Award. His subjects have included artists of all kinds, including painter Francis Bacon, film-maker Bernardo Bertolucci, writer Alan Bennett, and choreographer Karole Armitage. He has also made films about Dostoyevsky, rock and roll, visual comedy, and the Cultural Revolution in China. He is best known in the dance world for Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men and Strange Fish, his film versions of stage shows by DV8 Physical Theatre. He has also made performance films with Adventures in Motion Pictures, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and the Royal Swedish Ballet, and he has collaborated with several choreographers to create original dance works for the screen.

**Siobhan Davies** is a renowned British choreographer. Founding Siobhan Davies Dance in 1988, she has consistently worked closely with collaborating dance artists to ensure that their own artistic enquiry is part of the creative process. By 2002 Davies moved away from the traditional theatre circuit and started making work for gallery spaces and alternative locations, including an aircraft hangar and art galleries.

In 2006, the RIBA award-winning Siobhan Davies Studios opened in London, UK, realising Davies' long-standing goal of establishing a permanent base for her

organisation and for independent dance artists. Davies works alongside independent dance artists to create new work and applies choreography across a wide range of creative disciplines including visual arts and film. Her recent works have been presented at some of the most prestigious art institutions in the UK and Europe, including, Lenbachhaus (Munich), Arnolfini (Bristol), Turner Contemporary (Margate), the ICA, The Roundhouse and Whitechapel Gallery (London) and Glasgow Museum of Modern Art.

**Simon Ellis** is an independent choreographer, dancer, film-maker and teacher. He trained at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, and is now a Reader at Roehampton Dance in London. He co-edits the *International Journal of Screendance* with Harmony Bench. www.skellis.net

## Notes

[1] *All This Can Happen*, dir. Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, London: Siobhan Davies Dance Company, 2013, film. http://www.siobhandavies.com/work/all-this-can-happen
[2] The room is small. There are two tables in it, a couch, and pieces of technology and books lying around.
[3] The working title for *The Running Tongue* was *The Sprint*.
[4] Mineke Schipper, *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet: Women in Proverbs from around the World*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
[5] Efrosini Protopapa is another London-based artist who has made visions for *The Running Tongue*.
[6] Frank Bock is also another artist involved in *The Running Tongue*. http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/frank-bock
[7] Helka Kaski plays the central character in *The Running Tongue* who runs into each vision. http://www.siobhandavies.com/people/detail/helka-kaski/

# Mobilizing Subjectivity: An Interview with Victoria Marks

*Harmony Bench, The Ohio State University*
*Victoria Marks, University of California, Los Angeles*

Harmony Bench—The theme for this particular issue of *The International Journal of Screendance* is community, and when we were discussing this idea as an editorial board, your work came immediately to mind because I think this has been a constant refrain in the works you've made both for screen and stage. I think our readers will be familiar with your work with Margaret Williams from the 1990s—*Outside In*, *Mothers and Daughters*, and *Men* are quite canonical—but they might be less familiar with your more recent film *Veterans* and your work with what you call Action Conversations. I'm hoping that you could reflect just briefly on those earlier works to think through the questions you were asking with those pieces, and how those questions have either shifted or remained the same in your more recent work.

Victoria Marks—My work took a major shift when I worked with Candoco and Margaret Williams on *Outside In*. I think there were a few conditions that led to that change, and those were that I was making a 13 minute film for broadcast, and that I was working with an "integrated dance company," a group of dancers who were physically disabled and non-disabled. The opportunity, I felt I had, was to change the way disability is thought about in 13 minutes. Now, I know that's absurd, but it's also a great call to what choreography **could** do. Going into the project, I didn't say "okay, here's what I want to make a piece about," or "here's a movement idea I want to explore," as much as to say "please teach me the issues for your community," and then to work with those ideas in as poetic and compelling a way as possible using choreography as a medium. I say that because I think one could walk in with a very didactic approach to representation—"this is how I want to be represented, so let's concretely do that." I think I really wanted to look at it as a choreographic and cinematic enterprise—and Margaret also. But because of that piece, I began to think that there was a way to enter into making things that wasn't so much about "Here's the idea that **I** have," as much as to say "Let me listen very carefully and think about the ways in which you **are** interacting and the ways in which you **wish** to be represented, set alongside the ways in which I see you." So, not necessarily consciously, that changed a great deal of my work, which I started calling choreo-portraiture.

*Mothers and Daughters* and *Men* followed quickly after *Outside In*. *Mothers and Daughters* actually was a portrait of the main dancers Anna and her mother Marta, and

everyone else was sort of a chorus. But I was also informed by my own relationship with my mother, so it was very clear to me that while I was making a portrait, it was never independent of my own experience. I was very aware of the ways I was seeing into that relationship. With *Men*, similarly, I think it was informed by observations about my dad getting old. But as soon as I started working with the men, I realized they weren't my dad. So it became about them, but it was always informed by a younger woman looking at older men. So that was my framework that began my thinking about portraiture. And by no means am I confused, thinking that these are actual portraits, because there may be a lot of friction between the subjects who are "portraitized" and the maker of the portrait.

HB—So do you feel that some of these same issues arise in *Veterans* or in your Action Conversations, or does a completely different set of questions arise? Is *Veterans* also a choreo-portrait?

VM—No, not really. The reason why Action Conversations came about—which, in its purest form in my mind, is when I bring two groups of people into a room that would not otherwise be in that room together, to see what happens, like a petri dish. In the sense of portraiture, I impact that Action Conversation because of the atmosphere I create, because of the questions I ask, because of the exercises we begin with. So I impose myself in that way, but in a much less mediated way than in *Men*, and *Outside In*, and *Mothers and Daughters*, where I felt like I was really imposing "compassionate aesthetics" or something on my subjects. But with Action Conversations, I was interested in the chemistry between the groups of people in the room, and I wanted that to formulate the material in a much more direct way.

HB—Could you explain a little bit more about what an Action Conversation is, and what kinds of questions you might ask in that process?

