

Necessary Incursions: rethinking the unstable body in dance.

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ABSTRACT

Necessary Incursions: rethinking the unstable body in dance.

Necessary Incursions explores the practice of dancing and the agency of the dancer in a choreographic elaboration of the unstable body. It seeks to contextualize, integrate and expand on three related arenas (technique, practice and theatrical presentation) and to throw light on the conditions that have led to the demise of choreographic practices in western concert dance during the past thirty years. As a theoretical enquiry articulated from the position of 'an expert practitioner' (Melrose 2005), Necessary Incursions will include reflections on my own artistic work written as a series of polemical texts. These texts seek to problematise domains of modern and postmodern dance practice through the re-contextualisation and analysis of personal narratives.

Necessary Incursions will be realised in two parts: dance for the time being, which comprises a theatrical rendition to be presented in Dance Massive (March 2013) and Southern Exposure, which will consist of polemical texts that help situate the work and which have formed an integral part of the methodology. Southern Exposure will also articulate the underlying premises of the ongoing performance work dance for the time being and offer a number of contextual elaborations.

The notion of practice embedded and explored in this research enquiry includes an embodied, critical reflection upon the nature of one's embodiment, and on the relationship between doing and being. This includes a particular focus upon dance and movement techniques and their relationship to the quotidian (the forgotten in the everyday that gives us our sense of the everyday). The thesis explores the consequences of the overlay of the quotidian with an embodied, emotionally invested set of physical techniques.

Most dance practices train and choreograph the stabilised body. This rigidly controlled body is essential to the virtuosity and technique of ballet and it is this technique that is utilised in most practices of Contemporary Dance. The thesis argues that the discipline and control of ballet is a difficult state from which to move or explore movement outside the balletic lexicon. By contrast the dynamic instability of the body's weight distribution in an action such as running, orchestrates ease and efficiency. This allows gravity and momentum to be fully utilised. This unstable body is already in movement and this fact facilitates efficiency and the related capacity to explore virtuosity as well as the potential to develop new dance trajectories. Much of the movement developed for dance for the time being investigates bodily instability, its relationship to running and how it functions as a catalyst for audience empathy.

In broad terms this research is consistent with the project of dance modernism, the intention of which was to establish dance as an autonomous art form. My interest is in the aesthetic potential of a discrete dance practice that is movement-based, one that is not defined by relationship to other art practices, nor

habituated to displays of its own historically evolved performance forms and techniques. This research is grounded in a belief that the capacity or potential for human movement invention has not been exhausted; it seeks new imaginaries for dance/movement-based practices.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration (by performance / exhibition)

“I, [Russell Dumas], declare that the PhD exegesis entitled [*Necessary Incursions: rethinking the unstable body in dance.*] is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work”.

Signature Date

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INTRODUCTION

modern dance is dead

the body is still warm but

no one has told the Americans

too early to exhume the body, but too late to exhibit it

Dance historian Susan Manning has identified a stasis in the development of American modern dance in the period immediately following the Judson Dance Theater. According to Manning, the Judson experiments of the early nineteen sixties marked the end point of a period of sustained formal experimentation in the arts and the demise of the legitimating narratives that once supported modern dance development. In the USA, modern and postmodern dance were in sharp decline by the late 1970s and there have been no significant additions to the canon since this time. Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown and Merce Cunningham are still the significant artists.

Necessary Incursions seeks to throw light on the conditions that have led to the demise of choreographic practices in western concert dance during the past thirty years. It is a performance based research project conducted in the transitional / utopian space of the University. It has involved the creation of solo and duet movement material, shown in a salon context (see below) and performed 'live'. The written component of this PhD takes the form of a series of polemical texts or positional papers, which form an integral part of my methodology. Precedents for this distinctive approach include the artist manifestos of John Cage / Merce Cunningham (1961, 1968) and Yvonne Rainer (1974).

In broad terms this research is consistent with the project of dance modernism, the intention of which was to establish dance as an autonomous art form. My interest is in the aesthetic potential of a discrete dance practice that is movement-based, one that is not defined by relationship to other art practices, nor habituated to displays of its own historically evolved performance forms and techniques. I do not believe that the capacity or potential for human movement invention has been exhausted and I seek new imaginaries for dance/movement-based practices. The project investigates the conditions of possibility of a dance practice that is not defined from interdisciplinary perspectives or by relationship to other 'more legitimate' art practices. By implication the research inquiry also seeks to throw light on the conditions that have led to the demise of choreographic practices in western concert dance, with a particular focus on the Australian context.

The western concert tradition of dance has evolved in and is governed by the dictates of the 'viewing place', the theatre. As a professional dancer my career was shaped by the spatial aesthetics of opera house/black box theatre spaces. By contrast, my *choreographic* practice has historically unfolded primarily in the more intimate space of the haptic. I am interested and engaged in the possibility of a practice for dance that is based in the sense of touch. Its arena is corporeal proximity and the conditions of that encounter—an artisan practice in haptic space. My research inquiry concerns the conditions of emergence of such a practice. In the course of this research project I have investigated the differences between institutional and haptic space by drawing on elements of both in the course of its articulation. The transitional space of the University as an institution has been investigated as an alternative site, a site of possibility for a new movement-based practice unencumbered by the expectations and history of theatre, dance, music and visual art practices.

Necessary Incursions also seeks to articulate the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a dance practice that differently values the aesthetic potential of the everyday. The utilitarian nature of institutional space (real, virtual and imaginary) is appropriate for the development of an aesthetic practice that is characterised by an ordinary functional use of the body and a pragmatic means of production. Institutional space is multi- purpose, inherently sterile and under-determined, offering desirable neutrality. The use of available light and techniques of exclusion (cutting) forms an adjacent but integral part of my research.

My interest in and fascination with dance as a field has always centred on the performer, the dancer. In my experience, great dance is always structured by intelligent choreographic practice. This can be observed in traditional dance forms such as the Balinese Gambuh and Topeng, as well as Western canonical practices of dance. Through an examination of embodiment in both traditional, non-western and western concert dance practices (and by close attention to the relationship between dancer and choreographer, as well as the methods of transmission) *Necessary Incursions* draws into question the concept of the unique choreographic artist as a cultural fabrication, a necessary construction, a product of consumer capitalism. It questions the accuracy, usefulness and consequence of conceptualising choreography as an authorial practice, rather than a work of inter-corporeal and inter-subjective exchange. It attempts by these rhetorical questions to problematise and differently imagine both choreography and dance.

The primary aim of this research is to identify and elucidate the conditions under which a new "modern dance" choreographic practice might be realised. This research question is engaged as an integrated practice-based inquiry, organised through three key sub-topics and/or issues:

- How does space become place: the relationship between the space of the studio and the place(s) of performance.

- The relationship between dancer and choreographer as the condition of possibility for future choreographic practices.
- Ordinary movement / movement invention in/as choreography

The research question(s) are elucidated and animated through the creation of an original work for performance.

I understand modern and postmodern dance, including my own practice, as precursors to an emerging possible future practice. The idea of a future practice suggests a spatiality that is utopian, as in nowhere, and a practice that is “becoming”. Traces of this practice apprehended as a gesture towards abstraction can be seen in all dance forms, but this movement towards abstraction is usually submerged or enmeshed in the excessive performative expressivity that defines most existent practices of dance. The research seeks the articulation of a new imaginary for practices of dance in order to revitalise the status quo.

As a professional dancer and teacher I have lived and worked in Australia, England, France, Holland, Finland, Sweden, Portugal and the USA. I have taught in many other countries and in the course of international tours I have witnessed many rich traditions of dance and theatre in situ, particularly in Bali and Japan. My experience as a professional dancer, teacher and choreographer gives me unique insights into the developments of the practice of Western Concert Dance during the past three decades. As an expert professional witness, I have sought to understand the embodied history of this tradition from an international perspective. My sense of the possibilities of a future dance practice is based on my experience of these historical practices and considerations of dance in different cultural contexts.

In most Western democracies, the so-called “creative industries” and the elusive “knowledge economy” dominate cultural policy debate. During the past thirty years, most members of dance boards and panels of the Australia Council and State Government Committees lacked credible international professional experience as artists. The resultant “expert” parochial vision combined with geographical isolation from the formative elements of European culture and the continuing implications of the perceived convict stain have produced a broader society that is unable to contextualise, examine and learn from its own historical formation. Cultural policy framed by the Australia Council and State Ministries over the past thirty years reflects this impoverished vision and make the arts vulnerable to bureaucratic manipulation by other more powerful departments of Government.

All art funding proposals must be articulated in terms of criteria that are heterogeneous to art practices. The perceived social benefit of a proposed work and the language utilised to describe it are more important than the actuality of the work produced. In Australian arts funding organizations, this is now the “tail that wags the dog”. Within Government bureaucracy there is little critical debate with artists. This research, *Necessary Incursions*, has the capacity to significantly impact on cultural policy both here and

abroad by attempting to articulate major obstacles to informed analysis and critical understanding of choreographic practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND EARLIER WORK PERTINENT TO THIS INQUIRY

Actually for a domain of action, a behaviour, to enter the field of thought, it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it. This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematisation and the specific work of thought. (Foucault 1980: 117-118)

In my choreographic and performance practice I seek to problematise dance as a field of enquiry, or to use Foucault's expression, "a work of thought." As a theoretical enquiry articulated from the position of 'an expert practitioner' (Melrose 2005), *Necessary Incursions* includes reflections on my own artistic work written as a series of polemical texts. These texts seek to problematise domains of modern and postmodern dance practice through the recontextualisation and analysis of personal narratives; these could be understood as both critical fictions and cautionary tales.

A truly comprehensive Literature Review for a practice-based research project such as this would encompass the myriad experiences of everyday life and ideas encountered in books as well as the performances witnessed, the choreographers and dancers worked with and the techniques specifically studied and maybe allowed into my body, consigned to my emotional thinking, my behaviour. But what does citation mean in terms of a performance practice like dance? Does it mean quotation from what has been written/ published about work – reviews, books, personal journals and diaries etc.? A question that has emerged as I have surveyed the literature is: How relevant is the *lack* of professional dance experience in those who would speak for professional dance?

In embodied heritages such as dance, what an artist knows is whom he has worked with. I have been defined as an artist by what I have excluded as much as by what I allow. Over the past four decades I have experienced many kinds of dance and theatre in Europe, UK, USA, Japan, Indonesia and Australia. In my career as a dancer I've worked with many famous artists including Ashton, MacMillan, Cranko, De Valois, Rambert, Fonteyn, Nureyev, Beriosova, Somes and Helpmann. I'm one of only two dancers who have performed with The Royal Ballet, as well as the companies of Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown. (I was a regular company member while Mikhail Baryshnikov performed as a celebrated guest artist.) I feel vitally

connected to the rich embodied dance heritage that encompasses both the Diaghilev era and post-modern dance. I have been slow to understand the responsibility to future practice of my privileged access to this unique embodied heritage, but it is this knowledge base that grounds and substantiates the research. For almost fifty years I have rigorously defined, educated and exercised my aesthetic judgment. This is not the trite 'gut feeling/cultural indigestion' school of aesthetics. Ultimately it is what it means to have/live a practice.

Historically, dance has been defined by relationship to, and in the language of, other artistic practices. As many commentators (eg. Martin 1966, Franko 1995, Dempster 1988 and Gardner 2001) have observed, the absence of a discrete identity is problematic in terms of the perception of dance as a legitimate field of knowledge. An adjacent issue concerns the vulnerability of dance to appropriation by established/conservative academic disciplines. One of the objectives of modernist experimentation in dance, from the early moderns through to the postmodern dancer-choreographers, was to establish dance as an autonomous art. The relationship between dancer and choreographer was critical to the emergence and development of this new movement-based art form. As Sally Gardner (2004) has argued, the close inter-corporeal and inter-subjective relationship of choreographer and dancer is not just a minor or contingent feature of modern dance development, but needs to be recognised as the basis of choreographic practice. A core assumption of the *Necessary Incursions* research is that dancers are defined as performing artists by individual choreographers, and not in generic dance companies.

Prior to the emergence of modern dance the function of ballet master and choreographer were interchangeable and for centuries the notion of choreography related to the arrangement of set movement patterns and steps from a finite lexicon. The choreographer was an arranger of the classical vocabulary, be it Balinese, Indian, or European dance. Dancers acquired technique during an arduous and long regime, and kinaesthetically the movement habits of a lifetime were inscribed during a highly competitive early training, which often emphasised virtuosity. Classically trained dancers in all cultures find it difficult, if not impossible to investigate movement outside their highly prescribed, aesthetically marked and bodily habituated classical techniques. It is my contention that the training regimes of all classic dance forms are very poor places from which to embark on choreographic development. The greater the technical facility in any classic technique of dance, the more diminished the ability to explore movement with this same dancer's body. This is one of the reasons why so few choreographers have emerged from classical ballet and contemporary dance companies over the past thirty years.

Classic dance techniques are done 'on' and 'to' the body, whereas the future choreographic artist must have access to the physical questions that arise 'in' the body. The radical concept of choreography that was done 'in' the body was initiated by the practice of modern dance at the beginning of the twentieth century (in the work of Duncan, Humphreys and Graham, for example). For the early modern dance

choreographers the act of choreographing was a process of discovering or inventing movement (Fraleigh 1987:104). They did not begin, as the ballet master does, with an already established technique and style of moving. In classical ballet, the most significant choreographic development since the demise of the Ballets Russes occurred where modern dance impacted on practices of ballet (Twyla Tharp, Jiri Kylian, William Forsyth, Pina Bausch et al). In *Necessary Incursions* choreographic work is performance research that is conducted 'in' the body of the dancer, rather than choreography as it is more commonly understood, that is work done 'on' the body of highly skilled professional practitioners.

Proscenium arch presentation in Opera Houses and black box theatres, have defined both space and the movement practice necessary to articulate this space in Western dance and theatre. Lincoln Kirstein (1983) asserts that the form and style of classical ballet developed in response to the exigencies of the proscenium arch stage and it is thus the "most natural" way of moving in such a space. Following Kirstein it could be argued that the technique of ballet evolved in this space, hence the usefulness and implication of ballet technique to all dance, opera and physical theatre that is presented on the ubiquitous opera house stage. *Necessary Incursions* is concerned with the emergence of a different kind of spatial choreography, one that emerges from the more intimate, haptic space of the studio.

Choreographers in all traditions need to visualise and internalise a spatial sense that is culturally specific. In the western performance tradition this sense of scale and proportion is very different from the usual domestic dwelling. Inhabiting living/loft spaces is an effective way of becoming familiar and comfortable (at home) with spatial volumes and large areas that are the 'canvases' in which choreographic practices are developed. The implications of private, individual studio spaces for the development of choreographic practices in modern and post-modern dance was clearly understood by choreographic artists, but the significance of these 'living-working' spaces (Siegel 1993) has not been widely recognised.

Historically modern dance evolved in Germany and the USA and spread to other Anglo Saxon countries. In the USA, with the collapse of the National Endowment in the 1980s, many artists lost their living/studio spaces and their ability to pursue choreographic development in haptic space was severely curtailed. I would argue that this loss of private studio space was one of the precipitating factors in the death of modern dance and this continues to impact on all western choreographic practices. This situation has less impact on established artists such as Cunningham, Tharp and Brown who had secured their studio spaces, were experienced and could thus confidently explore the differently regulated space of the opera house and other such institutional spaces.

In *Necessary Incursions* I am interested in the underlying question as to why such private, domestic spaces are necessary for choreographic development. I believe that part of the answer is associated with the choreographic need to touch other bodies. This need is usually unacknowledged and indeed is often

perceived as shameful to the very perception of dance and a threat to its tentative emergence as a legitimate field of knowledge. Not only does it invoke the dubious past of ballet (*c'est une femme aux cuisses légères*), but also a more contemporary fear, the repression of touch in all fundamentalist religions and social encounters generally. Work environments, education and even parent and child relationships are all highly regulated and controlled by law.

For thirty years I have researched practices that utilise a different spatial imaginary—the cross-roads, temple courtyards, wentilans and family compounds that situate Balinese dance, as well as the spatial particularity of forms such as Noh and Bunraku (Japan) and Wayang Kulit, Gambuh and Topeng Cirebon (Indonesia). The complexities of Asian philosophies and epistemologies as well as the implications of modernity on traditional cultures are almost totally ignored in Western dance/theatre discourse and practice, but I believe an awareness of these different spatial dynamics and sensibilities has much to offer the work of choreography and has had a bearing on the conduct and outcome of *Necessary Incursions*.