VM—The conception of the Action Conversation came about because I wanted to respond to the War in Iraq. In 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq, Bush was President, and I had two 3-year old boys. I wanted to know what it would be like to be a good citizen with the skills that I have, which are choreographic. So I launched a variety of different projects at that time in relationship to the invasion of Iraq. I didn't have anyone in my family in the military, and I wanted to connect with actual people who were in military service. Prior to that time, I had been working and thinking about the representation of disability, and I thought there was an interesting opportunity for me to expand my thinking about disability if I could meet people who had served in the military. I immediately became tuned into the issues around Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Where I had been thinking about disability as in physical disabilities, I began for the first time to think about the ways in which a dance might represent individuals with invisible

Veterans in *Action Conversations*. Performers from left to right: Aaron McCollum, Manuel Flores, Eva Aymami, Cidkyee Williams. Photo by Rose Eichenbaum, courtesy Victoria Marks. Highways Performance Space, Santa Monica, CA, 2008.

disabilities. And then I also realized that there are enormous ethical concerns: what right do I have to walk into a room and tell a bunch of guys who had just come back from serving in the military what to do, or ask them questions, or play any role in their lives? So before Action Conversations even began I was talking to veterans, I met a doctor at the West Los Angeles Veteran's Administration hospital who I spoke to about my interests, and gradually, I came up with the idea because of those conversations to create—I mean, I couldn't talk about what I was doing as **dance**—so I came up with the idea of an Action Conversation, and I would bring other people into the room who in some ways would be a surrogate for me in a conversation. So in this case it was a group of grad students and associated artists in LA. Honestly, it took **so** long for it to even begin because I didn't have the connections. And gradually, the connections got made through the internet, through Craigslist. "Some wacky professor at UCLA wants to do this project with veterans," you know, and, actually, that's how it happened. But it took a long time to circulate and go that far, because I was just reaching out everywhere I could.

I think it's important for me that the Action Conversation structure was a response to wanting to enter into a conversation that I didn't know how to have. And I thought that if I brought a second group of people into the room who would also be interested in the conversation, they would, in a sense, be surrogates for me, and I could compose the interactions between veterans and, in this case, artists/grad students.

And I noticed that as a "dance person," or as a "teacher person," if you go into a studio and set up an improvisation exercise for dancers, after some substantial explorations within that exercise, it is conventional to sit down and talk about the experience. And when you work with dancers doing that, very often, their attention goes to elements of their practice, whether it's "this was challenging for me," or, "I noticed that this was a possibility that I hadn't noticed before," but mostly dancers' responses would be about dancing. But I noticed that if I do that with a group of people who are **not** dancers, their responses, when asked "what was interesting, or what happened, or what was challenging," their responses would always be about their relationships; about themselves.

HB—Their relationships to each other in the studio, or their relationships outside of that space?

VM—Both. So for example, if I was doing an improvisational exercise, that explored falling and catching—let's say the instructions are that you have to run to somebody who falls as they say "FALLING!" the discussion afterwards with the veterans was, "Oh my gosh! I just felt that if I didn't get to Aaron on time, it would be a disaster, and this kind of makes my adrenaline pump, because I was a first responder, and I just felt that it was my job to catch people when they were falling." So it moved very quickly into metaphor, and catalyzed the kinds of conversations that I wouldn't have imagined. I

started using that afterwards to turn the discussion into a metaphorical physical exercise. So it would progress. So for example, if I was a first responder, then somebody could say "Help" when they fall, and if you don't make it in time, we could consider an option for what you can do if you don't catch somebody. So I would take them down whatever road they were collectively or individually thinking about. The challenge is for it not to turn into a kind of interactional psychology project, but to build relationships. I felt like in any conversation, the project that's lying there waiting is to build relationships across very different experiences. And sometimes those are about our commonalities, but most often it's about actually acknowledging how different the people are in the room, and the ways in which they can still come together.[1]

HB—You mentioned the importance of listening to the people who are in the room and the communities that they are coming from. Has this Action Conversation modality emerged as a method, or as a way of listening? Has it become a codified approach, or a collection of resources that allow you to listen in a certain way when you go into these communities?

VM—I don't think it's either, and I kind of think it's both. People started thinking, "Oh, Vic is really interested in doing this work with vets," and while I was very moved by that work, and we sustained a few years of projects together, I realized that **that** wasn't my calling, to work on veteran issues, as much as to continue to find ways to use dance to make different kinds of poetries. And I wanted to know more about Action Conversations, so I wanted to test it out on different communities. And that's where I think it's a methodology, but it's completely different with each group. The next time I worked with Action Conversations was in Vermont in Bellows Falls under the auspices of Vermont Performance Lab. Sara Coffey asked, "What would you like to do?" and I said, "I would like to see if I could be involved in a civic conversation—something that matters to a town. I think it was partly in response to not knowing how to be in Los Angeles, and thinking if I could just work small, and think about how we are all working together in our different roles, that would be something to learn from. So in Bellows Falls, there's a concern for young women who are getting pregnant in their teens and dropping out of school, and there's multi-generational poverty in these old mill towns, so in conversation with Sara Coffey, we created an Action Conversation between a group of these young women, teens, and older women from the same community. I felt like, while the veterans were a vulnerable population, they were also excited about the opportunity to perform live, and we were all in LA. But with these young women, I felt like they would be too vulnerable and it would be too complicated for them to perform live in their own community, or anywhere else, so we chose to document the project with video. I worked with the filmmaker Ann Kaneko, and in my mind, I thought that somehow we were going to land somewhere between a dance for the camera and a documentary. I didn't really know how, but I thought maybe we could create a hybrid, documentary and choreographic cinema, because I thought process was important—we really needed to know who these people were, and at the same time, I wanted to

use choreography to create images that supported what was going on. So it was different—it began with two groups of people that didn't know each other.[2]

Right now I've just started working with sorority women, which is really interesting. I can't call it an Action Conversation because I only have sorority women from a couple of different houses. But in the spring I'll bring fraternity men and sorority women together for an Action Conversation, where we will address sexual violence. In this case, an Action Conversation will be set up with an agenda beyond just the people in the room. I hope to use it in some way in between mediation, opening up conversation, and art-making together.

I realize that what is consistent in all this work is an interest in mobilizing subjectivity through dancing—especially for under-represented groups.

There have been various historic controversies between "high art" and "community art." Especially spending time in England, I noted that these were very different streams. I don't know the full history of community work versus "high art," but I want to resist the idea that my art is therapy, even though sometimes it's interpreted as "oh, that was so healing, why don't you do it with this population over here?" I want to resist that its purpose is **for** community-building alone, because I try to experiment with my medium, and hold to the poetics of who is in room and how it happens, or new syntaxes. I'm trying to resist the drop-down into "providing services."

HB—When you look at your work, what stands out for you?

VM—What comes across to me is the hard and generous work of the people who were involved. I guess it's like I'm in love with each of them. It's that sense of subjectivity, that sense of "Look what happened when we just came together."

## Biography

Victoria Marks, an Alpert Award winner (1997) and Guggenheim Fellow (2005), has been practicing knowing and unknowing, making dances for stage and film, over the past 27 years. Marks' creative work migrates between choreo-portraits for individuals who don't identify as dancers—and dances for and with dancers that fuel Marks' inquiries into movement. Her current "Action Conversations" project, designed to bring two groups into productive dialogue through movement, is working with Greek college students addressing "Desire on Campus." Marks is a Professor of Choreography in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA, where she has been teaching since 1995.

Marks has received numerous grants and fellowships, including from the Irvine Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Los Angeles City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, and the London Arts Board, among others. She has received a Fulbright Fellowship in Choreography, and numerous awards for her dance films co-created with Margaret Williams, including the Grand Prix in the Video Danse Festival (1996 and 1995), the Golden Antenae Award from Bulgaria, the IMZ Award for best screen choreography and the Best of Show in the Dance Film Association's Dance and the Camera Festival.

For more information on Victoria Marks's work, including her published essays, go to www.victoriamarks.com

## Notes

[1] See *Action Conversations: Veterans*. The password for the Vimeo video is "vets." https://vimeo.com/album/2916653/video/99743786
[2] See a clip from *Action Conversations: Bellows Falls* at http://vermontperformancelab.org/video4/190-victoria-marks-ann-kaneko

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*Mothers and Daughters*. Dir. Margaret Williams. Chor. Victoria Marks. Comp. John Middlewick. Prod. MJW Productions. 1996. Television.

*Outside In*. Dir. Margaret Williams. Chor. Victoria Marks. Perf. Candoco Dance Company. Comp. Steve Beresford. Prod. MJW Productions. 1995. Television.

*Veterans*. Dir. Margaret Williams. Chor. Victoria Marks. Prod. EMPAC. 2008. DVD.

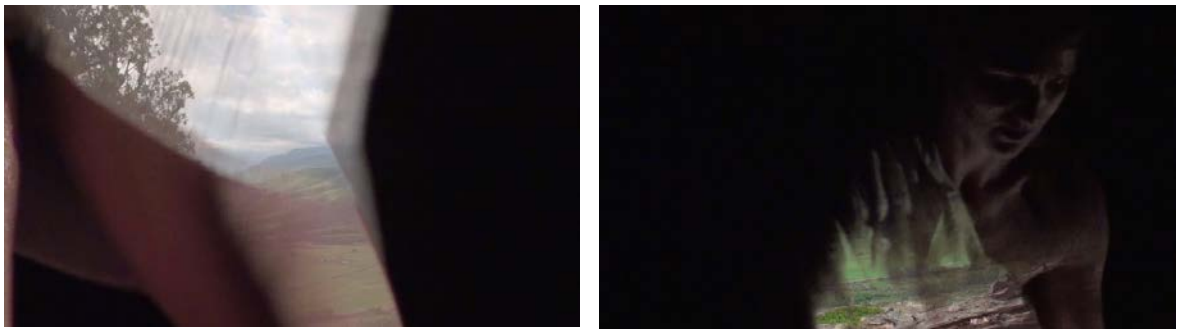
# Being a Video-Choreographer: Describing the Multifaceted Role of a Choreographer Creating Screendance

*Heike Salzer, Artistic Director of Salts*
*Ana Baer, Artistic Co-Director of the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema*

This is a conversation between Heike Salzer, Artistic Director of Salts and Ana Baer, Artistic Co-Director of the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema. They talk about the creative process of a videographer, the Sans Souci Festival, and the importance of screens, audiences and legacy.

Heike Salzer—On your website you call yourself a video-choreographer. Can you tell me what you mean by that and why you define yourself by this term?

Ana Baer—I am choreographing on the stage as well as in my video work. When I create video work, for the most part, I am creating videodance, (also known as screendance), I am not documenting. I am making dance for the camera. That's why I thought it would be appropriate to call myself a video-choreographer.



Images from *Disappear here*, courtesy of the artist

HS—Does it feel like choreography on the screen?

AB—Yes, very much so. Sometimes I choreograph for the stage and that is where the work lives. Other times I choreograph a piece knowing that I will re-organize and manipulate the material during the editing process. When editing one manipulates the same elements used during the choreographic process of a live piece, elements such as

time, space, dynamics, speed and spatial composition, in addition, one incorporates the movement of the camera, as well as the composition of the frames. Even though the body in movement is the seed and inspiration of screendance, often the movement phrases get tossed around, the end becomes the beginning, the body gets fragmented and layers of dancers end up superimposed into different backgrounds, creating a new work which in some cases is far apart from the movement material that it was based on. My decisions are based on the rhythm and composition of the new hybrid piece, as well as on the design, contrast and the proximity to the camera. That is what I experienced when creating the screen dance *disappear here* (2010). Initially I filmed two dancers in the black box, with the assistance of my colleague Caren McCaleb subsequently, we filmed a group of dancers at the mountains of Colorado. In the finished product, one can see segments of movement phrases superimposed into a slow procession of dancers on the top of the mountains, creating a visual metaphor.

Ana Baer filming Rocio Luna and dancers from La Universidad Michoacana at the CEDRAM in Michoacan, Mexico, 2013. Image courtesy of CEDRAM

HS—Can you tell me more about your creative process?

AB—In the beginning when I moved to the States, it was very important for me to talk about my nationality, my upbringing and my culture. I created political work in which the theme and the movement invention based on such theme were pivotal elements of the creative process. Common themes of my earlier work include poverty, injustice,

impunity and similar socio-economical issues. I created pieces about murders in border towns, tortured women and kids that lived in the streets among other topics. I was intrigued by the similarities and differences between Mexico and USA, but at some point the line started to blur, and political issues were not as essential to my creative work.

I started my Masters Degree at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and was invited to take experimental film classes with Phil Salomon, to date, one of the strongest influences in my work. I started exploring the intersection between choreography and video. I don't have a specific technique for creating. Every piece presents a different challenge, different vocabulary, and different approach. The common denominator is my investment in the exploration of dance and projecting images. In order to better explore the intersection between these two elements I study my dancers strengths and affinities, since this will be the main element of my work and will inform the creative methods in the development of the material. As important to the process is the familiarity with my film equipment and editing software, and when presenting live dance with projected images, the space design of the venue becomes vital to the work as well.

HS—Would you call it a collaborative process with the dancers?

AB—Yes, very much so. There needs to be exchange; their bodies have so much history, the way they move reflects their training, their preferences, their affinities, their similarities with other dancers as well as what makes them unique; my job as the choreographer is to provide them with a space for exploration and to guide them so we can generate material for each unique work.

HS—Can you give an example of how you allow space for exploration, while at the same time you ensure that the dancers keep on track with your idea?

AB—During my latest choreographic work in 2014 with college students at Texas State University called *do not flinch,* I created a few movement phrases which I taught to them. Once they have learned the phrases, I asked them to manipulate them based on their own preferences, allowing them to choose the way in which they transform them. Lastly, I asked them to transform the material into duets, and trios. By the time they showed me the trios, there was only a trace of my movement and many variations ready to be tweaked again by explorations of dynamics, intention or form and then set in space.

Ana Baer filming Kim Olson at the Great Dunes, Colorado, USA. A collaborative project with Syzygy Butoh and Sweet/Edge, 2014. Image courtesy of Ana Baer.

HS—Do you work out of a location or narratives?