Among the great arts of time—music, literature and dance—the latter is the only one in the West to have maintained a continuing relation with oral tradition. This mode of transmission, which has largely disappeared from the canons of our culture, and is judged primitive by some ... remains linked to the history of dance, and even more, to its very identity. (Loupe 1994:9)

Perhaps, for the reasons that Loupe outlines, dance is pre-eminently an art of the liminal and a sort of stigma of pre-literacy clings to it through its methods of embodiment and transmission. Although all art process is in some way an exploration of transitional / in-between space and thus may be described as liminal, this term is particularly associated with rites of passage rituals. Anthropologist, van Gennepe breaks down the formal “rite of passage” into three distinct stages: the pre-liminary, the liminal and the post-liminal. This idea was later developed by Victor Turner, who viewed liminality as ‘a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new form and structure’ (Turner 1982:12). I would suggest that the practices of ballet, modern and post modern dance are pre-liminary or liminal, and van Gennepe’s distinctions may be useful to imagine the contours of a possible future post-liminal practice of dance.

Necessary Incursions explores the liminal, the threshold, the place between, where one thing becomes another. It examines the relationship between the known and the unknown, between form and content and how one is a condition of the other. It explores liminality (the notion of the liminal) *within* an embodied

practice of dance as distinct from notions of the space between dance/ movement based practices and other art forms and disciplines.

I am interested in dance as a practice because in our dance, I believe we powerfully and directly manifest our views about our bodies. I am interested in the dancer's "performance", the noise that remains around each performer within the formal embrace of the choreography. By bringing these concerns into performance focus, it is possible to see where we have come from, and perhaps, where to go next.

METHODOLOGY

Studio practice: ordinary movement

During the past decade I have been developing a body perception and sensitivity training that I have termed "ordinary movement" to differentiate it from notions of pedestrian movement, explored in some practices of post modern dance. My interest in ordinary movement is to do with its potential to inform an aesthetic sensibility steeped in the everyday—practices that are pleasurable to do and watch, and that are useful to my endeavour to create a movement practice with which the audience can empathise.

The term "ordinary movement" should be understood both self-consciously and ironically. It affords a degree of audience legibility quite apart from the norms of spectatorship with its attendant forms of alienation. Concerned with directness, the complexity of simplicity and the inherent simplicity of complexity, I am interested in notions of virtuosity as a kind of deceptive simplicity, where simplicity is in itself an appeal to the viewer's depth of poetic feeling.

Using simple rule-game structures I have explored notions of improvisation in relationship to the habitual in dance —the underlying patterns of embodiment in dance techniques and other movement practices. Working with the banality of familiar movement, I examine the notion of "free-choice" in an embodied practice. Amongst other things, I consider the relationship between the dancer and the dance by an examination of a known choreographic text in an improvisational setting. I am interested in how our movement signatures are constituted in our bodies. What is the basis of our pleasure in the repetition of sensations such as turning? What behaviours and contexts pre-dispose us to value certain movements that get re-configured as choreographic choice? What are the conditions in the cultural (the social and the political) that shape aesthetic desire?

In this research I understand improvisation as instant composition and the concept of the unique choreographic artist as a necessary construction, a product of consumer capitalism. In my creative process, improvisation is practiced as a tactical resistance to social and political strategies of convergent experience (analogous to convergent technologies). A lot of the movement vocabulary developed through this research period is concerned with falling backwards. Considering the structural design of the body, this is clearly a dangerous and technically difficult activity. It does, however, suggest the potential richness of a movement practice that develops “behind your back”. It also expedites a heightened sense of what it is to move forward or sideways, and by going to extremes, to challenge the body’s habituated movement patterns.

The Salon

The notion of salon practice forms an integral part of the research methodology. It involves a strategy of implication, designed to place the observer and the observed in a situation of trust and intimacy. *Necessary Incursions* inaugurates a new salon practice for dance: a room, a dancer and ideally an audience of one. This context facilitates critical dialogue and a sense of authorship on the part of the observer in relation to the performance witnessed, for the guest is after all the only objective witness of the performance. This manner of research utilises performance as a reality check at a given time and place; it is research *by* performance and it has functioned as both a developmental and evaluation strategy.

Southern Exposure/ Polemical texts /position papers

Performatively, I understand dance as a possibility of “thinking otherwise”. I seek to engage various/different perspectives within a limited field—a first person narrative account. In the development of a series of polemical texts I draw on elements of my own professional practice as an artist (choreographer and dancer) during the past forty years and utilise Susan Melrose’s notion of the expert witness (Melrose 2005) to problematise various arenas of modern and postmodern dance in Australia, Europe and USA.

The notion of embodiment is central in performance-based research as distinct from research that is positioned by spectatorship. To do research by performance is to draw on personal experience; I don’t understand how this could be construed otherwise. Because it is an embodied practice it is difficult to adopt a critical perspective upon my own dance work, but the alternative is to persist with what Melrose identifies as “spectator studies.” A tactic of contextualising my arguments by my own professional practice as dancer and choreographer does in part side-step other implicated and inherently problematic areas such as the moral rights of artists, copyright, intellectual property and the persistent difficulties of citation in

time based practices. The self-referentiality of this is less than ideal, but at the beginning of a new trajectory it is also necessary.

Necessary Incursions is articulated in two parts, both termed Southern Exposure.

Southern Exposure (an edition of *dance for the time being*, our ongoing performance research given in Dance Massive, March 2013) and

Southern Exposure (these Polemical Texts/ Positional Papers).

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Dance as an art form is that site where the individual body meets and engages the other. It reflects on its own becoming in different arenas: social, cultural and political. This polemical writing begins to articulate the conditions in which dance as a professional practice is elaborated in Australia. This is an attempt to historically situate and articulate its conditions of possibility.

1

Three years ago I had an ischemic stroke and my specialist suggested that I limit my exercise to an occasional walk on the beach. Being interested in marine biology and conchology, I would walk in the inter-tidal zone, sharing it with groups of mostly overweight women joggers and their buff personal trainers who would alternately run then walk to recuperate. At some stage I noticed the footprints in the firm wet sand. There was nothing unusual about the footprints of people as they walked, but when these same bodies started running the parallel tracks of left and right feet converged. The heel strikes aligned perfectly one in front of the other. I could see the same evidence in the footprints of runners all along Bondi beach. The next day I returned with my video camera—but that is another story.

Human locomotion is based on falling, which is our relationship to the force of gravity. In walking this falling is internal to the structure of the body, and facilitated by the dynamic instability of the body's weight distribution. In running, the gravity line is external to the body, which attempts to save the head from potential damage by continuously attempting to re-align the torso directly below the head through a quick appeal to the legs (running).

We stand and walk in culturally specific ways, but we all run the same way or at least with the same deep contra-lateral efficiency. I am interested in this efficiency and the empathy we feel for the unstable body of the runner in full "flight" — the way that culturally diverse audiences know in their bones how this movement feels. Much of the movement developed for our ongoing performance practice, dance for the time being, investigates bodily instability, its relationship to running and how this functions as a trigger for survival modes of efficiency in terms of complex movement and virtuosity as well as a catalyst for audience empathy.

Allowing the shoulders to move forward or backwards of the pelvis as in falling or running triggers a self-preservation reflex in relation to gravity. Running requires a deeply efficient coordinated management of this instability in relation to gravity that all human beings share. How we stand and walk is culturally specific, how we run is almost genetically given — we have an evolutionary investment in running (hunting), not in walking or standing. The relationship to gravity in standing and walking is both socially

and culturally modified, whereas the body's relationship to gravity in running is more biomechanically driven.

I understand dance as a possibility of "thinking otherwise". From even a cursory reading of Foucault it is evident that to initiate change to practices it is first necessary to destabilise fields, be they thought or movement based. Contemporary political and social notions of stability are based on the organization of the stable pedestrian body. Industrial modernity has precipitated an instrumental approach to the body and its management in all arenas of contemporary life. This body is understood and elaborated in the activities of standing and walking — certainly not in the instability of the running body. I understand the 'running body' as the 'ghost in the machine' or an 'evolutionary spectre' that haunts the stable and socially compliant standing and walking body of industrial modernity.

The stabilised standing and walking body has been currency for so long that it has become the singular way in which we aestheticise the body in all social and cultural arenas and the way we unconsciously define beauty within all embodied practices, particularly dance. The relationship we have to our embodied habits creates a conservative community that is resistant to change – we define ourselves by our habits, and they are emotionally invested. Even techniques like Alexander, Feldenkrais and Experiential Anatomy utilise and assimilate us to a pedestrian body – a stable seated, standing or walking body. The pyrotechnics of ballet are built on this stable body. This stability is embedded in Australian culture through a colonial practice of ballet technique taught in suburbs and country towns right across the nation. The technique of ballet should be perceived as disempowering, for what it authenticates is our continuing status as a colony of England as well as social and cultural passivity at the level of the individual body. The embodied investment in stability in practices of ballet inculcates a socially conservative culture that is resistant to change.

My practice challenges this and is charting a syntax (rather than a vocabulary) of movement and ideas that coalesce around the notion of the unstable body, in direct contrast to the balletic ideal. The runner's body is already in motion and has an innate ability to adapt very quickly to different terrains and changing physical environments. This adaptability to new terrains and the ever-changing landscape of the future is where the potential for new imaginaries of movement based practice lies.

2

I seek new imaginaries for dance not to revitalise the status quo, but to create a new and different trajectory for practices of dance that have the potential to impact on our changing political and cultural imaginaries and their related unstable, future social realities.

Neurologically, we are our habits and for everyday, ordinary/pedestrian movement habits to function efficiently they must be forgotten, relegated to the part of the brain that is not under our conscious control. It is this “forgotten” in the everyday that gives us our sense of the everyday. In English usage, the ordinary, everyday or pedestrian does not include or allude to this potentially rich provenance of the forgotten. To differentiate between the everyday and the above notion of the forgotten in the everyday I use the French word “quotidian”.

Early post modern dance use of pedestrian movement was socially inclusive and built communities of interdisciplinary artists. It was a reaction to the highly stylised techniques of both ballet and historic modern dance and more generally, it was a 1960’s exploration of “democracy’s body”. It did not explore the quotidian – the forgotten in the everyday that gives us “pedestrian movement”. My practice elaborates the quotidian body as distinct from the pedestrian body. Aesthetically I am interested in the “look” of ordinary, everyday, pedestrian movement. Performatively, I understand that this must be elaborated on bodies that have access to the quotidian — the forgotten in the everyday. I associate this forgotten with the unstable body of the runner. We all know in our bones how this movement feels and can empathise with the running body in full flight.

Contemporary notions of the body do not include the unstable body, the running body—most of us do not run. Somewhat surprisingly (for me, at least) when we do run, we do so with great efficiency. Studies of the dancers who work with me, when filmed in slow motion, attest to this, as does the line-up of the consecutive heel strikes of runners in footprints left on the sand of Bondi beach.

3

The stable body—lying, standing and walking

Western dance techniques were articulated on the underlying movement patterns and assumptions of standing and walking bodies by the use of muscular core strength. Enormous social coercion is applied to fields of standing and walking and we conform from a very young age at both individual and societal levels. (Yet somewhat ironically our idiosyncratic movement signatures are forged in these domains perhaps because of our innate, individual resistance to the practices and strategies of the secular nation state as well as of all religions.) Stability in the upright position is achieved through an habitual muscular practice that is socially coercive and culturally prescriptive. Once the baby has developed the muscular core strength and technique to achieve verticality in relationship to gravity, it is difficult to modify this individually bespoke body. This muscularly stabilised individual body (my body) is the deep structural basis

that is further elaborated in any dance technique, particularly ballet. Within the paradigm of industrial modernity, the European balletic body colonised the world.

Perhaps the most successful strategy for modification of the child's 'my body' is the aesthetic distortion that is achieved by 'putting the child to ballet', more precisely by learning and elaborating its technique through relationship to rhythmical music. It is this ordained relationship to rhythm that I found so disappointing in the so-called Minimalism of choreographers such as de Keersmaecker and Lucinda Childs. This simplistic, prescriptive and primitive relationship to rhythm continues to pervade most practices of contemporary dance particularly in collaborative and hybrid settings. (by contrast, the rhythmic complexity of traditional Australian aboriginal dance, Japanese Noh and Balinese Rejang and Gambuh)

The interest of early post-modern dance in everyday movement was a reaction to both ballet and the highly stylised modern dance of the 40's, 50's and 60's. This interest reignited debate on the relationship between everyday movement and performance and how virtuosity could be redefined in the context of the ordinary. With the exception of a few practices, most famously Trisha Brown's, by the late 70's, the aesthetics of the everyday/ordinary body became the domain of performance art, drama and film rather than dance.

The body techniques that underpinned the notion of virtuosity explored in this everyday, pedestrian movement as well as in all other techniques of western dance and ballet are elaborated on a lying, standing or walking body. All embodied practices are emotionally invested, strongly habituated and culturally formed. To change or challenge the underlying habits of these bodies is a work of years—Yoga, Alexander, Feldenkrais, BMC, experiential anatomy, martial arts and other body therapies all attest to this. Ballet, contemporary dance and the above mentioned in-body systems are all built on and assume a notion of bodily stability. The everyday body that is elaborated in their techniques is the stable standing or walking body. I would suggest that practices that evolved in fields other than dance (i.e. self-defence or therapy) retain a residue of their provenance and should be utilised advisedly in choreographic elaboration.

I commenced studying ballet as a child and I became interested in martial arts as a way to challenge this balletic inscription of my body. Martial arts seduce bodies into highly efficient movement reflexes and responses and I was interested in how this is accomplished neurologically. I have no answers but I suspect that the repetition of the movement kata and focus on subtle detail distracts the conscious mind in a way that is comparable to the use of imagery in the work of Todd, Clark, Bernard and others (in ideokinesis, experiential anatomy, release technique etc.).

It took me about thirty years to work out that in Japanese Noh, the “walk” is a slow motion “run”. Although stylistically and compositionally very different to Noh, my work is influenced by both the rhythm and the integrated use of sound, voice, music and movement in Noh.

I encountered Noh in Japan in 1969 while touring with London Festival Ballet and subsequently saw it in Italy at Teatro Eliseo in 1970 at the ritzy Premier Roma Festival. Because Ballet Rambert was the next company appearing in the festival I got a special discount on my ticket — it cost only half of my weekly salary. The rapt attention of the rich Italian clientele lasted about three minutes then to my chagrin, the din of audience conversations drowned out all sound coming from the stage. In London at the World Theatre Season (1972) at the Aldwych the audience was reverential, and I could both hear and see the work. I promptly started to drift in and out of sleep, missing entirely the movement (dance) denouement of the final play. Rather than admitting to this, I had to return the next evening to see what my friends had described as “so amazing”.

I used to think that it was strange that so many of the audience at Noh in Japan would be dozing and I would resolutely resist this temptation by drinking copious amounts of strong coffee. After some years of coffee fuelled viewing I realised that to see Noh with the eyes wide open, was not to see it at all. Since 1976, I have visited Japan almost every year to witness this extraordinary “waking dream” in situ. In the performative and compositional methodology of Japanese Noh, I am interested in the treatment of time. The Noh is like dreaming in two registers: the dream that is the here and now, unfolding before us, and the dream that is the past; the deep satisfaction that affirms our participation in the order of things; the oneness of time and place; the reality of the past in the dream of the present. Not a bad definition of improvisation.