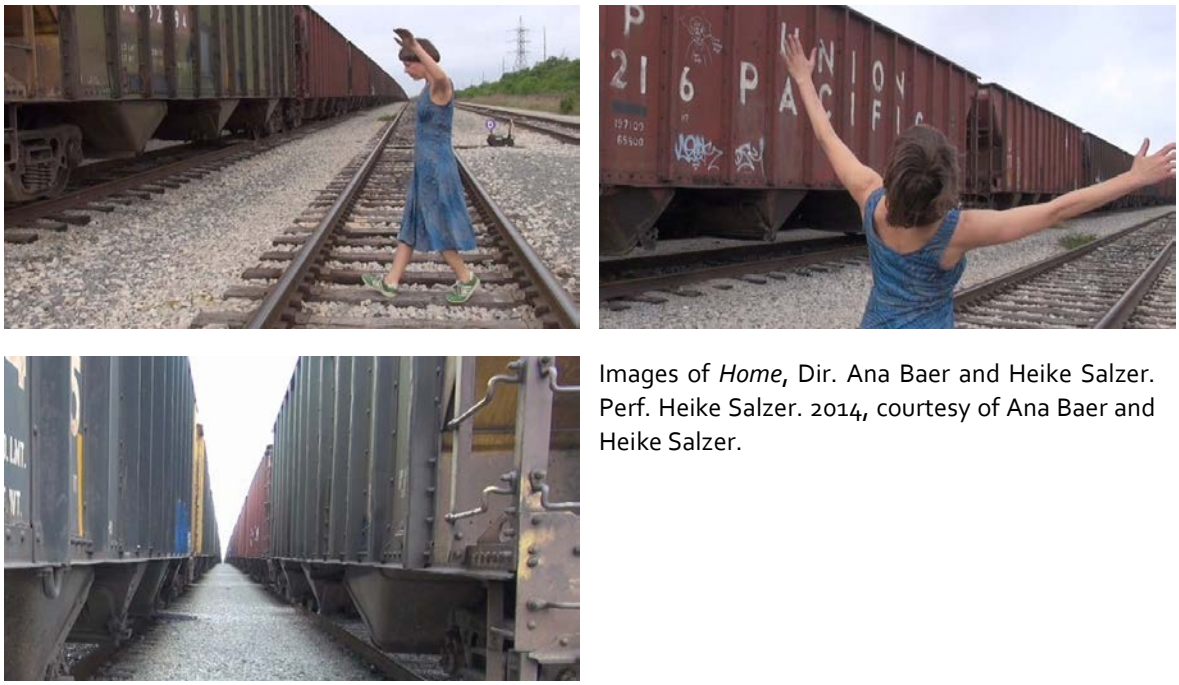
AB—I would say both, out of a location, and also out of a combination of both, narrative and location. Some of my work is mainly an exploration of the location, a site specific work that could have not been created elsewhere. Such is the case of my piece *Dunes* (2014), an exploration of the female moving body in an extreme environment. This category of screendance is common practice among the field. Such is the case of the breathtaking piece *The Time it Takes* (2013) by Katrina McPherson and Simon Fildes, in which they explore an archaeological find in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland. In this same category of site specific screendance we find the work *North Horizon* (2010) by Thomas Freundlich and Valtteri Raekallio, exploring the Arctic landscape of Kotka, Finland, as well as the piece *1/6* (2009) by Orsola Valenti, an exploration of snow and fir trees in Switzerland, or your work *Strönd/Beach* (2010) where the dancers were filmed on two beaches in Iceland and Denmark and then edited together on one screen.

HS—Yes, in *Strönd* one could say that the different cuts from one location to the other, the shots themselves become sites which interact with each other. The locations were not only the impulse of our movement, but also the way we filmed and edited the piece.

Images of *Strönd/Beach*, Dir. Heike Salzer and Ingi Jensson. Perf. Saga Sigurðardóttir and Søren Linding Urup. 2010. courtesy of Heike Salzer.

AB—Another category of screendance involves a narrative or situational piece; such is the case of *Home* (2014) our first collaboration. In this piece, first we scouted the train tracks and subsequently, we explored the location. We had been shooting for some hours when a train passed really close. In this case, the narrative developed out of the situation. If the train would have not passed, the piece would be completely different. Other examples of powerful narrative or situational screendances are: Emile Shemilt's *A Touch of Red* (2013), where a relationship is revealed through performative and cinematic patterns, rhythms and expressions; and Tove Skeidsvoll & Petrus Sjövik's *Outside in* (2011), where the dancer Cecilia dances inside a forest inside a studio introspectively filmed by an intrusive crew.

HS—Filming on sites offers the opportunity to improvise as a team. Different to the stage, where the environment is controlled, shooting dance on sites has an exciting side effect, it is uncontrollable; the weather changes, animals or objects such as the train in *Home* appear. These unexpected moments offer the chance for dialogue between the environment, the dancers, and the filmmaker. Creating material informed by an occurring situation allows reacting in the moment and making creative decisions based on an immediate embodied experience. The train track shoot for *Home* would have been very different if the train would have not appeared. For me, as the performer this visceral experience of the location, allowed me to react 'site' and 'situation specific.' Improvising in the moment and following my instant associations stimulated by the energy and force of this fast, heavy steel object. I could feel the wind and the vibrations of the ground, affecting my body when it rushed by. There was no time to communicate with each other about how you would capture this with the camera, but I was sure that you would react and would follow; we were both improvising in reaction to the third 'moving element,' the train!



Images of *Home*, Dir. Ana Baer and Heike Salzer. Perf. Heike Salzer. 2014, courtesy of Ana Baer and Heike Salzer.

HS—How do you approach post-production? Are there any specific aspects, which are important to you in the editing process? You already mentioned that you are becoming a choreographer again.

AB—Firstly I need to know what my footage is. I study it, select it analyze it and name it. Sometimes the footage that I thought was great is not so good, and in the same way, some footage surprises me for its definition and design. Often I film with an idea of what I would like to explore in the editing process, but regardless of how much insight I have regarding the editing process, I try to over shoot, I shoot much more than what I think I will need. Once on the editing process, I start exploring by moving sequences out of order, or repeating some elements of the phrase, then I manipulate the speed, the size, or the colors, as needed. I see what flows and what doesn't. After I have a first draft, I get some music that I enjoy and that provides me rhythm and some sort of structure. However I almost never use this music, due to music right issues and because I don't want the music to correlate as directly to my edit, so I usually commission a composer to create and original score that can enhance the movement without mimicking.

HS—This process that you describe is, as if we choreograph movement images similar to bodies in space. Firstly when choreographing the movement with the dancers, then when we capture and frame the movement in the filming and finally when we are editing. Each process allows the videographer to think with a choreographic mind, looking at anything that is moving as a 'body' that is choreographed. This includes not only the bodies of the dancers, but also the space that is captured around the dance in

the two dimensional frame, for example the environment, architecture, or objects, and during the editing the ways in which superimposing, layering or split screen can create a composition of the different elements on the screen. In each process we are thinking of space, time and effort, composing different layers of moving images.

AB—I agree, and should add that chance and/or intuition play a great part on the whole process.

HS—Do you spend more time editing than filming?

AB—Yes, infinitely more. I usually try few editing ideas before selecting the appropriate one for each piece. Some ideas are very simple like fragmenting a phrase and moving it out of order, or manipulating the speed; however, some other ideas are more complex and time consuming like chroma-keying part of the background or applying an effect with different intensities throughout a clip. There is also the possibility of re-visiting a finished piece, and re-editing, so there is no limit to how much time you can spend on certain pieces.

HS—You also create work where you combine live performance and screen-based work. What kind of relationship do you think those two elements have?

AB—I am very invested in it and have been exploring ways to integrate both elements. I've experimented with proximity in space, bringing two elements very close. For example when I project the image on the dancers.

HS—Can you elaborate what kind of integration this has created?

AB—In this particular example I am trying to integrate both elements in space. When there is a projection on one side of the stage and a live dance on the other side, most of the audience will prefer the projection. When superimposing the image into the dancers, you capture the audiences' full attention. Another possibility is sharing the elements on the video projection and on stage (making the work self referential). For example, we could project the same dancers as a linking element and experience them both, live and on the screen, this could happen simultaneously or at different times in the piece.

HS—A great example of such a strong visual link between live and virtual dancers and the choreographic composition is the piece *Proximity* (2013) by Choreographer Garry Stewart and Video Artist and Engineer Thomas Pachoud developed for the Australian Dance Theatre. Here the live and virtual dancers are in a dialogue with their counterparts via real-time video manipulation. It is not only the play with perspectives which creates the strong connection between the projections and the dancers on stage but also the awareness that real-time manipulation is taking place, such as delayed and manipulated projections of the live dancers.

While this is an example that uses an obvious link between the live and projected image, sometimes, it is a degree of how much of that is needed in order to integrate the experience of the live dance and the projecting image for your audience. There must be a connection, however the link could also be thematic or even a contrasting connection, a juxtaposition of movement and image.

Image of *OJO*, Chor. and Perf. Kim Olson. Vid. Dir. and Ed. Ana Baer. 2014 courtesy of Ana Baer.

AB—For example my latest multi-disciplinary collaboration *OJO* (2014) where the dancers were moving on a vast stage without a sitting area or a "front," the projected images of different stripes of water were projected on the dancers and on flying pieces of fabric, bringing all the attention to this particular part of the stage. The projected water contrasting the rest of the elements created a visual counterpart to the movement.

If one doesn't incorporate and create a relationship between the projecting image and the live performance, the audience attention drifts towards the video, and this has been one of my creative enquiries of study.

HS—What is it that fascinates you with screen-based work?

AB—Mainly, two aspects, the massive difference of accessibility between live performance and screen dance, and the aspect of ephemerality. When working for a stage performance, the work vanishes after you perform it, not so when you create a dance for the camera.

HS—Is impact and reaching the audience something that you are interested in? Is that kind of legacy important for your work?

AB—Yes! When I learned that this was a genre that I could access, I was excited about the potential reach and accessibility of this medium. I am interested in experiencing other cultures and I travel as much as I can, that said, I can't always bring dancers with me to perform my work. Screen-based work travels light. I find it intriguing that people in remote places are accessing my work and the work of the Sans Souci Artists, and in a similar way, I am fascinated by work of artists from other parts of the globe.

HS—Do you think the medium itself is more accessible because it is on the screen, something we are maybe more familiar to? Does perhaps the length of shorter videodance pieces play a role?

AB—We are a YouTube/Vimeo generation and the youth is familiar with the genre. Currently, screendance is a fertile field, it is interesting for them, because it is technology, and they know and use technology, they know videos and they can access them all the time. Most commercial dancevideos are created to illustrate pop songs; they are short (3-4 min). At the Sans Souci Festival we favor videos that are shorter than 15min, mainly because we want to screen a representational sample of each year's production, but we've shown many that are longer.

HS—Considering that there is constant access to media and videos via digital devices, if any, what effect does this have on your work? Does it influence the outcome of your work?

AB—Yes and no. I feel that each piece dictates its own length. But in general my pieces are short, and maybe this is endemic of our times.

HS—This reminds me of Bob Lockyer's observation when comparing stage performance with dance on screen. He suggested that "… stage time and screen time are different".[1] Time on the screen appears to pass much faster than in a live performance. It also seems that the size of the screen influences the perception of time, as smaller the screen as quicker time seems to pass.

You have been co-directing the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema based in Boulder, Colorado for 11 years. What are the criteria that you select the video for screening?

AB—As our mission states it, we support new work that integrates dance with cinematic elements, both experimental and traditional. We also encourage an expansive definition of dance and encourage an appreciation for highly experimental and interdisciplinary forms, including mixed-media works that incorporate live performance.

HS—Do you consider the audience during the curation process?

AB—Yes, I curate with my audience and venue in mind. Some of the aspects that I consider are our audience's age, their exposure to the medium, as well as the duration

of the event and the size of the projecting surface. For example when I screen the festival to college students, I don't select many long and slow developing videos, instead I tend to show fast-paced, fun and/or uplifting videos. I include videos in which they can identify themselves with the dancers on screen either because of their similar age, or because they share the same dance practice. However, I usually include videos to challenge their pre-conceptions and inform how expansive the genre can be. In Mexico for example, due to the political environment that they are living in at the moment, I try to bring videos that have an emotional, cultural or social content.

Screening of Sans Souci Festival of Dance video selection at the Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 2014. Image courtesy of Universidad de San Carlos

HS—It is interesting that you consider the political environment of a particular community. Can you elaborate how the expectations of the audience in for example Mexico influences the way you curate the program?

AB—I have produced the Festival in the State University of Morelia, Mexico on three occasions. The audience is comprised of their wonderful dance department, students that are dealing directly or second handedly with violence, poverty and constant impunity by their local authorities. It has been my experience that they are expecting work that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but work that has an emotional or cultural investment. Last year I screened *Off Ground* (2013), directed by Boudewijn Koole, among other pieces, they were deeply touched by this masterful screendance, they could relate to the pain, the loss, the emotional development of the piece. When I screen this same piece to my college students at Texas State University, they are moved by it as well, but they rather watch work that includes hip-hop dancers and lighter themes. As a curator, my role is to screen the kind of work that the audience

expects, as well as pieces that I think might challenge them, in order to expand their appreciation of the form.

HS—To what extent do you feel you can develop and support and foster a screendance community?

AB—I feel like this is my role and my biggest contribution to Sans Souci Festival. Introducing this hybrid and relatively new medium to students as a new practice, continuing to produce the festival in venues that have a consistent interest for the form as well as in new and remote venues are in the forefront of my work.

HS—The Sans Souci Festival receives entries from all over the world. Do you notice any trends over the years?