Most practices of Western Dance are concerned with the body in space in which time is measured as a function of movement—of the earth around its axis and relative to the sun. The perception of speed is relative and context driven. Increasingly I am drawn to other time/space relationships such as everyday life in Bali and the dreamscapes of Noh and Gambuh (the most ancient form of dance and theatre in Bali). In theatrical rendition I utilise sound. Focus in visual space usually implies a narrowing of the perceptive field (often closing it down) while in the aural sense, an opening out. Perhaps this is why the Noh master, Zeami, insists that the gesture must be heard before it is seen. In Noh the sound always heralds the action of the performer—it precedes the action. In the Noh, aesthetic tension is set up amongst the various practices that constitute its organisational structure. The balancing of these dynamic forces is one of the remarkable attributes that generates, somewhat ironically, a sense of spontaneity in this highly regulated form. In my practice, I attempt to replicate in the body of individual performers a similar concern for

balancing the various fields of activity that constitute performative and choreographic practice and their integral linkage. I could characterise some of these discrete fields of activity as: (1) choreographed movement phrases (2) traditional dance techniques that negotiate outward conformity (3) inner mask and a related concern for "ordinary movement" (4) agency and persona of performer—how she plays the game, a management of the self in a public arena (5) managing instability—essential to ease, efficiency and (the related) virtuosity.

5

Sally wanted me to see the layout of the images she had selected to be published with her paper from the Sydney conference. It occurred to me that there should be a photographic credit for these images from "3", but who is the photographer of an image captured by a computer program of an existing film. Legally as director, choreographer, performer and producer, I own copyright of both the film and the underlying choreography. Somehow I feel uncomfortable giving a photographic credit to the cinematographer while having no way to acknowledge the friendship and unpaid labour of the many generous dancers who are implicated in my work and these images.

As I prepared dinner, Sally laid out the photos on the table in groups of three and a two. I had imagined that these images could be arranged as a sort of filmstrip running down the side on each page. She discussed how the horizontal format worked better than the vertical for these images, and I agreed. I looked at the photos and began to try different arrangements. By her slight agitation, I sensed that she had already given this project a fair bit of consideration.

Six months ago, Sally had called me in Sydney. I phoned Miranda whose computer I needed. In her apartment, she demonstrated the re-frame, and other editing options and procedures. Miranda is an animator, and I am interested in what she likes, how she sees and what she chooses. Miranda lives with Jonathan, the dancer with whom I have worked for the past five years. She and Jonathan prepare food in the kitchen. I choose, select and save, occasionally re-framing. Next day Miranda burnt a CD of my selection and sent it to Sally, who made her selection and had some printed photographically, which again changed the proportion of these images.

I had been looking at a 16mm black and white film that has been rendered as Betacam (professional) video, edited and copied into vhs (domestic) format. This work was shot by Scott Inglis, directed and choreographed by me and performed by Nick Sabel, Josephine McKendry and me.

I started working on the movement phrases of this trio in 1971 with dancers Mary Prestidge, Eva Karczag, Julia Blakie, Joe Scoglio, Jeremy Allen and Mike Vrooman. From the first rehearsal (in unheated studios) we worked naked and without music. Vital aspects of dance modernism such as liberation from bodily constraints and freedom from the balletic tradition were not part of my agenda. My inspiration was the

movement photography of Muybridge and a series of drawings by Blake. My starting point or artistic pretext to commence was my irritation at the way nudity had been utilised and sensationalised in shows such as *Hair*, and particularly dance performances such as *Mutations*. This work for *Nederlands Dans Theater* was co-choreographed by Glen Tetley and Hans van Mannen.

Like so many Greek statues, the constricted movement vocabulary of the naked dancers fetishised the genitals of these young men. In live performance the pelvis and thigh relationship was frozen in balletic outwardness, a presentation of the motionless genitals all roused up and pushed forward, in the manner of courtly deportment in the presence of the sovereign lord. The flaccid uncircumcised penis was a sheathed weapon, not to be drawn in public or aroused by unseemly movement. By contrast, in the projected duet sequence of Gerard le Maitre and Anya Lichter, safely consigned to the already dead of film, Gerard's penis whipped and slashed uncontrollably around his and her body. The use of slow motion empathised the beautiful trailing movements of his comely member, and I perceived this duet as a trio—Adam, Eve and the serpent.

I had spoken with Norman Morrice, director of Ballet Rambert, about the possibility of doing my trio in the next Rambert Choreographic Workshop. After a couple of weeks of rehearsal, I heard that Madam wouldn't allow this as I had left her company—twice!

Several months later I joined the Royal Ballet, and started teaching the trio to some very gifted dancers. The studios at Barons Court are a bit like thoroughfares, so we did not rehearse naked, but Madam (Dame Ninette de Valois) heard that it was to be performed naked in the choreographic workshop. "The Royal Ballet, naked!" –Curtains to that.

Sally Potter and Richard Alston wanted to show works they had recently choreographed, so we decided to produce ourselves. The lunchtime performance at the Jeanetta Cochran Theatre (part of the Central School of Art and Design) was facilitated by Charlie Payton, my lighting and set designer, and then a student at the Central School. We got into the theatre at 9am, and almost immediately the lights went out. Rolling power strikes and industrial unrest were a feature of life in those times. Power resumed at mid-day and we simultaneously attempted to tech our works till the audience was let in at 12.30pm.

First up was the solo I had made for Eva Karczag. Charlie had created a set of small steel balls attached to the high fly bars by piano wire. These pendulums were controlled by a series of electro magnets aligned on both sides of the stage, and lit by one blue work light, high above the stage. Eva's white silk costume inspired by Tang Dynasty figurines had been created by a designer who had worked for the famous Indian dancer, Ram Gopal. The solo was a disaster and Eva spent the entire time voguing in a pseudo oriental manner and trying to avoid the pendulums that in the technical fiasco had been incorrectly wired, and randomly bore down on her.

The naked trio was the second piece.

In the chaos of the morning, Eva had forgotten to relay a phone message from Jeremy Allen, telling me that he was stranded at Sheffield due to the power strike, and wouldn't arrive in time to perform. Completely cold, as in no dancerly warm-up, and unable to remember the choreography, Eva and Mike talked me through the entire performance. Afterwards, feeling embarrassed and depressed, I was less than polite to some well-wishers from the Royal who had witnessed this fiasco, yet still come backstage to see me. Alexander Grant wanted to acquire the trio for the Royal's schools programme, "Ballet For All". He inquired if I would permit the work to be done in unitards. Still smarting from my public humiliation I arrogantly dismissed his request by insisting that the costume was tits and bums. Somewhat ironically, this is the only work of mine that any ballet company has ever wanted to purchase.

A couple of weeks later, Sir Frederick Ashton requested a private showing in one of the Royal Ballet's rehearsal studios opposite the stage door in Covent Garden. After our showing, he told me that he sought some kind of aesthetic gymnastic activity that could occur on the beach in the distance in the Benjamin Britten opera "Death in Venice", and that my trio would fit perfectly with what he had in mind. "Of course I can't give you a separate choreographic credit", he said and my face must have betrayed my feelings.

He motioned me to approach closer, and half whispered, "Dear boy, really all you should be worried about is money in the bank. Now how are your finances?"

Eva, Mike and I considered this option for a few days, but decided not to do it. As it turned out, it was not enough money in the bank to justify our drawn out contracts that committed us to intermittent performances in Glyndebourne, Paris and Rome over a period of nine months. After this experience I suppressed my choreographic aspirations for several years and worked with a number of high profile artists, including Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown.

Returning to Australia in December 1975, and during some years, I developed many rolling sequences and duets with performers who include: David Hinkfuss, Daryl Pellizer, Reyes de Lara, Alan Schacher, Stewart Shepherd, Sally Gardner, Warwick Shillitoe, Keith March, Ken Coldicott and Stephen Richardson. Fragments of this material and other remembered bits of my original trio were reworked and performed in London and New York with Rebecca Hilton and Lucy Guerin. This was later resurrected and developed in "3", for Nick Sabel, Josephine McKendry and me. These dancers all left traces of their bodies in this work, their weight, phrasing and rhythms—an experience of presence through absence. They haunt this movement like so many spectres.

6

Vertical

The vertical is associated with the plane of movement and action.

Steve Paxton's Small Dance seeks, amongst other things, stillness and balance (mechanical and psychological) through moving—subtle adjustments to alleviate discomfort. To balance with the eyes closed (without vision), and then to negotiate the liminal space between inner and outer, private and public, is to keep faith with sensation. To stand upright has overtones of morality and mortality—heaven is up, hell is down—but the overtone is always double, or at least not one thing.

To speak of standing in the upright (vertical) position implies fixity and muscular holding patterns, even minimal ones. It is not possible to stand in the erect position without using the muscles. The given task in the Small Dance is to maintain this posture with the least expenditure of energy, to balance through the deep infrastructure, the skeleton. Balance is a sensation, not a position.

The articulatory surfaces of bones are rounded, yet most dance techniques are concerned with stabilising the body (at the joints, usually). A more useful concept for dance and movement based practices, would be to engage with the management of instability.

Horizontal

The death position, allowing the bones to sink through your soft body.

The 'feminine' plane of sleep and death affords a very different experience of gravity from the vertical.

To engage with the experience of gravity in the horizontal plane allows for a multi-focussed experience. It facilitates a noticing of many sensations without having to balance or control any. This is a profoundly different experience to the sensing of tiny adjustments that is an integral feature of Steve Paxton's Small Dance. Noticing the sensation of gravity in the body (an undifferentiated mass of bones, muscles and organs) while in the death position 'utilises' only the involuntary musculature, breath, for instance.

Lying on the side, allow the body to fall backwards, safely abandoning oneself to this pleasurable sensation and noticing the sequence of sensations of the fall. Being present to these experiences in multiple sites throughout the body, one experiences the complexity of the 'desire to repeat experiences'. This spatial field within the body is created by the dynamic instability of real spaces occupied by fascia, muscles and bones. The concern is both to create and manage this instability. This different spatial imaginary is a product of both mind and imagination. The endeavour to imagine a *where* and *nowhere* for this dance practice that is not determined by a *here* and *there*. Work that implicates time and that unfolds in this empty space of potential. This horizontal experience of sensation guided by imagination is an attention to "becoming", an experience of the liminal.

Visually, the roll can seem / look the same to an observer, but the subjective experience is far more sensually engaging and differentiated.

Structuring Possibility

Anatomical knowledge of the body was gained by artists doing human dissection hundreds of years ago. These inaccurate artistic renditions of the body were further distorted by the needs of the newly developed publishing industry (three dimensions rendered as two and segmentation into convenient page size representation). The methodology of the study of classical anatomy has necessarily impacted on our understanding and analysis of human movement. Anatomy literally means “separating the parts” and in combination with the development of photography (the still image) it has shaped how we analyse and attempt to understand movement. The anatomical knowledge gained by cutting up dead bodies is radically different from that gained by the study of experiential anatomy. Our desire to see clearly and the technological capacity to arrest motion have distorted our understanding of the potential of the whole body orchestrated by ease and efficiency in coordinated instability.

From my study of experiential anatomy I know “in my bones” the relationship between the femur heads and the sit bones (tuberosities of the ischia). Recently I began to question why this relationship is misrepresented in most anatomical textbooks. Most of the classic texts cite earlier texts that were exquisitely drawn from practices of human dissection in eras when such practices were forbidden by the church. The body was apprehended by candle light, in bits and pieces, and in the horizontal plane. More recent publications reproduce the same errors with new visual technologies. X rays and CAT-Scans reproducing bony relationships of bodies in the horizontal plane are put through computer programs to create virtual bodies in the vertical plane. The effects of gravity are mis-represented in splendid colour reproduction and consequently misunderstood by generations of health professionals as well as dancers studying traditional anatomy. The veracity of my assertion is easily demonstrated by an examination of the pelvis of an articulated human skeleton, in particular the positioning of the femoral head in the acetabulum and the alignment of the tuberosity of the ischium directly and vertically below this place in standing and sitting. (*I stand above where I sit and I sit below where I stand*—M.E.Todd.) In vertical alignment (parallel 1st position) the centre of the heel, centre of the ischial tuberosity and centre of the iliofemoral joint are in the same sagittal plane. These relationships in right and left legs operate in parallel sagittal planes.

Linking the sensations of the experiential centre of each foot with the iliofemoral joint in the acetabulum is the basis of an unstable verticality that is rich in its potential for movement that is multi-directional. These rounded unstable and narrow foundations respond easily and efficiently to the movement of the torso, as distinct from the bracing support of the bones in the wider stance of historic modern dance or even Paxton's Small Dance, adopted to stabilise the legs so that subtle movement in the body (torso) can more easily be felt. Generally it could be said that techniques of ballet stabilised the torso to support the movement of the limbs while modern dance stabilised the legs to support the movement of the torso.

The structure of the human body is inherently unstable with a high centre of gravity and rounded joints. It is also a testament to the intelligence of evolutionary design. The ability of the body to work in an integrated, highly efficient way comes clearly into focus in the action of ordinary running. This extraordinary coordination and grace of the body in full flight is one of the few arenas where the dictates of industrial modernity have not impacted on human movement. Most other ordinary movement actions have been compromised by the organisational imperatives of contemporary life and work.

The line-up: experiential centre of the foot, centre of the knee joint, tuberosity of the ischium and acetabulum (in the same plane of action) of each leg facilitates the easy running action that efficiently manages the unstable alignment of the spine. As outlined above, the representation of the tuberosity of the ischium and acetabulum alignment in anatomy textbooks is for the most part, simply wrong. The technical implications of this detail from experiential anatomy extend far beyond the field of professional dance.

8

Anneke's Song

Toe knee chest nut nose eye love you

Toe knee nose, toe knee nose

Toe knee chest nut nose eye love you

That's what toe knee nose.

Most practices of professional dance are characterized by a particular kind of aesthetic distortion or physically extreme elaboration. Turnout and stretch—the fingers, the feet, the legs, the arms, the torso, etc. The professional requirement to go to these extremes on a daily basis, concentrates the dancer deep within her body, on ligaments, muscles, and bones. The dancer slowly and carefully explores and attempts to extend the physical range of the ligaments and joints, in the manner of an explorer who attempts to negotiate difficult physical terrains for the satisfaction and pleasure of mastery. The somnambulant quality at the beginning of the "warm-up" gradually shifts to the need and pleasure of focusing on more vigorous sensations in the muscles, ligaments, and joints—the dancer's neuro-chemical high. The inward focus produces docile bodies that are dependent upon extreme bodily training regimes to feel "alive". This docility and the rigidly authoritarian environment of professional dance companies inculcates a kind of passivity which, when habituated by daily practice results in a kind of vocational stupidity.

Classic dance techniques are done “on” and “to” the body, whereas the future choreographic artist must have access to the physical questions that arise “in” the body. The radical concept of choreography that was done “in” the body was initiated by the practice of modern dance at the beginning of the twentieth century. In classical ballet, the most significant choreographic developments since the demise of the Ballets Russes occurred where modern and postmodern dance impacted on practices of ballet.

For centuries, the notion of choreography related to the arrangement of set movement patterns and steps from a finite lexicon. The function of ballet master and choreographer were inter-changeable, and concepts of appropriation and copyright, irrelevant. The choreographer was an arranger of the classical vocabulary, be it Balinese, Indian, or European dance. Young dancers acquired technique during an arduous and long regime, and kinaesthetically the movement habits of a lifetime were inscribed during this highly competitive early training, which often emphasized virtuosity. Only the most gifted and highly trained were taken into professional companies. Classically trained dancers in all cultures find it difficult if not impossible to investigate movement outside their highly prescribed, aesthetically marked and bodily habituated classical techniques.

It is my contention that the training regimes of all classic dance forms are very poor places from which to embark on choreographic development. The greater the technical facility in any classic technique of dance, the more diminished the ability to explore movement with this same dancer's body. This is the main reason why there are so few choreographers to emerge from classical ballet and contemporary dance companies during the past forty years. To work professionally in a ballet company is much more competitive for women and almost invariably they are technically more skilled than male dancers. More than any other single factor, this is why there are fewer women choreographers in ballet. Similarly, the less rigorous inscription of ballet dancers in contemporary dance – the ‘also rans’ of ballet who started training too late – allows more women to access this choreographic field. In any event there is no aesthetic distinction between ballet and contemporary dance as the formative bodies and training methodologies in both fields clearly demonstrate.

9

Doing it

In 1972 I joined the Royal Ballet. Michael Somes had responsibility for Nijinska's *Les Noces* and during a rehearsal praised me as the only dancer who was really ‘doing it’. By ‘it’, Somes meant the ability to lower my centre of gravity, to drop my weight.

Ballet technique is largely concerned with defying gravity and making this look easy. In *Les Noces*, Nijinska (sister of Nijinsky) required classically trained dancers to drop their weight. Contrary to all their training, this choreographic demand was physically frustrating and ultimately the dancers failed in their attempt at mastery. This 'failure' to master the movement idiom created a sense of drama or struggle in the bodies of the individual dancers that collectively gave a tight poetic tension to the work.

Some years later in New York, I saw the Joffrey Ballet performing *Les Noces*. This production had been supervised by Nijinska, who was old and frail at the time. The dancers looked magnificent but the work was somehow vacant.

Like me, these dancers had studied Graham technique and were able to drop their weight. This ability to accomplish the choreographic demand had eroded the poetic tension that was central to the aesthetic value of *Les Noces*.

Clearly Some was misguided in singling me out for praise. Fortunately the dancers of the Royal Ballet and presumably the dancers of the original *Ballets Russes* production in 1923 couldn't do 'it'.

10

Just talk

Ballet technique is elaborated as 'steps' on the walking or standing body.

Poser--to place

To step, implies controlled movement. To place, positionality.

Expose, exposition, (exhibition) repose, posé (not to step, but to place).

Words are instrumentally implicated in the formation of all abstraction.

Language is perceived as an instrument of thought as well as a medium of expression and communication. By means of words, ideas are given legs, or even wings for flights of fantasy.

The metaphor, like life, is haunted by the memory of other metaphors and other lives, in the same way that language can never be innocent. There is a kind of self effacing narcissism and pleasurable seasonal circularity in this logic which inhabits Western intellectual endeavour. Within disciplinary thought, the instrumentality of language reigns supreme.

Enter the dramaturgs, the custodians of High European Culture, or more usually, the intravenous drips for the choreographically challenged step-arrangers of Contemporary Dance.

Expedite—to free one caught by the foot.

It goes without saying because it came before words.

The notion of multiculturalism in Australia is based on criteria and steeped in a perception of culture that derives from 'language' (NESB—Non English Speaking Background) and language, all language, is already a field too differentiated culturally and linguistically to find common ground for mutual understanding. Implicated in our multicultural policy is an intention to 'keep separate', 'isolate' and 'retain difference'. This focus is contrary to the way that individual cultures evolve, adapt, adopt and change.

Most immigrants attempt to nostalgically recreate the cultures they leave or are expelled from, thus creating cultural museums that do not engage with the contemporaneity of either their countries of origin or destination. Australian multicultural policy creates ghettos of displaced people, cultural alienation and a sense of isolation that is probably linked to and exacerbated by the cycles of incarceration and detention on arrival. Australian multiculturalism is a dodo and this should have been recognised with the failure of Esperanto. To find common ground we need to re-examine the possibility of pre linguistic commonalities—an imaginary pre history of embodiment.

Dance as an embodied form, uniquely creates itself from its own matter/substance.

All dance is articulated in specific cultures, by particular bodies, and in this sense, all dance is ethnic dance. This focus on the body and distinctions of body movement places ethnicity at the centre of dance as a practice. Dance is steeped in embodied cultural particularity. In this sense, again, all dance is ethnic dance.

Only a tiny proportion of any given population will be understood to be artists, or even desire to be perceived as such, probably no more than 0.05%. In any event it is necessary to have a certain critical mass of people of any ethnicity to throw up the conditions necessary for the development of both culture and artists. Statistics also tell us that there are over 200 different ethnicities in Australia, many of these arriving as refugees. The Dance Board of the Australia Council through their assessment criteria recognise no cultural differences between or beyond these ethnicities. The 'other' is anyone that is not anglo-saxon (of Non English Speaking Background). When the 'other' is defined through 'difference' from the white anglo-saxon majority, this renders all 200 ethnicities as 'same' in their difference to 'us.'

Australian multiculturalism needs to embrace different cultures rather than elaborate and perpetuate cultural difference. Considering that embodiment is at the centre of the practice of dance, one would expect the Dance Board to be alert and sensitive to issues of race, ethnicity and vulnerability in embodied practice. How is the multicultural criteria which the Dance Board applies to all funding applications not a racist criteria? A criteria based on ethnicity is by definition, racist.

Colonial Vistas

At age eighteen I did company class with the Alvin Ailey Company, on stage at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne. The company was full of the most extraordinary dancers I had ever seen and they were all black. This American Modern Dance bore no resemblance to the pathetic 'jazz ballet' that was taught in dance studios across Australia. I knew immediately that as a white man I would never be able to dance like this. I later understood the class to be a mixture of Graham and Horton techniques with stylistic influence from Talley Beatty.

My professional career began in January 1965 when I was employed by Betty Pounder of J.C. Williamsons as a dancer in the musical comedy "Hello Dolly". For the next four years I worked in commercial theatre, television, pantomime, review, Leagues Clubs and NSW Schools. In Australia at this time, the so called "modern dance" was clearly the domain of passionate amateurs such as Margaret Barr, Elizabeth Dalman, Margaret Lassica and Shirley McKechnie or "commercial dancers" such as Keith Bain and Ronnie Arnold. It bore little resemblance to the American Modern Dance I had seen at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne.

Being disinterested in "Australian jazz ballet and modern technique" I resumed my study of ballet. I had not understood ballet as ethnic European dance or how it inscribed 'whiteness' and 'class'. Part of the problem was that I was a skilled, eminently employable ballet dancer and certainly none of my teachers ever suggested that I should leave Australia to broaden my horizons. My eventual departure was precipitated by an ankle injury which threatened to end my dance career. This injury made me very selective about what subsequent dance training I would do and which choreographers I was prepared to work with. I was awarded the RAD Overseas Fellowship in 1969 although I had known since I first saw a live performance of the Australian Ballet in Rockhampton in 1962 that I had no interest in being a ballet dancer – in performance I thought it was plain silly. In pursuit of my interest in the style of dance I had seen in the Alvin Ailey Company, I set out for Europe in mid 1969. (I had an aversion to going to the USA because both my parents had fought in the Second World War and I had inherited a prejudice to both the "Pomms" and the "Yanks".) However, seeking American Modern Dance in Europe was like trying to find a needle in a hay-stack. I joined and left in quick succession the "famous" English and European contemporary dance companies – NDT, Rambert, Cullberg, Gulbenkian and Strider. The arduous touring schedule of these companies thwarted my desire to study Graham Technique so eventually I joined the Royal Ballet as the resident company rarely toured.

Eventually, after almost a decade of joining and leaving classical ballet and other mixed repertory dance companies in Australia, England and Europe, I came to understand that the practices of American modern and postmodern dance were central to all significant new choreographic development in the canon of

Western dance and that change was driven by the developments of choreographic auteurs in New York City. It gradually dawned on me that these European companies were all “contemporary ballet” companies and that to have access to the embodied heritage of modern dance, I would have to work with American choreographers in the USA, not study their hived off, decontextualised “techniques” taught to ballet dancers in mixed repertory contemporary dance companies in Europe and England. Returning to Australia at the end of 1973, I performed and taught with the Dance Company NSW (now Sydney Dance Company) and ADT in Adelaide. Turning down an invitation to join the company of Merce Cunningham in 1975, I performed and taught with the companies of Twyla Tharp (1975) and Trisha Brown (1979).

I have been the Artistic Director of Dance Exchange since its foundation in 1976.

My ignorance (and that of my Australian teachers) caused me to waste many years in pursuit of a practice that did not exist here or in Europe. I take little comfort in the fact that this ignorance persists to this day and we still encourage would-be choreographers to remain here or send them to the choreographic boondocks of Europe.

My perception of dance was formed in the context of a colonial practice of ballet, and it has taken a long time for me to understand the depth and complexity of my inscription. Returning to Australia at the end of 1975, I enjoyed the notion of dancing in the margins and the creative freedom this implied. I also appreciated the geographical proximity to Asia and the inspiration of its myriad forms of dance. I am interested in dance as a discrete art form as distinct from its perception as a fairly insignificant part of the Entertainment Industry. The centre of my choreographic practice I perceived to be NYC Post Modern Dance and being in the margins of that practice seemed to be a place of creative possibility if not current opportunity in Australia. Of course the problem with margins is that they are positioned and determined by the centre, and centre in Australia and Europe was (and is) ballet. My practice was doubly displaced—un-Australian because it was dance literate hence threatening to local amateur practices of modern dance and not balletic but clearly professional. Critically, the work of Dance Exchange was acclaimed both in Australia and abroad. Initially it was supported by the Australia Council mainly due to enlightened strategic interventions by individual committee members. Eventually with the formation of a separate Dance Board the vision and international perspective of older professional dancers and artists from other disciplines was replaced by younger inexperienced dancers and the dance illiteracy and ignorance of administrative ‘peers’. In the judgement of my ‘peers’ on the Dance Board of the Australia Council, my practice is deemed insupportable. Growing up homosexual in Central Queensland in the 1950’s gives me a certain stoicism. I had worked out by the age of twelve that my sexual pleasure lay outside of the Law, so what was wrong with the Law ?

13

fuck art, lets dance

fuck dance, lets fuck

Seen printed on a T-shirt in a shop at Kings Cross Station.

Human sexuality is always the elephant in the room in any discussion of dance. It is deeply implicated in all embodied art practices, especially dance where the body is central. This creates problems for the perception of dance as an independent, legitimate field of knowledge. Ballet was always perceived as “une femme aux cuisses légères” and the legitimacy problem was solved by marriage to other more established art forms such as theatre, visual arts or music. Contemporary dance is based on the same technique and aesthetics as ballet and has similar problems with legitimacy.

Catherine Clément (*Opera or the Undoing of Woman*) has asserted that as a trajectory of aspiration woman in Roman Catholicism could be the virgin bride of Christ, the virgin mother of God or the whore (Mary Magdalene). The homoerotic body of ballet is elaborated on this catholic body of woman i.e. the axis of virgin, whore. The sacrament of confession enables a sensuality that was elided from Protestantism. The price of this sensual body was legitimacy only through relationship (marriage). The dancing body in all Western concert dance including ballet and contemporary dance is legitimised through its marriage to other art practices, mainly theatre/music. The virgin/whore duplicity is embodied in the very technique of ballet, not only in its historical provenance.

14

The Balletic Body

Head – sovereign

Arms – courtiers who frame the sovereign

Torso – the aristocracy who support the monarchy (core strength)

Legs – the happy peasants who do all the work.

Ballet reflects the desire for control and order imposed by Louis 14th, and mirrors the social order of the French court. The technique of ballet is based on the stability of the torso and head (framed by picture perfect arms) all paraded on well turned-out shapely legs. Ballet is based on muscular stabilisation of the

torso in order to provide a firm anchor for exaggerated/extravagant movement of the limbs as exemplified by the practice of Sylvie Guillem. The fetishisation of the limbs (especially the legs) is the hallmark of classical ballet and it is this technique that is utilised by most practices of contemporary dance. The technique of ballet was developed to be visible from a great distance in the manner of semaphore, initially in the palace courtyards and later in the Opera Houses of Europe. The technique of ballet is aesthetically exhausted—where else can Sylvie put her leg.

Hip-Hop dance might get to the finals of “So You Think You Can Dance”, but the winner is always the one who has done ballet. If we exclude New Orientalism (Butoh, Yoga Dancing, Suzuki Stomping and Bollywood), the ideal body that inscribes practices of Contemporary Dance is steeped in the technique of classical ballet. It is important to recognise the Eurocentrism that sustains this balletic hegemony and the aesthetics of “whiteness” that it inscribes.

The Ballets Russes was the golden era of ballet and Diaghilev’s infatuation with Nijinsky, central to its creativity. Until fairly recently the arts was one of the few arenas where “abnormal” sexuality was tolerated, if not embraced. Many significant choreographers were homosexual and to admit that you were a professional ballet dancer was tantamount to acknowledging sexual deviance. (Regardless of your actual sexual preference) The milieu of ballet functioned as a homoerotic social network that gave entrée to a distinctive culturally literate subculture and also assuaged a sense of isolation and fear of homophobic violence during foreign tours.

I am interested in the relationship between human sexuality and aesthetics, the necessarily subjective, intimate and private nature of this formulation within individual bodies. This intimate relationship is akin to the subjective relationship of the right hand and the left hand within the same body, but more complex because there is more at stake (human reproduction). Human sexuality is a fascinating but somewhat limited way of understanding the body/mind nexus and what it can do. The harnessing of human sexuality to the embodied practice of dance creates a hegemonic practice that is resistant to other ways of knowing and being, particularly of the self.

In the techniques of both Graham and Vaganova the torso is sexualised. This gives a powerful individual performative agency to these bodies and a reciprocal loss of other movement options and choreographic possibilities. The use of the muscles of the perineum facilitates a quick recognition of the relationship between acetabulum and femoral head and allows the inside thighs to manage this relationship. Lifting the perineum and genitals facilitates a downward thrust into the femoral head through the acetabulum. The more attention one brings to the area of this joint, the easier it is to manage the instability and fluidity of the spine. The use of the muscles and fascia of the perineum in Vaganova helps locate the management of instability in the base of the pelvis where the leg and body join in the iliofemoral joint and this is the most efficient place to manage the movement potential of the torso in ballet technique. In most understandings

of ballet, the torso is *muscularly* stabilised and used as an anchor for thwacking the legs around in virtuosic acrobatic display - the looser the better.

Ballet and a neutered form of Graham Technique are deeply implicated in Merce Cunningham's Technique. Merce however, insists that the reversal of the curve in the lumbar spine had nothing to do with the sensations of a shallow Graham contraction or indeed any sensation in the torso below the waist. The torques, twists and abrupt directional changes may not be from ballet, but the commitment to extravagant leg and arm gestures, elevation and an almost prudish commitment to verticality certainly are, as is the extensive use of the mirror in class.

The complex relationships between seeing, being and doing in practices of ballet celebrates and fetishises young male bodies and enshrines patriarchal values. The etiquette and technique of the ballet class inculcates and perpetuates passive-aggressive behaviour. It normalises the experience of the "subjected and the subjugated". For suburban ballet schools, the jousting fields are the cycles of children's and major examinations, eisteddfods and international ballet competitions. The notion of beautiful young bodies disporting themselves for the patron's pleasure is central to the perception of western concert dance and ballet.

While performing the set *enchainment*, what is my relationship to the other students in the class? (Why is this called a "class"?) In depth transmission is done in private lessons so what is this class other than a place to learn and rehearse fixity (social stability) and positionality? In class one is performing one's best version of the *enchainment* often monitoring this performance in a mirror. It is an aesthetic passive-aggressive competition where the rules are deeply regulated, related to sexuality and youth but never overtly revealed. (One of the incongruous elements of this aesthetic agenda is that the idealised body of the ballerina is an adolescent male, which becomes a virtual body for legions of little girls and only attained exceptionally through a kind of arrested puberty and starvation.) The necessary fascination with the malleability, manipulation and changeability of the image of the self, reflected in two dimensions, is a rehearsal for the rigidity of the lived, highly prescribed experience of the professional dancer.

As audience we sit in the dark and are implicated in the sensuality of human movement, aesthetic desire and looking. Through our emotionally invested deeply embodied habits, we create a virtual provenance to the uber bodies of Micha and Sylvie. We negotiate the shifting fault lines of contemporary morality, the instability of eroticism, pornography and art—easier to follow than lead.

Historically, the sexual preferences of Italian, French and Russian aristocrats shaped the field and evolution of ballet and human sexuality continues to be central to the aesthetics and patronage of dance.

Western notions of beauty and the aesthetics of the balletic body colonized the world with the spread of industrial modernity. The aesthetics of the balletic body is all pervasive even in countries like India (through representation in Bollywood). The homoeroticism of the ballerina — long limbs, narrow hips and no bust - owes its provenance to Greek notions of ephebic beauty, the ideal beauty of adolescent males. The situation of the dancing body today, vis-à-vis ballet, is comparable to the resistive practice of Isadora Duncan at the beginning of the 20th century. The big distinction being that whereas Isadora invoked an imaginary Greek beauty, the contemporary ballerina has deeply inscribed the ephebic body (and desire for it) and this strategy taps a deep homoerotic vein in patriarchal order.

Notions of beauty in ballet are over-determined along the lines of ephebic beauty. A pornographic encounter rather than one rich in potentiality. Its muscularity doesn't allow for the necessary neutrality of abstraction hence it cannot suggest any other possible reading. A safe bet, a sure thing, a universal professional body—the balletic body.