AB—In general, I would say that the production value is increasing, more artists are involved in the production of a screendance. The inclusion of dance forms, (asides from the prevalent modern/contemporary form), like hip-hop and neoclassical dance in the last past years could be read as a trend. Maybe the incorporation of animation could be a trend as well.

HS—In terms of recognition, how do you experience where videodance is placed?

AB—I think that the field has been consistently gaining recognition. The proliferation of screen dance festivals as well as scholarly journals dedicated to this hybrid form, such as the International Journal of Screendance, have seeded a period of growth. The youth is fluent in technology and hungry for some substance. At the same time, the production value has been increasing and with it, our audience base. For example, The Sans Souci Festival has been screening at the interdisciplinary venue ATLAS Institute in Boulder, even though most of our audience is from a dance background, year by year, we are making new connections with Film, New Media, English and Music majors, (to name a few), as well as with the general audience. During the last few years our audience has increased significantly, so we decided to add a few more venues to screen the work in the City of Boulder. In 2014, we screened in 3 additional venues plus 2 more out of state venues. The interest in the Festival has been increasing since our inception in 2004. The international screenings have also been increasing. We are constantly looking for co-producers and partners in order to expand our reach and show the work of our Artists. Currently we are working on co-producing the Festival in the UK and Iceland.

HS—You also have exhibited programmes in more informal public settings such as the library. Our project *Bekkur/Baenk 1,2,3…* (2010) was screened in cafes in Reykjavik and Copenhagen. To me these alternative public spaces, offer the opportunity to screen work over a longer period of time and visitors enter these spaces for other reasons, therefore stumbling upon screendance out of coincidence. I think this unexpected

encounter might raise the awareness of the genre, creating interest, and an audience who then might consider coming to a festival or viewing work online.

HS—The artists who are submitting to your festival, do you know, what their background is?

AB—They are truly varied; from the choreographer creating their first choreography for the camera, to the experienced dance maker collaborating with cinematographers and composers; from the inexperienced student that recently took a final cut pro course on-line to the production company working with established dance companies, that is the beauty!

HS—Does the screen size influence the programme you curate?

AB—The ATLAS Institute where we annually produce the Sans Souci Festival has fantastic projection quality and we usually screen two one and a half hour programs, (one on Friday, and the next on Saturday night). We have experimented with longer programs resulting in an overwhelmed audience, and we can't screen a shorter event due to the amount of fabulous work that we want to show. I think the smaller the screen size, the shorter the event. If you are watching on a small screen you are expecting a YouTube video, one short video after another. If you have a big cinematic screen the viewing expectation is longer, similar to a movie in a cinema.

HS—What is the next thing that you think you would love to do? In terms of your own work or the festival.

AB—For the festival, I'm glad that it is growing and that I can contribute with International screenings. Traveling with it is important for me. This year I'm going to Guatemala and that's a new venue for the Festival, the first time that most of our artists' work has been screened there. I've never been in Guatemala so I'm excited to experience the culture. I want to see what experience and reactions the audience will have with the different programs. I enjoy bringing the Festival to remote places where this might be their first exposure to the medium, creating community and encouraging cultural exchanges. I also enjoy intimate venues where there's room for Q & A, adding an educational element to the screenings. Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema has been able to create space in Boulder, to foster community among the college students and the general audience, breaking a barrier that sometimes is hard to penetrate. My goal is to foster other long-term relationships and to enhance other communities by offering annual screening, workshops and/or lecture demonstrations elsewhere. In doing so, we are advancing the field, screening the work of a multitude of international artists in different parts of the globe, as well as creating community, fostering international collaboration, and educating.

In terms of my own work, at the moment I am experimenting with a few things in choreography, such as the integration of partnering work with multiple facings, and the

juxtaposition of slow stationary movement against a fast traveling phrase, as well as the introduction of pedestrian movement gestures combined with technically challenging phrases. I also keep investigating the relationship between projected image and live performance. Recently, I have been projecting images in unusual surfaces, such as the dancers themselves, or hanging elements through out the stage in an attempt to break with the bi-dimensionality of a flat screen. Going to a different country to screen Sans Souci and create work with other artists is a treat for me!

## Biographies

Ana Baer is a Mexican video-choreographer living in the USA. Her work encompasses a variety of dance for camera work, as well as interdisciplinary performances and choreography. She has been Artistic co-Director of Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema since 2004 and is a founding member of Avant Media, Bitcho Maria Productions and Merge Dance Company. In 2013 she co-founded the transdisciplinary collective Xinergistas. In 2014 Heike Salzer and Ana Baer formed the Transatlantic Multidisciplinary Collective WE Create Productions, in order to explore creative collaboration within the confines of arts and technology. Ana is currently teaching as Associate Professor at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas. www.anabaer.com; Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema.

Heike Salzer is a German dance artist currently based in the UK, where she is Program Leader of the dance degrees at Teesside University, Middlesbrough. Under the name of *Salts* she collaborates with numerous international artists; many projects have been with the Icelandic visual artist Ingi Jensson. Her work has taken various forms, from live performance and dance videos to installation work, and has been invited for performance, screenings and exhibitions at international venues such as the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema (USA) where she and Ana met. Heike is co-artistic director of Tees Dance Film Fest (UK). www.salts.nl

## Notes

[1] Lockyer, Bob, "A new place for dancing," In *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video*, edited by Judy Mitoma, Chapter 28, 156-162. New York: Routledge, 2003.

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*Home. Edit 2.* Dir. Ana Baer and Heike Salzer. Ed. Chor.and Perf. Heike Salzer. Comp. Jeff Mohler. Prod. We Create. 2014. *Vimeo*

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*Outside in*. Dir. Tove Skeidsvoll. & Petrus Sjövik. Chor. and perf. Tove Skeidsvoll. 2011.

*Proximity*. Dir. Chor. Garry Stewart. Vid. and Eng. Pachoud Thomas. 2013.

*Strönd/Beach-Bekkur/Bænk 1,2,3,…* Dir. Heike Salzer and Ingi Jensson. Chor. and ed. Heike Salzer. Perf. Saga Sigurðardóttir and Søren Linding Urup. Comp. Michael Greig. Prod. Salts. 2010. *Vimeo*.

*The Time it Takes*. Dir. Chor. and Ed. Katrina McPherson, Simon Fildes. 2013.

# REVIEWS

# *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli. 2014. New York: Oxford UP. 496 pp, 107 b&w screen stills. $150 hardback.