15

Falling backwards

Emotions are registered in the musculature and fascia of the body rather than the joints and the balletically inscribed body is habitually emotionally invested in its own provenance as can be discerned in the anticipatory forelock tugging forwardness of the English stance, the four-square uprightness of the American style and the ecstatic left behind (abandoned) body of Vaganova.

In Vaganova's method, the sense of the sacrum lengthening down and subtly forward (but not tucking under) is counterbalanced by a perception of a tiny falling of the head backwards, which is often amplified by the framing of the arms. This action is initiated in the muscles of the perineum through lifting the genitals (akin to trying to suck them up into the lower abdomen). Of course it is the whole pelvis that moves slightly forward and the connected spine and head slightly backwards on the fulcrum of the femoral heads, which being rounded make themselves available for easy movement through a range prescribed only by the depth of the acetabulum and the surrounding muscles, ligaments and fascia. This sense of falling is stabilised by the wrapping muscles of the inner thighs.

The relationship between the use of *epaulement* in Vaganova and the instability of the running body is through the desire for movement continuity in the embodied narrative of the dancer/performer. This could be understood in terms of an editing problem—how to mobilise the unconscious part of the brain (the old brain) that manages the running body in order to create a smooth continuity between disparate movement gestures, assertions or phrases. To activate this brain-body, it is necessary to destabilize the torso, even slightly, as in Vaganova technique. The wrapping muscles at the top of the legs (used for turn-out) and

the lifting of the perineum creates the possibility of falling backwards ever so slightly while moving forward or to the side. This is the spinal use and leg muscularity of the power sprinter.

This activity is clearly not marathon running but it shares with distance running a moving, fluid rhythmic management of instability that relates to how continuity is created in exceptional dancing. The powerful leg action leading the torso does relate to the sprinting body and it is to this type of running that balletic virtuosity is analogous. In power running or sprinting, the legs drive forward and the body, head and shoulders seem left behind (abandoned) by the powerful leg and pelvic action. Like the virtuosity of balletic solos, this type of leg action can be maintained for only a few minutes at a time. Through this smooth linking or editing of one dance gesture or phrase to another by an appeal to the unstable efficiency of the running body (in the marathon) as distinct from the sprinting body (in Vaganova's ballet method) we begin to mobilize a new imaginary for dance.

16

Technique and style

There are three basic stances that are elaborated in the various techniques and styles of ballet that for clarity could be related to the centre line (and plane) of the body as:

- (1) Slightly forward—(I associate this stance with British ballet and the RAD).
- (2) Centred—(I associate with American ballet but not Balanchine).
- (3) Slightly behind—(I associate with Russian ballet particularly the Vaganova method).

The slightly forward or backward stance implicates the muscles and fascia more strongly than the joint centredness of American ballet. The forward and backward alignments implicate this muscular and fascial memory in a way that is associated with style—the abject European catholic body comes with the baggage of embodied history, a dominant theme in the dramaturgy of European Dance Theatre. The four-square joint centredness and uninflected plainness of American ballet lent itself to elaboration in the various “techniques” and styles of dance modernism precisely because it lacked this muscular investment and associated emotional colouring. I associate this stance with the protestant body.

Ballet is elaborated on the movement of a stable torso and central to the control and management of the torso is the muscles of the perineum. This use of the perineum is functionally useful in all three alignments, but it is less muscularly (and emotionally) invested in American ballet because of the central vertical stance and the joint centredness (and related intelligent use of the deep structure, the bones).

Inevitably this strong use of the muscles of the perineum (“core strength”) sexualises ballet technique and this happens at a deeply individual level. (This use of the perineum is the same at the beginning of a

Graham contraction.) The harnessing of emotionally invested individual sexuality to these techniques is what gives agency to great performers in both ballet and Graham. This very agency creates a hegemonic power relationship in individual bodies that are then unable to “professionally experience” or even “see” movement outside these highly charged movement lexicons. The use of the perineum in the techniques of Vaganova and Graham has greatly enhanced technical facility and virtuosity of dancers making these techniques useful to the Entertainment Industry. The technical facility of these bodies has precipitated an audience demand for virtuosity that has reached technical limits in the human body. This has led to aesthetic exhaustion in both these techniques (ballet and Graham) and a related choreographic stasis. The only significant developments of the balletic canon since Diaghilev have been where dance modernism impacted on ballet.

The demise of dance modernism in NYC since the late 1970's and the re-emergence of the balletic body as the formative and normative body in Western dance (and probably through the reach of film, TV and the internet, of world dance), charts the demise of dance as a legitimate and discrete art form. Professional ballet and contemporary dance companies produce uniquely skilled performing artists but none have produced significant choreographic artists, neither here, nor in Russia, China, Europe or England.

17

Ballet in Australia

Ballet is ethnic European dance, and the Australian Ballet is at best a muscular, colonial rendition. The Australian Ballet was modelled on the British Royal Ballet, and its only distinguishing feature is its muscularity – as Jiri Kylian has observed, “a bunch of cowgirls on pointe.” Our colonial practices of ballet could never authentically contextualise the history, emotional trauma and abjection of the European catholic balletic body and were always stylistically “improper”—hence the necessity of authentically inscribed European/English artistic directors and ballet mistresses to forge a stylistic provenance.

Even before the formation of the Australia Council, ballet in Australia was clearly based on English models: more precisely on The Royal Ballet and Ballet Rambert via Van Praagh, Woolliams, Gielgud, Scott and Taylor. Decades before the establishment of the Australian Ballet, organisations such as the British Ballet Organisation and The Royal Academy of Dancing dominated the teaching of ballet in cities and country towns throughout the nation. From a colonial perspective British ballet was synonymous with the values of English culture —all those imperial Dames (Dame Ninette de Valois, Dame Marie Rambert, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Dame Peggy van Praagh and Dame Margaret Scott). This British domination of Australian dance continues through the staff of the Australia Council and the adoption of out of date British

Arts Council policy. (It is also commensurate with Prime Minister Abbot's re-introduction of lords and ladies and the public subsidy of the new ballerina hut in Melbourne.)

With monotonous regularity, the popular press does lifestyle pieces on ballet dancers where they are invariably depicted as disciplined, athletic, pretty and vapid. Ballerinas usually perceive their art as handmaidens to music and waffle on about giving expressive interpretation to the music – I wonder why they think that music needs interpreters. The notion of dance that is married to music is a somewhat limited view of the potential of dance and human imagination and one that is symptomatic of a total ignorance of the provenance of dance modernism.

The centrality of ballet technique in all Australian universities that offer undergraduate programmes of dance is ethically derelict. To start training in classical ballet at a tertiary level is an abject waste of educational, intellectual and human resources. None of the tertiary institutes since their inception have ever or can ever produce a professionally significant ballet dancer as undergraduates commence training too late, yet ballet technique forms the core study of the major tertiary institutes (WAAPA, VCA, QUT and Adelaide College of the Arts). The university terms and semesters do not allow for the continuity of physical training and discipline that is a pre-requisite for the development of ballet technique. Additionally, these older university graduates will never compete successfully for the few professional dance jobs with the younger graduates of the elite professional ballet schools – if you are not dancing professionally in a ballet company by the age of 19, you have little chance of making a career in the ballet.

The continuing appointment of arts bureaucrats associated with British ballet did nothing to alleviate this situation. The Dance Board under Jennifer McLaughlin "streamlined" its application procedures and this privileged the choreographer as the marketable "brand name". This effectively eliminated support for the developmental needs of professional dancers as well as the possibility of young dancers gaining access to travel, invaluable international exposure and experience. The same small group of more established contemporary dancers are used interchangeably and instrumentally by a coterie of compliant choreographers in "pieces" conforming to the politically expedient dictums of creative producers in a tightly controlled government subsidised entertainment industry.

The artisanal organisational structure of modern and post-modern dance in the USA supported the emergence of the choreographic auteur, the notion of the unique individual artist that was useful to consumer capitalism. In classical ballet it is also observable that all significant choreographers were significant dancers and that dancer and choreographer developed symbiotically, Fonteyn and Ashton for example. In dance modernity, the separate fields of dance and choreography were often collapsed by the phenomena of the choreographer as principal dancer and "star". In ballet the principal dancer is often the "star" but rarely the choreographic auteur. Professional ballet and contemporary dance companies

produce uniquely skilled performing artists but none have produced significant choreographic artists, neither here, Russia, China, Europe nor England.

Profoundly misunderstanding the cultural potential of embodied knowledge and the symbiotic developmental relationship of dancer and choreographer has had dire consequences on all dance policy initiatives in Australia since the inception of the Australia Council. The director and staff of the Dance Board nominate peers to the minister for the arts for appointment to this board (after consultation with peak bodies such as Ausdance which, being reliant for funding on the Australia Council, reflects the same values). Modern dance, Post-Modern dance, multicultural and otherly-abled practices and even contemporary dance in the tertiary sector are all perceived to be the arena of the other (to ballet) and only accredited with professional status and value if they demonstrate competency in the technique of classical ballet.

18

Ballet and professional legitimacy.

It needs to be understood and clearly articulated that there is a cultural consequence in the bodies of dancers whose daily training is a ballet class. Ballet predisposes psychologically and physically the minds and bodies of its students and inhibits the possibilities for exploration of the potential of human movement that is not in the balletic lexicon. This has serious consequences for the development of future choreographic practices. The Australian Ballet and its school graduates, having created a choreographically sterile colonial practice of classical ballet, are now implicated in furthering English cultural domination and European colonization in the guise of Contemporary Dance. Australian practice of contemporary dance has produced a number of dance “celebrities” all of who are graduates of the Australian Ballet or its school. The creation of dance celebrities is a poor substitute for the ability to create even one internationally significant choreographic artist.

The notion of the choreographic auteur emerged in dance modernism and was subsequently used by ballet-masters to describe their work, but some, like Balanchine preferred the more accurate appellation, “ballet-master”. The ballet lexicon was drawn from European folk and contemporary social dances. These were refined by the ballet-masters to make them suitable for the courtly entertainments of Renaissance Italy and France. Viewed from a considerable distance, ballet technique evolved to meet the legibility and organisational requirements of these spectacles. Clarity of line, simple musicality and exaggerated gestural expressivity prevailed. With professionalisation, virtuosity became the measure of accomplishment in what soon became a theatrical entertainment practice. The incorporation of extreme

gymnastics and other exotic physicality provided a contemporary gloss to its stilted academic vocabulary and were integral both to the survival of ballet and its further deployment in contemporary dance. Appropriation was perceived as a matter of economic expedience and was standard practice. The legacy of this attitude in both ballet and contemporary dance continues to this day, not so much in Europe but in countries that were colonised by the Europeans. (In Europe the provenance of work is more easily discernable to culturally literate audiences.)

The technique of ballet is eminently suitable for the deployment of cultural storm troopers -- the corps de ballet and the marine corps have much in common. Ballet has been utilised in propaganda by governments of all political persuasions and its use in staging "genuine" ethnicities is all pervasive, for example, Les Ballets Africains, Alvin Ailey, Bangarra and The Red Detachment of Women.

"Traditional" dance is undervalued in Western culture because it lacks the notion of unique individual authorship and hence is more difficult to implicate in capitalist ideology and value systems. Still, it is unfortunate that Bangarra's Stephen Page does not want to do "ooga booga" dance (his term) as indigenous Australian dance is the oldest dance extant and of course it is of enormous interest to the world. There are many reasons why the work of Bangarra should be supported and most have nothing to do with European aesthetics, the ongoing European colonization of bodies through ballet or the implicated inscription of whiteness.

19

Contemporary Dance

The Russian aristocracy aspired to all things French and somewhat ironically after the revolution, Vaganova built on the inherited homoerotic Italian/French catholic body of ballet. Vaganova's method for ballet training evolved in the USSR during the 1920's when ballet was subjected to a sustained attack from the "left wing" press. In the introduction to the 4th Russian edition of her book, *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*, she suggested alternatives to classical training were: "Theophysical training, athletic gymnastics, eccentric dancing, mechanical dance and acrobatic dance..." It has taken the collapse of the USSR to bring the Left and Right sides of the body politic into alignment to give birth to Contemporary Dance. (An amalgam of ballet with the above suggested alternatives to classical training plus yoga dancing, new orientalism and disability dance.)

Contemporary Dance like classical ballet is a hybrid theatrical form. Ballet since its inception was a hybrid and interdisciplinary practice. Notwithstanding the radical theatrical practices of Pina Bausch and Robert

Wilson, Contemporary Dance has done little to advance Western choreographic canon since the interdisciplinary Orientalism of the Ballets Russes.

Contemporary Dance developed in the economically depressed environment that was Europe post World War 2. In the European nation states, culture was seen as an integral part of social reconstruction. Companies such as Rambert, NDT, London Contemporary Dance Theatre and Cologne Tanz Forum had limited access to the American choreographic auteurs so modern dance "techniques" (mainly Graham, Nikolais and later Cunningham) were grafted to the balletically trained bodies of these contemporary dance companies.

The choreographic auteurs at the centre of dance modernity were mainly American. European artists such as Pina Bausch, Sasha Waltz and De Keersmaeker gained access to these American practices through their studies at American schools and universities. With the collapse of the National Endowment for the Arts and the death of dance modernism in the USA, European access to American dance modernism was limited to the passed down experiences of the second and third generations of American modern dancers who moved to Europe and taught extensively in well endowed State funded European schools where ballet remained a core study. These schools include: SNDD, Amsterdam, Statens Dans School, Stockholm, PARTS, Brussels and The Place, London.

Contemporary dance re-emerged in Europe during the 1980's to fill the void caused by the death of modern and postmodern dance practices in the USA. Laurence Louppe's elegant articulation of *La dans Contemporaine* gave a critical framework and language to postmodern dance, but it is important to recognize that the practices theorized and discussed were all American. This language and critical discourse did not give access to the physical questions and embodied knowledge of the American studio-based practices. In Europe and her colonies the formative body remained that of European Ballet.

The choreographers of contemporary dance have little in common with the choreographic auteurs that emerged in dance modernism, but much in common with the ballet masters and choreographers of Classical and Romantic ballet. In contemporary dance there is little exploration of the potential of human movement. What is presented in performance is a synthesis of already existing movement techniques (mistakenly called languages) with dramatic, musical and scenic elements from other art forms, usually filtered through a dramaturgy and typically a "collaborative methodology". In a real way contemporary dance evolved in an environment of a Pan-European sheltered workshop. Within the political bureaucracy of the European Union it is further deployed to shore up notions of a European cultural identity.

To understand the use of the term "contemporary dance" in Australia it is necessary to trace the historic evolution of the use of the term in Europe, especially Germany in the post World War II era, as well as

France, England and to a lesser extent Belgium and Holland. Isa Partsch-Bergsohn in "Modern Dance in Germany and the United States" traces the effects the Third Reich had on the key European choreographers – Adolphe, Laban, Wigman and Jooss and how this impacted on the development of American Modern Dance, and how this in turn revitalized the New German Tanztheater, producing artists of the calibre of Pina Bausch. The influence of the American Modern Dance heritage is very clear; Pina Bausch is after all a graduate of Juilliard. In a real way, Tanztheater's emergence was facilitated by the lack of an established ballet tradition in Germany. The emergence of modern dance practices in England, France and Holland was constrained by the large State subsidized established ballet companies and their perceived role in forging national cultural identities in the various European Nation States. Access to the American Modern Dance heritage was kept at arm's length and concentrated on the importation of American teachers of the various "techniques". This was the case in England, Holland, France, Sweden and Belgium and to a lesser extent Germany. From an Australian perspective it is crucial that we understand the choreographic impotence of this practice. Where there has been any European choreographic development, it is clearly attributable to a more direct access to the American modern and postmodern dance heritage.

Contemporary dance is aptly described by the American term "Eurotrash". Most contemporary dancers are 'also ran' ballet dancers, whose practices incorporate a smattering of modern dance techniques (Cunningham, Graham, Limon) or adjacent practices such as Yoga, Martial Arts, Gymnastics or physical theatre. Ballet was always a collaborative and interdisciplinary practice that incorporated new technologies, so where and how is contemporary dance different from ballet, other than in scale of production and the skill of the performers?

British dance critic, Gerald Dowler characterised contemporary dance as:

---the morass of European dance companies and their roster of choreographer-directors who pump out euro-schlock ballet in the manner of all those over-subsidised European Union farms growing low grade cabbages for no one in particular. (Financial Times, Tuesday June 12, 2007)

The tone is dismissive and reeks of Anglo/French antagonism, but the reality is there for all to observe, as are the cabbages.

20

Not Exactly Insider Trading

After several failed applications to present work at the International Performing Arts Market I requested feedback from the Australia Council and was informed that the committee deemed my work not a suitable "fit" for this event. The notion of inclusion by criteria of "fit" is somewhat over-determined and I was trying

to think of a suitable response to this criteria of “fit” when I went to the first night of The Australian Ballet’s Sleeping Beauty in Sydney and witnessed the Telstra Ballet Award and the People’s Choice Award. The penny finally dropped.

The winner of the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award as well as the Telstra People’s Choice Award is the photogenic Coryphée whose beautiful, full-page air brushed image is featured five times in The Sleeping Beauty Souvenir Programme. A perfect advertisement for the sponsor, Telstra, this was clearly an example of industry “fit” as understood by the arts bureaucrats/ curators who had selected the “winners” for inclusion and spotlight showcase presentation at the Arts Market.

In both instances, these events are staged as competitions to determine “suitable fit”. In sports, there are fairly clear rules of participation, referees, video and public surveillance and of course clear winners and losers. In sports the rules are somewhat simpler to follow and less about subjective interpretation compared to the criteria of “taste” utilised in arts funding. But this should not be a reason to decide that the “general public” is interested only in “fashion”, which is a field created by advertising and business precisely for profit.

The only artists being given access to the “level playing fields” are those already in receipt of Australia Council funding. The Arts Market is a charade of self-justification for the funding decisions of the Australia Council and previously the State Ministries in the allocation of public funds. Another question is why the Arts Market as well as the Telstra Awards need to be staged as competitions? Clearly this has to do with advertising, self-promotion, and keeping the sponsor happy, but in other arenas it is called match fixing or insider trading.

In 1990 my video dance “Approaching Sleipner Junction” was awarded the *Prix Special du Jury* at the International Video Dance Competition at Sète (France). Not knowing much about film festivals, I did not appreciate the significance of the Jury Prize. There was money attached to all the other prize categories so I assumed that this was the encouragement award. At the reception after the awards, I learnt several interesting facts: (1) The composer on the panel had wanted to give me the music composition award because of my work’s innate musicality—it was electronically mute, not even ambient sound. (2) The German dance critic on the committee believed that the work had been improvised for camera and over many glasses of champagne tried to get me to confess to him that this was the case. (3) The committee felt constraint about awarding my work the Grand Prix as the principal sponsors were the French and German cultural TV channels and electronically mute work is difficult for broadcast—keeping the sponsors happy.

Producers

Film, video, and dance are amongst the most expensive media for the production of art. Part of my recent research was to explore the use of film and video in dance and especially the possibilities suggested by the term "dance for camera." My participation in several international video dance festivals made me aware of the artistic impoverishment of the whole field, and I spent several years thinking about this – wondering why this is so.

What is being produced as "new" cultural product is camera re-works of pieces that have had considerable history on the European and American festival circuits. These "new" works are invariably well performed, if somewhat vacuous. This symbiotic relationship between "live" performance on the festival circuits and "cultural" product for TV is a testament to the enormous financial investment required to develop "new" work for the media of film and video. Of course, underlying the above scenario is the huge cost of developing the initial choreography for the stage.

Gradually, I became aware that the whole area of television, film, and video production is the captive of producers, in precisely the same way that all live performance of dance is the captive of sponsors, festival directors, and the latest aberration, "creative-producers". Contemporary producers and artistic directors simply do not have the cultural clout and experience of predecessors such as Diaghliev. He was the product of another era, an aristocrat with the time, knowledge, connections and means to indulge his passion for the arts in a way that no contemporary artistic director or creative producer could hope to emulate. This is hardly surprising considering that they are the product of a very different social order. In Australia, our colonial origins and geographical isolation added to problems associated with dance literacy. Anyone from elsewhere, except perhaps New Zealand, is perceived as more dance literate than someone who lives here, and so the cultural colonisation continues. Europe's failed experiments are our new dinosaurs.

This led me to reflect on the role and vision of the individual artist, and the conflict and compromise that result when the artistic control is vested with groups of individuals who are not artists, but whose role is integral to the means of production in practices such as film, video, and dance. The roles of executive producer, producer, and finance director are well documented in film and television production, and form core study areas in many tertiary institutions. These roles are less well understood in dance.

All new technologies are ways by which we extend the body's capacity to understand and experience differently. Considering the financial investment necessary to work in film, video, or dance, it is easy to see

why these are such conservative practices, artistically controlled by producers whose responsibility is mostly fiscal. It is also easy to understand why the work is mostly artistically mortgaged and critically bankrupt.

The media of dance are the body, time, and space. Unfortunately for dance as an art form, these media have individual commercial values far in excess of their use in dance. Time is money, space is real estate, and the body is the vehicle for the world's oldest profession. The commodification and trading of the body in free market capitalism refuses to recognize or give value to any relationship not concerned with buying or selling. This economic framing of contemporary dance has led to a situation where producers should more aptly be termed "procurers" - purveyors of fine flesh for the entertainment industry. Mass entertainment is an important aspect of popular culture, but it is clearly not art. Most government funding agencies, while acknowledging this difference, produce funding criteria and guidelines that fail to take account of these different activities - art and entertainment.

22

Choreography

The dancer and choreographer articulate their relationship through a shared studio practice that forms the basis of a choreographic text or *écriture* in which both are deeply implicated through the dancing. Choreography is a dialogical practice. (Even when the dancer is also the choreographer, the work is usually developed on the bodies of other dancers.) Dance is the only art form that places human embodiment at the centre of its practice. I understand dance and choreography more generally as a site for asking physical questions that cannot, as yet, be rendered/articulated in any other "language". I believe that language, all language is already too culturally invested in its own becoming.

Dance and Choreographic practices are formed in reciprocal relationship to each other and within a broader community of other dancers and choreographers. I worked with Twyla and Trisha, but with whom will Rachel and Stuart work? What future is there for Jono, Nicole and David? Merce is dead, Trisha has Alzheimers and Twyla is on Broadway. A whole generation of dancers have emerged whose only access to the radical thought of dance is through the wake-like reconstructions that have truly confirmed the death of post modern dance. Judson Church has been celebrating the life and death of post modern dance for years. The death of modern and postmodern practices and the emergence of European Contemporary Dance, has perceptually consolidated ballet's claim to centrality as the underlying technique of all professional practice of Western Concert Dance. During this same time frame, there have been no significant choreographic developments in this practice.

23

For thought to enter language is to improvise.

The floor is the horizon up close. To understand the essence of classical ballet is to understand the horizontal through verticality and gravity: to understand the symmetrical use of the pelvis in relationship to the horizon. The need to constantly return to the vertical (or upright verticality) to assert our humanity, our relationship to the other and to ourselves as other.

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Studio Spaces

Choreographers in all traditions need to visualise and internalise a spatial sense that is culturally specific. In the Western performance tradition this sense of scale and proportion is very different from our usual domestic dwellings. Inhabiting living/loft spaces is an effective way of becoming familiar and comfortable (at home) with spatial volumes and large areas that are the 'canvases' in which Western choreographic practices are developed.

All significant choreographic developments in modern and post modern dance have occurred in the USA in private studio spaces that usually doubled as domestic space for the artists involved. The disused industrial buildings in urban centres such as Soho provided affordable artist housing and the necessary studio spaces to develop individual choreographic practices. The need for such spaces has perhaps not been clearly articulated, particularly by established artists, who clearly understood this need, and almost invariably had private studios for their own use exclusively. (Tharp, Brown and Cunningham, for example) Of course institutional spaces (State Theatres and Opera Houses) are utilised by established artists, but initial formative experiences were usually in their quasi - domestic private studios. The exclusive use of institutional spaces even by established artists is exceptional. (Pina Bausch was one such exception)

According to figures published by Centre National de la Dans, 237 choreographic companies were given State support in France during 2006. As well, France has 12 Ballet Companies mainly based in Opera Houses in addition to the 15 National Choreographic Centres. In the late 1970's through the 1990's, the French Government created these centres in response to a perceived need to create and support choreographic practices. This endeavour has been a spectacular and very expensive failure—so expensive that it cannot be acknowledged in France. The Choreographic Centres clearly demonstrate the problem of institutional space for developmental dance practices. Government intervention has created a series of temporary homes for choreographic artists. Institutional homes that are not quite homes—more like orphanages.

It is very easy to observe the relationship between the cost of real estate and the lack of potential for dancers to own private studio spaces. I am aware of only one Australian professional choreographer who owns her own studio. Spaces owned or run by collectives and other groups have the problems of shared households. Fine as temporary arrangements for emerging artists, but not suitable for the development of mature artistic practices.

In Australia, outside of the State subsidised, established ballet and contemporary dance companies there are no independent professional practices, only amateurs and hobbyists. Development in all artistic fields occurs through resistive practices, but in embodied practices, resistance is exhausting and often destructive—the body is inherently conservative and movement patterns are habitually emotionally invested, hence difficult to modify. In a real sense, choreographers are culpable, as we have failed to cogently articulate our own developmental needs.

The underlying question as to why private/domestic spaces are necessary for choreographic development is associated with the choreographic need to touch other bodies. This need is usually unacknowledged and indeed often perceived as shameful to the very perception of dance and its tentative emergence as a legitimate field of knowledge. Not only does it invoke the sexually dubious past of ballet but also a more contemporary fear, the repression of touch in most religions and social encounters generally. Work environment, education and even parent and child relationship are all highly regulated by law.

(The evolution of forms such as Contact Improvisation from an art and performance practice to a network for more general social contact (touch me hold me feel me heal me) is clearly symptomatic of a perceived sensual deprivation within Anglo-Saxon cultures. In all Protestant/Lutheran cultures, the sense of touch is repressed. Further examples of this same “need” is the proliferation of body therapies and practices -- BMC, Alexander, Feldenkrais, Rolf, Traeger, Todd Alignment, yoga, remedial massage, martial arts and gym culture generally.)

25

History

Pushing my way through the enveloping roots of the Moreton Bay Fig trees that covered the entrance, I noticed footprints in the salt infused powdery rock that formed the floor and thought that others had found our cave. During school holidays, my friend Peter Clayton and I had spent many years exploring this ancient headland that was slowly being eroded by the actions of salt, wind and tide. I hadn't been in the cave for well over a decade. In the interim my parents had sold our home on Mulambin beach, my father had died and I had lived abroad for five years. Staring at these footprints the eerie sensation 'someone

just walked over my grave' engulfed me. I realised that many of these footprints were mine, just slightly smaller. These footprints had endured for about the same length of time as postmodern dance—a sobering thought.

We never climbed on The Bluff, the headland at the other end of Mulambin beach. Recently I learnt that it was the site of a large Aboriginal massacre.

Some years ago, I spoke with my neighbour about the death of his mother in 1976. She was aged 104 and apparently spoke with great lucidity about her grandmother who had come to Australia in the 1790s. In my 68th year my perception of time has shifted to an embodied one, measured through a sense of generations. I have been here for more than a quarter of the time of white Australia. This is not ancient history or the expedient sense of time proffered by politicians like John Howard.

Australian author Meaghan Morris has argued persuasively that “we must learn to want history.” Need speaks of lack, while want speaks of desire. I understand history as a dynamic interaction between individual and collective memory. Authentic accounts of human memory are necessarily subjective, always provisional and open to constant revision and re-interpretation. The selective use of memory by and in the body is an instance, as well as an account of, the desire for history.

I initiated the Larret Project and the organisation Dancelink because I understand choreography as an ongoing studio based dialogical practice between dancer and choreographer. For my own choreographic development I understood the need for a broadly based community of Australian artists, and for them to have access to seminal international dance practices through intensive workshops and performances. These initiatives gave access to artists such as Sara Rudner, Dana Reitz, Lisa Nelson, Steve Paxton, Pauline de Groot, I Made Djimat, Christina Formaggia, Daksha Sheth, Lisa Krauss, Jaap Flier, Mary Prestidge, Ulla Koivisto, Willy de la Bye, Deborah Jowitt, Susan Milani, Pam Matt and John Rolland amongst others. A shared access to this embodied heritage creates a rich and dare I say, “multicultural” history for us. This is very different to a commercial niche marketing opportunity or activities such as the ubiquitous Australian Arts Festival that emerges from an easily identified lack such as the perception of cultural isolation in the Antipodes.

The problem with the creation of Arts Festivals is that they invariably perpetuate and institutionalise this “lack.” It is after all their *raison d'être*. In no way do they address the “cause” of the “lack.” The Indian academic, Dr Sandra Chatterjee has designated this problem with festivals as the “lack within the lack” This distinction is important to understanding the different implications of dance literacy for artists and the general public.

Histories have been written about the development of professional ballet practices in Australia (Pask, *Enter the Colonies Dancing*), but the development of modern dance here has remained uncommented upon, mainly because there was nothing to say about it as a professional practice. By the end of the 1960's, Ballet was a well established professional practice.

Dance Exchange was formed in 1975, and initial Australian Council for the Arts support was granted on the basis of the balletic legitimacy of some of its members (Karczag, Dumas and to a lesser extent, Hassall). Significantly, this was the first time that the Australia Council gave support to individual dance artists. Prior to the formation of Dance Exchange, modern dance was perceived to be the domain of passionate amateurs or skilled foreigners such as American, Ronnie Arnold.

To understand present dance practices in Australia, it is important that accurate historical accounts be given. Because of my implication in this history, it is not appropriate for me to judge the value of these early practices, but it can be clearly understood from reviews of its performances, during four decades, that in Australia, Dance Exchange was in a league of its own. In fact the pre-eminence of Dance Exchange in Australia meant very little as all other practices of modern and postmodern dance here lacked professional provenance and professional credibility. (Clearly my view of history differs markedly from the Rusden centred account of Professor Shirley McKechnie of Melbourne University as articulated in the inaugural Dame Peggy Van Praagh lecture.)

26

WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant)

The protestant body of post modern dance was moved from the joints and what you saw is what you got. The everyday body and its movement is aesthetically defined by the cultural, social and political context in which it occurs. This is clear if we examine the dancing body in the context of a culture that is radically different from our own but it is less obvious when we compare Australian, European or American bodies due to shared belief systems.

The work of Trisha Brown had the straightforward plainness and elegance of Quaker furniture. The dances are confident, sensuous, direct and functional. The dancing requires a sensual engagement with joint action, informed by experiential anatomy. The dancer must be at home in her skin and have an improvisational focus on the play of gravity in the moving body, especially at the joints. This is a very different sense of embodiment from that of ballet, where the image of the body that is internalised is formed externally through reflection in a mirror then practiced and committed to memory through vigorous muscular repetition.

Trisha Brown utilised the Ball Work of Elaine Summers and also an awareness of the body from practices such as experiential anatomy (Ideokinesis). The body was understood as an engineer might look at systems rather than from the perspective of the gravity denying techniques that developed in ballet. Steve Paxton's legacy of Contact Improvisation has been embraced by the largely sensually deprived Anglo-Saxon cultures and could be seen as a continuation of the sensual exploration of bodies that had occurred in the immersive theatre practices and encounter groups of the 60's and 70's in Europe and the USA. Twyla Tharp elaborated kinaesthetic intelligence utilising ballet and the eclecticism of other movement styles (jazz, swing, tap, ballroom and contemporary social dance as well as Broadway show dancing, martial arts and film).

Department in American Ballet is foursquare and joint orientated. This protestant body was useful to dance modernity because it was primarily articulated through an intelligent use of the skeletal structure. It also lent itself to the ordinary movement of post-modern dance because of its focus on joint articulation as distinct from the emotionally invested muscularity and provenance of European Ballet. Ballet continues to be the underlying practice of European and Australian contemporary dance and this has produced a highly controlled muscular body that is almost incapable of assimilating the unstable joint based articulations of American practices such as Trisha Brown's.