*Hetty Blades, Coventry University*

Dance on screen is by no means a new phenomenon, however the analytic consideration of popular dance on screen is a relatively new addition to dance studies.[1] *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen,* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli, takes Sherril Dodds' seminal work *Dance on Screen* from 2001 as a point of departure, in order to "establish a body of contemporary readings about dance in a popular screen context."[2]

In the Introduction Blanco Borelli explains that the book is motivated by an increased interest among students in researching popular dance on screen. Similarly, teachers of dance studies increasingly draw on examples from popular culture to demonstrate theoretical concepts, a method wonderfully articulated by Blanco Borelli's discussion of her use of the music video for George Michael's *Flawless (Go To The City)* to provoke conversation about the body, identity and social inscription.[3] Those of us who have adopted similar teaching methodologies know first-hand how the recognition of familiar examples can help students to comprehend otherwise abstract theories. However, despite an active interest from students and teachers, the area is relatively under explored and Blanco Borelli points out that academic consideration of popular examples can be hard to find, suggesting that, "Because dance on the popular screen can be so heavily entangled in the zeitgeist, finding scholarly material on a recent music video, dance film or *YouTube* trend poses a challenge."[4] The 27 chapters cover an array of familiar examples from film, television, and online contexts, utilizing various perspectives to describe, analyze and theorize the body. Through detailed description and interrogation, the various authorial voices work together to present an implicit, but nevertheless tangible framework for analyzing and reading dance in this form.

The book starts by considering dance on screen through a historical framework. Some chapters in Section One discuss the role of the screen in the evolution of specific dance forms or style, whilst others consider specific case studies from the big and small screen, focusing on examples that occupy a significant place within the history of dance on film, or include a dance that is part of a specific dance history. Cinema is further addressed in Section Two, which focuses on recent commercial films that feature dance

as a central subject, or include movement as central to their meaning. These discussions demonstrate how dance serves a crucial function in the construction of narrative and how analysis enables deeper understanding about issues of race, gender, sexuality and class. These themes are further developed in Section Three, which addresses the role of the dancing body in music videos and the construction of "televisual bodies"[5] through television talent shows and music videos. The chapters in this section consider how the camera, lighting, costumes, music and movement combine to create visual affects and reveal socio-political narratives. Section Four further examines the politics of the dancing body, this time specifically in relation to the construction of national identities. The discussions demonstrate how the movement of the body in both dance and non-dance contexts provokes discourses regarding race, place and identity. The final section examines the role of the internet in our engagement with dance. The authors address the ways that we interact with cyber worlds through sharing, observing and copying dance. They consider how music videos and video games situate the spectator in the midst of a complex reconfiguration of time, identity and embodiment.

The key themes of the text are summarized in a helpful conclusion by Sherril Dodds. She points out that readings are likely to draw on a range of approaches due to the breadth of dance styles presented on screen. The central role of the camera is reiterated, as Dodds proposes various ways to analyze the behavior of the body through the camera, including through the adoption of structural and intertextual analysis, drawing links to established dance analysis methodologies.

Particular highlights include Mary Fogarty's examination of the relationship between Gene Kelly's famous dance from *Singin' in the Rain* and the "remix"[6] for a Volkswagen commercial in 2005. Fogarty analyzes the confluence of movement, camera work, and props in relation to contextual information, images, theoretical perspectives and critical reviews, demonstrating to readers how rigorous academic theorizing can arise from a wide range of sources and reference points. Rosemary Candelario provides an important addition to the discussion, asking, what can dance studies methods reveal about 'non-dance' events? Candelario's analysis focuses on the corporeal analysis of documentary film *Dave Chappelle's Block Party*. Her analysis of the identities, movements, and transportation of bodies reveals the ways in which the film constructs and re-presents notions of community, race, and identity. Thomas DeFrantz's genealogy of hip-hop in Hollywood film, Chih-Chieh Liu's discussion of the intercultural construction of sexiness in Mandarin pop, and the examination of dance on TV talent shows from both Laura Robinson and Alexis A. Weisbrod also provide particularly insightful observations regarding the circulation, construction, and commodification of the dancing body.

The organization of the chapters into thematic sections is in some ways arbitrary, as many examples could exist in two or more of the categories. However, it provides a

necessary tool for navigating the extensive text, and the overlap between themes serves to demonstrate the "multi-layered meaning"[7] of each of the case studies. The consideration of the dancing body in popular screen contexts enables the reader to comprehend the significance of the form on everyday experiences. Removed from the theater, and all of the connotations associated with 'high' art forms, dance is foregrounded as an activity through which social, political, and personal commentaries are constructed and revealed. Equally, the reader is led to think through the various value systems at play as the dancing body is presented as a product and agent of both cultural and economic capital.

Blanco Borelli's introduction encourages readers to analyze the methodologies of the authors. She suggests paying attention to the ways that they identify and examine rhetorical strategies and utilize theoretical ideas.[8] She encourages the use of key questions, such as "what is the body doing?" and "how is the body doing it?"[9] thus imbuing in future scholars the necessity to put the form at the center of dance writing. The straightforward way that these ideas are articulated allow the reader to grasp how it is that the complex discussions that follow are constructed and may be stylistically and methodologically mimicked.

The result of this is that commonalities in each author's approach become evident, allowing the reader to form a clear picture of how one might approach the analysis of dance in this context. For example, the role of rich description is evident throughout. The detailed way that the authors set the scene for the reader and describe specific movements will be particularly useful for students approaching formal writing about dance for the first time. Furthermore, the consideration of the camera, lighting, characterization, costume, narrative, and rhetorical devices are encouraged. The combination of dance studies methodologies with film and media analysis provides an important addition to the field. As students, scholars, and audiences increasingly engage with filmed dance, reliance on methods that focus solely on movement, or require the theorist to pretend they share space with the dancing bodies, do not allow for full or adequate engagement with the object of its study—which, after all, comprises the screen as an essential component. Acknowledging the screen however, makes the project of analysis more complex as the scholar must contend with layers of seeing. This is a theme that runs throughout the anthology, beautifully demonstrated in Mary Simonson's description of the viewer watching characters secretly watching others, generating a complex form of voyeurism.

The concept of layering and the role of the spectator's body play recurring roles throughout the book. Many chapters address the circulation and borrowing of dances, demonstrating temporal layering, as technology enables the viewer to reproduce and share their own versions of dances, marking a shift from receiver to performer and enabling constant circulation and reinvention. Furthermore, more subtle modes of bodily engagement are also discussed. The first chapter from Clare Parfitt-Brown

borrows the notion of "prosthetic memory"[10] to discuss the physical engagement of the spectator's body and the way this facilitates the ability to remember an experience they did not have through mediated images. Stephanie L. Batiste's 'affect-ive' reading of krump highlights the physical, and emotional impact of watching dance through the screen. These are important additions to the overall project of the book, as they serve to remind the reader that there are at least two bodies involved in the exchange that occurs when we observe dance. This framework places the book alongside discourses in cultural studies, which have shown an increased interest in the affective and kinaesthetic nature of perception. These discussions further demonstrate how in the case of dance such experiences are not limited to conventionally 'live' performance. The affective nature of movements serves an integral role in the way we experience dance, and the consideration of this has an important place in the development of new analytic frameworks.