One of the enduring interests of post modern dance was the attempt to access the 'already performative' fields of everyday movement and ordinary behaviour in theatrical and studio presentation. This task was often initiated in improvisational fields defined and negotiated by various agreed limits (the rules—spatial, temporal, anatomical, moral, ethical, social, cultural and political). These dancers were often economically and culturally privileged, mainly WASP and Jewish women in NYC. The city was almost bankrupt, making studio space readily available for the emerging practices of postmodern dance. At a time of American hegemonic, economic power the sense of personal agency in the USA (anything seemed possible) was often accompanied by a lack of interest or knowledge of other cultures. I think that part of the choreographic interest in me and other Australian ballet dancers was the very lack of European inscription, making our colonial bodies more like American bodies. Certainly both Twyla and Trisha were interested in Scandinavian bodies but I can't think of any European ballet dancers (catholic bodies) that worked with them.

All bodies are narratives in the sense that they are embodied histories, but memory is more associated with muscles and fascia rather than joints. The emotional "expressivity" of European practices of ballet lent itself to Dance Theatre as well as practices of contemporary dance. In the practices of post modern dance that interested me the most, gravity was managed through acute attention to sensation around joints rather than the hyper-muscularity and emotional memory of ballet.

Somewhat ironically, the puritanical, protestant, American body of post modern dance was given form in the social upheavals of the 1960's. The quintessential texts of this era would include Rainer's Trio A, Paxton's Contact Improvisation and Brown's choreographic écriture till the early 80's. All epitomised the "thought" of dance and the association of dance with thinking was a radical departure.

The economic downturn, religious fundamentalism and the collapse of the National Endowment closed down the radical possibilities that had been suggested in postmodern practices. By the end of the 1970's, the rich potential of the Judson era had been replaced by the need for new product in a voracious entertainment industry. Butoh and other Asian fusion / hybrids are fashionably multi-cultural and provide exotic and cheap product for the ubiquitous dance festivals and government funded art markets. This new "Orientalism" has added little to western choreographic canon. Twyla went to ABT and Broadway, Steve to his farm in Vermont, Rainer stopped dancing and made films and Trisha followed Twyla into high-end entertainment in opera and ballet.

27

in the room, in the room-- again, in the room—still, in the room—palely loitering.

During 2004 and 2005, Jonathan Sinatra and I developed a durational performance research project about time and memory. The work *in the room* was envisaged as a two-year project, and the four public performances (one every six months) at The Studio (Sydney Opera House) were integral to its methodology. The staging of performance research such as this at the Opera House requires an entrepreneurial confidence, experience and trust that is rare in Australia, so thank you Neil Simpson and Virginia Hyam.

In the room unfolded in three continents – Australia, Europe and USA. The four public performances at The Studio were a 'line in the sand' strategy. This strategy both delineates a clear beginning while acknowledging that new work comes from previous work. Each of the public performances should be understood as an artistic template that was further developed and in part abandoned in the next stage.

The work takes the form of a collection of individual solos that can be performed by one dancer or more in radical and diverse juxtaposition. The distinctive architectural features of The Studio were integral to the development of *in the room*. Considerations of space and place were featured through distinctive lighting and staging. The work is a performance accumulation in a particular venue (The Studio) conducted over two years in which the passage of time is apprehended through the audience's memory of the preceding works. As such it is a meditation on time. This is a work of memory that challenges the conventional form/structure of black-box presentation and that seeks to collapse the usual sense of time implicit in most dance performance (beginning, development and ending all in a couple of hours) and suggest the possibility of a different consideration of time and an implicated different experience of history. How is the

quotidian implicated in the aesthetic experience of the audience? There were too many variables in this work, but the experience provided the seeds for future work including *dance for the time being*.

Salon

The research for *in the room* inaugurated a new salon practice for dance...a room, a dancer and ideally an audience of one. In its simple austerity and its invocation of quiet contemplation, the work has a certain resonance with the spirit of Cha-no-yu (the Japanese Tea Ceremony). Suggesting infinite possibilities it remains steeped in a pragmatic aesthetic of the everyday, the here and now----- a room, a dancer and an invited guest.

Such Salon projects are crucial for the development of a viable community of artists and the creation and support of future dance practices. These initiatives are also a pragmatic attempt to provide continuity, both for my own creative development and for those artists who work with me. These are projects that acknowledge the relationships between the continuity of studio practice, performative experience, and the work produced.

28

Riposte

In London I rehearsed with Rambert and de Valois, and I feel vitally connected to the rich embodied dance heritage that encompasses both the Diaghilev era and Post Modern Dance. I studied ballet with Jorge Garcier, Eileen Ward, Brian Shaw, Anna Northcote and Audrey de Voss. (I am the only dancer to have worked with The Royal Ballet as well as the companies of Trisha Brown and Twyla Tharp-- Baryshnikov performed as a famous guest artist, not a company member.) I have been slow to understand the responsibility to future practice of my privileged access to this unique embodied heritage.

Dance has an embodied heritage and in my practice what I know is whom I have worked with. I am defined as an artist by what I exclude as much as by what I allow (include).

Dance is an extremely competitive field, and the professional dancer is almost pathologically driven by the need to demonstrate not merely competence, but excellence.

In professional practices, the sense of being chosen characterises the dancer, choreographer relationship, even in institutionalised settings such as ballet companies. In modern dance companies the sense of personal betrayal is correspondingly more intensely felt if the chosen dancer leaves. The necessity for these often emotionally painful ruptures is the condition of new embodied knowledge.

For more than fifty years I have rigorously defined, educated and exercised my aesthetic judgment. This is not the trite 'gut feeling/cultural indigestion' school of aesthetics. Ultimately it is what it means to have/live

a practice. To be defined by what one hasn't done is not at all the same thing as being defined by what one couldn't do.

To be a practising artist is to physically and intellectually exclude that which weakens my resolve, to exclude what I perceive mediocre.

It is only those who are not artists, or who no longer practise, that can afford the luxury of indifference. I respect your right to have an opinion different from mine, but you can't seriously demand that I respect your opinion.

Who did you work with?

Where have you been?

Why did you stop?

What have you done?

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Inner Mask

This is not a hugely apt metaphor, but I think of the technique of the mask carver in Noh as analogous to that utilised in Todd's work, Ideokinesis.

The carver's work creates one of the conditions of possibility for a successful performance of Noh. The carver creates a simplified, pared back (essential) mask form that when deployed in a given text by an experienced shite seems capable of infinite expressivity and takes on attributes that are seemingly unique. The same mask can be utilised in different plays yet always seems unique; a capacity for abstraction/neutrality that flows into different narrative contexts.

In Todd's work, the subtle dynamic movement potential of the rounded joints of the human skeleton is explored through experiential anatomy. This intimate knowledge of bones is central to the work and movement from this deep core lends itself to elaboration in many different arenas.

Dance as a professional practice is of course concerned with presentation and representation and this has tended to prioritise muscular techniques of "outwardness". Ideokinesis and some other somatic techniques are concerned with directing the "focus" inwards. This inward perception of sensations created by the dynamic instability of muscles, fascia and bones within *my* body implicates time, memory and imagination differently and fluidly. Experiential anatomy endeavours to imagine a *where* and *nowhere* for a dance practice that is not determined by a *here* and *there*.

The performer needs to study these adjacent practices separately from more obviously muscular dance techniques. Experiential anatomy and ideokinesis will profoundly change the body and eventually this will impact on life and art practices. This is a work of years, as each individual embodies these practices in her own time. Attempts to exploit this knowledge in the context of traditional Western dance techniques and

other muscular training regimes are a betrayal of fundamental principles of the work. Such phrases as "ballet with release" indicate an ignorance of the means by which the body assimilates new movement patterns, as well as a poor understanding of the practice of ballet. It is the equivalent of the tourist mask that is created to hang on walls as a decoration. Only superficially does it resemble the masks used in Noh or Topeng.

30

Hereafter

Proscenium arch presentation in Opera Houses and black box theatres, defines both space and the movement practice necessary to articulate this space. The technique of ballet evolved in this space, hence the usefulness and implication of ballet technique in most theatrical presentations. This expedient use of ballet could be said to have produced and defined the genre, Contemporary Dance.

I seek to articulate the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a future dance practice that gestures towards a different aesthetics. I examine the movement components of the everyday in order to understand why these emotionally invested fields are interesting to watch and do. The early forays of postmodern dance into this territory were largely aborted because of the economic reality that led to the death of these practices by the late 70's. To survive, professional practices of postmodern dance had to be suitable for black box presentation on European touring circuits and this changed the criteria ----

For thirty years I have researched practices that utilise a different spatial imaginary—the cross-roads, temple courtyards, wentilans and family compounds that situate Balinese dance, as well as the spatial particularity of forms such as Noh and Bunraku (Japan) and Wayang Kulit, Gambuh and Topeng Cirebon (Indonesia). The ancient provenance and extraordinary richness of these Asian forms as well as the intrusions and implications of modernity on traditional cultures are almost totally ignored in Western dance discourse and practice. In the shadow puppets of Java and Bali (Wayan Kulit), the clarity of outline and finite shape is softened by fire, the screen and movement. This creates a three dimensional quality, and scenes float across, towards and away from the screen with the ease of dreams and the chemical smell of memory. As smell evokes the past through memory, dreams invoke the future.

Dance suggests an order that is not rational/scientific. Dance dreams and re-members.

In performance we re-imagine the past for the future in the present. The ambiguity of poetry, not the precision of mathematics. Film and new technology have the potential to arrest this fluidity. Mechanical authenticity as the end of dreaming and imagining.

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Memory and Improvisation--the reality of the past in the dream of the present.

What are the underlying patterns of embodiment in dance techniques and other habituated movement practices? Working with the banality of familiar movement, we explore the notion of "free-choice" in an embodied practice. Amongst other things, we consider the relationship between the dancer and the dance by an examination of a known choreographic text in an improvisational setting. How are our movement signatures constituted in our bodies? What is the basis of our pleasure in the repetition of sensations such as turning? What behaviours and contexts pre-dispose us to value certain movements that get re-configured as choreographic choice? What are the conditions in the cultural (the social and the political) that shape aesthetic desire? I understand improvisation as instant composition and the concept of the unique choreographic artist as a necessary construction, a product of consumer capitalism. In my work, improvisation is practiced as a tactical resistance to social and political strategies of convergent experience (Analogous to convergent technologies).

The process of *remembering* the future has resonance with an imaginary archaeology of the past. When the notion of time is not linear and the future and past are simultaneous realities, the body of evidence and the body as evidence co-exist.

32

The revolutionary ideas that informed the development of Modern Dance created shifts in how the body was viewed. The choreographic practices of dance modernism impacted significantly on the development of ballet as a global phenomena and this has tended to obscure the European origins of ballet and its use in contemporary dance.

All embodied practices implicate the body as an agent of social, political and cultural transformation. In the arena of Western concert dance, ballet in particular, is perceived as a high aesthetic pursuit, a cultural form of an extreme Olympic sport. What are the underlying attitudes in the social and political everyday that require the suppression and control of the body in dance?

Why and how is ballet useful to notions of beauty in patriarchal order?

The ballerina's body is all limbs, no hips and no bust—an adolescent male body. The ideal ballet body plays to homoeroticism in patriarchal orders.

When did extreme thinness become a desirable evolutionary trait?

What is the relationship between extreme thinness (the body anorexic), dependence and beauty? If I can't control my environment, I can control my body. What is the relationship between everybody and the everyday (the ordinary)? It is the forgotten in the everyday that gives us our sense of the everyday, so what is forgotten in the everybody to give us our sense of everybody, the ordinary and our sense of

normality? What is the relationship between the ordinary and the highly aesthetic body? An all consuming self-control and discipline is necessary to bridge the gap between "everybody" and this high aesthetic regime of "beauty".

The individual sense of being less than desirable/perfect, of failing to measure up is a way of repressing people individually and collectively through our emotionally invested habits and sense of "self"— only the beautiful people fall in love and live happily ever after, only normal heterosexual couples should breed. The notion of life as a competition (a competitive game) and illness as an individual failure to maintain the body, psyche or "soul"— for this the individual is responsible. Guilt and responsibility as well as agency, must be assumed individually.

"It is not our fault" all elected governments assert. The use of committees and "democratic process" is an excuse for (social, cultural or political) failure—there is too much wriggle room.

33

"Live" performance is a ritual of the fear of the unknown, of death. A theatrical rite of control and ultimately of resurrection—the dead stand up and take a bow. Western practices of dance are obsessed with the cult of youth, fertility rites and the celebration of nubile bodies. This is observable in the historical narratives of Romantic ballet as well as the psychological dramas of contemporary dance (for example, Pina Bausch and Sasha Waltz). It is also implicated in the very technique of ballet that could be understood as a process of embalment, an attempt to retard the ageing of bodies and delay the inevitable (death and decay).

Black box theatre is perhaps the most controlled and controlling environment yet developed for man's secular spectacles.

Thurs 26 May

I saw my friend wasting away with AIDS, his mind slowly unravelling. Mercifully, he seemed not to notice. I hope that Trisha doesn't know she has Alzheimer's, but just maybe she would rather know.

Woke up from a dream, which I think is about death. Usually I can't remember dreams; or rather I remember them vaguely. This dream was full of exquisite detail. I woke slowly, astonished by the rich detail and my ability to remain in this state of being and remembrance.

We had been given the usual cough syrup but the taste was slightly different I recalled later. We had waited in a city of extraordinary architecture. It was as if all the massive buildings in Florence were turned upside down and were simply suspended in the air, several metres from the ground. The rooms had huge

cinemas within them, and in each there were six or seven individuals, all men, writing on laptops, while glancing half-heartedly at the films. There were many rooms and I was free to move between them. Soon after the syrup we discreetly made our ablutions; somehow we were joined in pairs. We assembled in another room and names were read out and name tags attached. Everyone was calm as technicians began administering lethal injections – a thought occurred to me that the syrup had been spiked with some kind of pacifying drug. Somewhat surprised, I heard my name being read out – but surely this is a mistake, I am here only with my friend – I'm not ready to die yet. Death comes while we are waiting for something else to happen.

Dance is that place that we perform and reflect on our cultures repertoire of images, impressions, sensations and memories. That place we rehearse our becoming, our *not yet*.

34

Other Histories

Early in my professional life, I realised that accounts of history are subjective and usually strategically written. Being an illegal immigrant in the USA my employment with the modern dance companies of Trisha Brown and Twyla Tharp has been elided from the official histories of these companies. My inclusion in accounts of the British Royal Ballet is probably more to do with the reluctance of the ballet establishment to fuzz history. With this notion of the subjective nature of history in mind I struggle to find a suitable voice and form for a critical analysis of the status quo that could be a catalyst for change in Australian cultural policy.

"Look around you. You are not the beginnings of a solution, you are the problem." I left immediately after delivering this, but I heard from others who remained at the conference that an adjournment was called while noses were powdered and discussion centred on legislating that all participants must respect each other. I had refused to be silenced after the three minutes allocated to responses from the floor as up to this point on the second day I had been gobsmacked by the dance illiteracy and ignorance of the participants and had said nothing. Needless to say I was excluded from subsequent meetings of the Australia Council, tertiary heads and artistic directors.

The Liberal decade merely consolidated the conservative cultural and social interventionist stranglehold that had emerged under Labor (Whitlam and later Hawke and Keating) and was taken up again more recently by Labor. Bureaucratic procedures of administrative convergence (one size fits all) have institutionalised arts illiteracy and this ignorance has created opportunities for dance funding for politically savvy creative producers, dramaturges, ambitious amateurs and recent dance graduates. (It is difficult to

tell which is worse—the conservative disdain and indifference of the Liberals or the manipulative social interventions of Labor.)

Opera houses and multi-purpose art centres proliferated throughout Europe and her former colonies after World War 2. These cultural edifices required huge investment in administrative, technical and more recently security apparatus just to maintain them. To justify public subsidy, the whole enterprise embraced the economic language of industry, and referred to itself as the Arts Industry, a distinct (and unprofitable) part of the massive Entertainment Industry.

The Australia Council for the Arts, the Federal Government's main funding body, forged policy along social welfare and party political criteria and ministerially appointed "representative" boards and committees distributed funds accordingly. The wasteful duplication of the administrative apparatus (Federal, State and Local Government), combined with the cost of physically maintaining the cultural facades, the huge distances between cities and the sparsity of population have led to a situation where a huge slice of arts funding goes to support these "infrastructure industries" that self-perceive as some kind of necessary pre-condition for the development and support of Australian artists. The proliferation of administrative and organisational structures has led to the erosion of funding for artists. In Australian performing arts, a cogent rationale for the need to support individual choreographic practice has never been articulated, and this failure is reflected in terms of the absence of coherent strategy within all Government and private arts funding agencies. Have any of the creative producers, CEO's or administrators noticed that there are now no internationally significant professional, individual choreographic practices in Australia?