Discussions of context also play a crucial role throughout the text. This seems to be of specific importance due to the circulation and re-contextualization of dance. For example, particularly interesting chapters from Harmony Bench and Philippa Thomas demonstrate how music videos have the potential to transcend geographical, political, and temporal constraints and accrue new significances. This means that the consideration of the relationship between the video and the context of their production, such as Takiyah Nur Amin's insightful comparison between Beyoncé and the media's treatment of Michelle Obama, highlights to future readers the initial socio-political relevance, providing a rigorous point of departure for future analyses.

It is hard to find serious ways to critique this work. It is clear, useful, interesting, and rich. One criticism might lie in the relatively narrow geographical spread of the case studies, which arise primarily from western culture. Although there are chapters that address examples from India and China, the collection is relatively western-centric and a wider range of cultural perspectives would have further added to the book. Similarly, I wonder if the consideration of more marginal types of screens might have contributed to the discussion. Blanco Borelli and Derek A. Burrill's chapter on gaming makes moves towards this and made me think about the role of the dancing body in online art, apps, motion-capture and immersive screen contexts. Having said that, that the use of marginal examples for discussing popular forms might be paradoxical and this point is not really a criticism as much as an acknowledgement of how this book may pave the way for exploration of these areas. Overall, this is a welcome addition to the field. It serves to demonstrate the serious academic worth of popular dance, pose multiple avenues for further enquiry, and put forth an interdisciplinary and detailed framework for analyzing dance on screen, providing a very useful tool for teaching and scholarship.

## Biography

Hetty Blades is a final year PhD student at Coventry University. Her research considers the ontology of dance works, and their reconfiguration through technology. She has worked as a visiting lecturer at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, Kingston University, Roehampton University and the University of East London. Hetty has published work in multiple contexts and was the 2014 recipient of the Ede and Ravenscroft Award for Academic Excellence.

## Notes

[1] Dodds in Blanco Borelli, 446.
[2] Blanco Borelli, 1.
[3] Ibid. 3-4.
[4] Ibid. 2.
[5] Ibid. 10.
[6] Fogarty in Blanco Borelli, 84.
[7] Blanco Borelli, 1.
[8] Ibid. 15.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Parfitt-Brown in Blanco Borelli, 23.

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*Singin' in the Rain*. Dir. Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly. Perf. Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds. MGM. 1952.

# *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by Mary Simonson. 2013. New York: Oxford UP. 304 pp, 8 music examples, 21 b&w images. $99.00 hardcover, $29.95 paperback.

*Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros, Coventry University*

In this book, Mary Simonson examines the American entertainment in the early 1900's, a time of great transformation in which boundaries were challenged and redefined. Her main tool in this examination is "intermediality," a notion which is traditionally found in discussions relevant to media. Simonson argues that intermediality allows one to cast a new look into the past which brings to light things that might have been overlooked. She assists the reader in exploring the interconnectedness between various disciplines, and ultimately enriches the current discourse on performance and musicological values and methodologies. The author highlights that intermediality has often been used to describe new media and postmodernism and in this book she sets out to prove how intermediality lends itself to examining early twentieth-century performances. Simonson's viewpoint offers the reader a bird's eye view on the performers' work in America at the turn of the twentieth century.

Simonson argues that intermediality is a way to understand the relationship between two mediums, whether those are dance and cinema, music and writing, or the performing arts and society. She claims that dance artists reflected values and trends of the time and re-examines the period by investigating the female artists working on various stages and platforms. By using the concept of intermediality to frame the turn of the twentieth-century, the settings are transformed and each chapter is a unique account and a fresh approach to discuss the period. The chapters do not follow a chronological progression but do follow a logical one. Whether it is the Salome dancers of chapter one, the Hellenist subject matter of American pageants in chapter two, or Isadora Duncan and Anna Pavlova being subjected to the gaze of the 'other,' the book offers an intelligent, well-constructed perspective on the subject matter. Simonson's lively accounts bring the past to life and although at first glance the six chapters appear to be content-wise a bit disconnected, there is a flow to the book that in its entirety is a dance of intermediality.

The theme of intermediality emerges in every chapter, more obvious in some than others. As we turn the century Simonson guides us through the times showing us how

intermediality has taken on different shapes and styles. The interrelationship between dance and various mediums is a fresh way to reflect on the period but sometimes Simonson's numerous, vivid descriptions can force the reader to lose perspective on the hypothesis. Her imaginative reconstructions are thorough but an edit might have been helpful with chapter four, which examines Rita Sacchetto's "dancing pictures." There are lovely descriptive passages which frame Sacchetto's work and offer numerous accounts of how her work and its connections between Botticelli or music of the era, but the various descriptive critiques from Sacchetto's contemporaries dim Simonson's own voice. Yet, this attention to detail and Simonson's commitment to bringing the past to life using academic scholarship from the past or reviews from the period are among the strengths of the book. In chapter three "Dancing Music: Isadora Duncan and Wagnerism in the American Imagination," one is transported to an enchanted land not only because of the excitement of the content but also through the way in which Simonson analyzes Duncan's work and her relationship to Wagner's music. There is a nice balance in the chapter between describing audience members in attendance, what the critics thought about Duncan's concerts, and how she "re-wrote" Wagner's work. Simonson comments on how Duncan's work is an entry point to reflect on the beliefs and the perceptions of the American audiences.

In summary, *Body Knowledge Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* by Mary Simonson is a fantastic book. She connects the female body and the performers in America during the turn of the twentieth-century, arguing how those artists and their approach to working during that period were in fact intermedial in nature. The book is not for the young dance learner or the novice. It may feel a bit heavy and perhaps full of jargon. Given its intermedial essence, any graduate or professional dance, film and media student or even Opera historian might enjoy the read. The author pulls in various elements to highlight intermediality, thus making her writing a new form of intermediality.

## Biography

Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros is a Dance Historian and Critic, Roma Scholar, Flamenco Historian and Peace Activist who graduated from the UW-Madison Dance Program and went on to complete her Master's in Dance History and Criticism from UNM-Albuquerque. Rosamaria is a professional dancer, choreographer, and qualified teacher, who has lived and danced in various parts of the world and collaborated with many Flamenco greats and other leaders in the Dance field. She has taught throughout Europe and the US at places like UW-Madison, UIUC, Boston Conservatory, Brown University and at various other places in Germany, Spain, and Turkey. She is a dance

writer who makes regular contributions to *Bachtrack Magazine* and *Flamenco News* while also dancing with Protein Dance Company. She currently works at Coventry University's Centre for Dance Research on two EU-Funded Projects, and is the co-organiser of two festivals at Coventry University: Flamenko Coventry 2014 and Romani Week 2015. Rosamaria also works closely with the University of Barcelona's CREA Research Centre and the Roma Women's Association Drom Kotar Mestipen.