The last seven appointments to lead Australian dance organisations have been filled by foreign artists or directors. The artistic directorship of such organisations is a rare opportunity to gain valuable experience and expertise that should be extended to Australian artists, but clearly none have the ability/talent or experience necessary to fill these positions. The wholesale importation of foreign models of arts support totally fails to address specific Australian conditions (geographic, historic and economic) and after forty years of Australia Council funding for dance, this situation is clearly symptomatic of a disgraceful policy failure.

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Cultural Cringe

Four blokes, two dancers and two visual artists do a show and tell in Lucy Guerin's "Untrained". As I would expect the presentation was elegant, but the simple structure was almost devoid of movement material of distinction. It did however allow the audience to feel smug about their cultural literacy in "getting" the

simple choreographic premise and this encouraged an indulgent complicity with the puerile antics of the performers.

Contemporary Dance is usually presented at art centres in multi- purpose, flexible spaces that convert into black-box theatres. I resent the coercive nature of the seating arrangement in these spaces, usually attributable to “fire and safety” regulations. The audience is corralled like sheep in a holding pen. There is no way to discretely slip out or escape. In the old European Opera Houses, entry and egress of the audience was not a problem. Private boxes, balconies, standing rooms and internal corridors facilitated a flow and constant circulation of the audience without disruption of the performance or annoyance to other patrons.

I resent the time wasted in the company of an audience of wealthy, dance illiterate cultural aspirants who by fulsome applause for childish antics reveal a contemporary form of that old chestnut, the Australian Cultural Cringe. This makes me almost nostalgic for the time when artists here, particularly in the performing arts, knew that they had to spend formative years abroad to acquire ‘literacy’ in their practice. Knowledge is constituted by the ability to contextualise information. In embodied practices, the inter-net and virtual space have exacerbated and accentuated problems associated with isolation, distance and dance literacy.

36

Context

To know my body “inside out” is to “know in my bones”. The pedestrian body of post-modern dance sought new ways to navigate the relationship between this “in” and “out” and how these fields could be mobilized in performance. It sought to know differently the multiple relationships of the senses and to orchestrate these relationships differently. I seek to understand how different body imaginaries are prescribed and inscribed by belief systems in different social, cultural and political contexts; to understand the relationship between the actually performed body in a given culture, the everyday of that culture and the quotidian (the forgotten that gives us this everyday). How aesthetic value is related to notions of beauty, harnessed to particular bodies and aligned with sexual desire. A way of understanding what a culture values and how desire for these values is inculcated, inscribed and perpetuated. How cultural capital is attributed, artificially inflated through scarcity and managed through the repression of individual bodies.

In plain sight—the fish cannot see the water that surrounds it, it sees through this water.

Dance Literacy

In the performance of dance, the "choreographic-object" (the dance) never recedes from the body that created it other than as a reproduction, a two-dimensional filmic representation/photographic image or critical review. This poses distinct problems for notions of embodied heritage, provenance, dance literacy, access and critical thought. It places a premium on human memory (a notoriously unstable field) and the immediacy of engagement in the present moment of performance through the sensual/sexual matrix.

In other performing arts, evidence in the form of script, text or score, facilitates different interpretations and critical readings through different epochs. In dance this evidence is embodied and implicates time differently. Being subject to memory, it is much less precise than other performing arts. In most practices, the creator recedes from the work with the passage of time and the work exists separately as evidence. The inability of dance to create this space of critical distance (separation of dancer and the dance) is a major impediment to its perception as a legitimate art practice. The critic's job is even more difficult in a colonial setting.

Anyone who is interested in the arts and has lived in London or New York for a few years is going to be more dance literate than most Australians. Access to the embodied heritage and provenance of western concert dance facilitates literacy in these practices and such literacy is essential to any significant choreographic development. The artistic provenance of much "original choreography" is difficult to authenticate in Australia. Dance unfolds in real time and very few have seen the European and American works and practices that are often appropriated here. From an Australian perspective, the 'embodied literature' of Western concert dance has been developed elsewhere and in other times. What traces remain of these practices are in the fabric of other social, political and cultural bodies and orders, in Europe and the USA.

Problems associated with embodied dance literacy have created an artistically mortgaged insecure profession, intellectually bankrupt research as well as legions of ignorant but often passionate amateur contemporary dance practices. And it is these peers and the ubiquitous English nannies in the Australia Council that the Government turns to for policy advice. We have segued from a muscular colonial practice of English ballet to a derivative European contemporary dance via amateur practices of American modern dance so the sheltered workshop depiction of contemporary dance here is even more apt than in Europe.

Organisations such as Critical Path (Sydney) and Dancehouse (Melbourne) are the captives of vested interest, an aspirational contemporary dance community that is numerically too small, insular, nepotistic and artistically bankrupt. The dystopian combination of colonial ballet and illiteracy concerning dance modernity ensures that no internationally significant choreographic practices will emerge here regardless of how much money the Australia Council and private philanthropy throw at this endeavour.

The prognosis for the development of dance as a serious legitimate art form is not good, but I am an optimist.

The Arts are an integral part of Public Relations and soft diplomacy of most Governments, and because political vision is measured in three year terms, there is little possibility of a long term vision for the Arts, especially here in Australia where the notion of culture invokes the colonial spectre of social/class inferiority and even the term suggests effete fragility and is often used to denigrate.

Senator Joyce has told ABC1's Insiders, he has taken advice from several people before making his decision. "I know what I'm going to be doing because I've had that discussion with Tony, but I'm going to leave it for Tony to announce it. I can tell you it won't be the Minister for Arts," he said. As can be heard in the comments of politicians such as Barnaby Joyce, the field of culture in Australia is totally lacking in kudos. The Arts are perceived to be the domain of "men who are not quite men" and girls.

The perceived need to justify cultural activity in Australia as a legitimate concern of government is enduring evidence of the Australian Cultural Cringe, and nowhere is its legacy more evident than the practice of Australian dance. The Dance Board of the Australia Council fosters the development and growth of Australian dance "to express the spirit of our country". Merce Cunningham famously said that the only thing that you should "express" is your toothpaste, but obviously the bureaucrat who wrote this mission statement was not aware of the practice of Merce Cunningham or its impact on subsequent generations of choreographers.

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Entertainment Industry

Australian Performing Arts have been organised and articulated on industrial models as a small unprofitable part of the Entertainment Industry. All extant practices of professional dance in Australia have been formed (by Government invitation only) and collapsed into this pseudo commercial context. Since Whitlam, governments of all persuasions have attempted to sell the idea of culture to the electorate by "forging" an uncomfortable "fit" to business as the entertainment industry. Although some industries lose money and should be subsidised (medicine for example) only a second rate entertainment industry is subsidised to lose money. Culture is an integral part of all human civilisations, and the arts in Australia need to be understood in the broader cultural arena rather than as an unprofitable "also ran" in the commercial entertainment industry.

The market place is simply not the measure of all things that we value as human beings. Financial accountability needs to be understood in terms of investment in cultural development rather than the narrow bean counting perception that dominates the politics of government arts patronage in Australia.

Arts companies and individual artists are required to masquerade as businesses or tax exempt charities as a condition of eligibility to apply for funding. (Many of the board members of performing arts companies as well as government and private funding bodies demonstrated incompetence across several art forms before becoming bureaucrats, but these amateurs are not reticent in speaking for professional art practices.) This business model effectively delivers artistic control to accountants, administrators, managers and “creative” producers.

In the Performing Arts in Australia and other Western Democracies, this business model has tended to support work that is already popular and commercially viable, hence desirable to the PR aspect of government. It will be “bought” by festivals at Government funded International Arts Markets and will attract business sponsors, clearly demonstrating the oft touted ideal of private enterprise and Government working together in partnership. This scenario has not supported the creation of a dynamic arts environment in the USA, Europe or Australia, but rather created an over-subsidised highly bureaucratic second rate entertainment industry dominated by creative producers, administrators and festival directors with artistic aspirations / pretensions.

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Provenance and practice

Compared to other arts, dance in the western democracies has struggled to find legitimacy. Dance policy in Australia was forged in a hostile colonial environment that required constant social and political justification to justify its public subsidy. The need for obsequious behaviour by artists and bureaucrats denigrates the real work of art within society and devalues cultural capital. This has led to “policy” that echoes the social and political (hence cultural) agendas of whichever party is currently in government. It is hardly an exaggeration to describe the Australia Council as a part of the PR machinery of the Federal Government. In its more benign aspects the Australia Council is more comparable to a dysfunctional welfare agency for artists than to an independent body charged with the task of development of future professional practice through support of an arts meritocracy. (An example of recent bureaucratic ignorance is the “Scope Initiative” which suggested that artists enjoyed the same super-annuated perks as other Australian workers. Artists don't *retire*, they *die!*) The Dance Board's current fostering of mentors, dramaturgs and creative producers is just the contemporary spin on its policy failure since its inception, as well as the legacy of policy failure of the old Theatre Board and years of getting it wrong.

To understand the place of dance in the cultural fabric of Australia it is necessary to consider the impact of the professional origins of ballet as distinct from the amateur origins of modern dance as well as the colonial dynamic that this reflects and perpetuates. The affective ties formed in amateur modern dance

networks and the proliferation of these networks in tertiary education and through organisations such as Ausdance have combined with The Australia Council's bureaucratic use of 'democratic process' to produce a community of dance and performance practice that is truly abject. The decline can be traced in the Australia Council's administrative language used to describe the relationship between choreography and dancing during the past thirty years. Support for individual choreographic practices has "developed" by a series of semantic shifts, into support for questing. Choreographic artist—choreographer--independent artist--solo practice—what is your practice?

How many more National Dance Summits need to be organised so that the Dance Board and Ausdance understand the reciprocal relationship between dance practices and choreographic development?

In dance modernity, the dancer and choreographer relationship was unique and central to the development of the canon of Western Concert Dance. It is not accounted for in the 'one size fits all' streamlined administrative/arts policy of the Australia Council. For the most part, funding agencies in Australia lack the dance literacy, expertise or desire to undertake informed critical analysis of dance practices, initiate research and development, or even to identify the need for these crucial activities to occur – with dire consequence for the formulation of dance "policy".

The endless professional surveys conducted by the Australia Council will never suggest solutions or even identify the problems of arts development, because the paradigm is wrong. It is difficult to imagine where intervention might be possible because of the vested interests (jobs) of current professional practices, legions of suburban ballet teachers, the Tertiary Dance sector and peak bodies such as Ausdance.

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And we all know frogs go—la de da de da

Modern and particularly postmodern dance were envisaged as investigative practices for a new art form. Ballet and contemporary dance were envisaged and elaborated as illustrative practices within an entertainment paradigm. All funded contemporary dance and ballet companies in Australia are steeped in a colonial practice of European ballet.

To understand dance only through this balletic paradigm is to deny the rich thought of dance during the past fifty years, and also to deny the autonomy of dance as a discrete art form. It is to succumb to the reductive notion of dance as an unprofitable "also ran" in the massive entertainment industry – the sexy wallpaper for popular spectacles or the elitist glamorous body of high-end entertainment. How is this colonial practice of European ballet "culturally diverse"?

From the late 60's to the early 80's, the major impetus to choreographic development in the Western dance canon was the studio-based practices of American postmodern dance. All significant subsequent developments in Western choreographic practices have been influenced by the radical thought of postmodern dance. American postmodern dance has produced the most influential choreographic legacy since the era of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, yet artistic directors of Australian publically funded performing arts festivals during the past forty years have failed to notice or understand the significance of these dance practices and audiences and artists here have been denied access to this rich and significant body of work. The total elision of access to the radical thought and embodied practices of postmodern dance condemns Australian choreographic practices to international irrelevance.

Friends of Dorothy and Robyn

Dance is an embodied practice, and as such is habitually emotionally invested. The emotionally invested nature of embodied practices, affective ties and vested interests cause problems that are recognised within dance communities everywhere, but cronyism, artistic incest and nepotism are more difficult to manage in small communities and even more so when the population is widely dispersed such as in countries like Australia. (A comparable situation in Finland is managed more intelligently.) Although acknowledged within dance communities, within arts managerial bureaucracy conflict of interest and nepotism are completely below the radar, and this is yet another impediment to the development of dance in Australia.

Why would the rest of the world be interested in Australian dance other than the traditional indigenous heritage when it is clearly a derivative version of European ballet and contemporary dance practices? Does the Australia Council seriously believe that the creation of greater infrastructure support (More white elephants such as Ausdance, more creative producers and more access to art-markets) for this artistically mortgaged colonial practice is going to change this perception? The Cultural Cringe and ill informed government intervention created the current imbroglio. The Dance Theatre Qango in Sydney and the generation of Melbourne "Ikea" dancers are not only a wasted generation, but through government processes of peer review and assessment, a generation that will inflict its failure on future generations.

The Dance Board of the Australia Council fails to differentiate between the adjacent fields of arts and entertainment and has failed to implement policy that addresses the developmental needs of dancers as creative artists. The potential to develop future choreographic practice is dependent on the vital relationship between professional dance practices and choreographic auteurs. This needs to be apprehended and understood through extensive embodied professional experience. Clearly this is outside

of the professional domain or experience of the majority of members on the Australia Council Dance Boards and Committees during the past three decades—even of the so-called artist peers. The consequence of this collective ignorance will continue to impact negatively on choreographic development here for decades.

The majority of “peers” on the Dance Board of the Australia Council are not artists. This fact, as well as the obsession with collaborative, interdisciplinary and multicultural funding criteria could be seen as an attempt by the Australia Council to prise open this artistically mortgaged, incestuous dance community. However, it is difficult to see how racist criteria and dance defined by other art forms from the managerial perspective of “creative” producers and administrators in the Entertainment Industry is going to support the development of dance as a discrete art form.

In 2007, the Dance Board of the Australia Council, after extensive consultation with the peak body, Ausdance, announced that we need a local Dance Manifesto modelled of the British Dance Manifesto published in 2005 and this is where the Dance Action Plan 2012 began. The British “wish list” has been transposed to the ever so slightly more virile “four ambitions” of the Dance Action Plan 2012. It is easy to Google this British collection of platitudes and nannywaddle so why does the Dance Board believe we should base anything on this document? Yvonne Rainer’s “no” manifesto from the 60’s is perennially apt and clearly more pertinent.

Dance Modernism evolved in Germany and the USA, and spread to other mainly Anglo Saxon countries. Contemporary dance evolved in other European Nation States where ballet was well established and had an aristocratic provenance. Problems of funding, patronage and sponsorship for the arts in Australia are not dissimilar to those of other Western democracies, but our particular foundational history - penal colony of England - and our isolation from the embodied heritage of both American dance modernism and European ballet continues to impact negatively on our development in all kinds of subtle and often obvious ways. Lacking access to the provenance of embodied thought creates a warped perception of the value of culture to society. Financial accountability that knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing, dominates the politics of arts patronage in Australia and this is related to the convict stain, our isolation from other western cultures, colonial insecurity and a related reluctance to engage with the extraordinarily rich Asian cultures that surround us.

As a choreographer one is dependent upon patronage in a way that is true of no other artist. Professional practices of dance cannot exist without patronage and the funding criteria of clients at “arms length” from government patrons such as the Australia Council is not far enough away for the development of a viable independent art practice. The total elision of support for the agency of dancers as dancers ensures that no significant future choreographic practices will emerge here. This is an unfortunate reflection of the

professional vision and intellectual calibre of the Australia Council staff and board members who failed to understand the consequence of such 'policy'.

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Patronage and grooming /Elisa Dolittle /the rain in Spain

Sometime after my father's death, I asked my mother why he had wanted me to be a concert pianist. She told me: "he didn't-- he just didn't want you to be a dancer". She also told me that soon after I had started to learn ballet, my grandfather's cousin, Sir Lloyd Dumas, had tried to persuade them (my parents) to discourage me from this pursuit. Some years later, Peggy van Praagh took me aside and explained that although clearly I was a talented dancer, I would not have a future with the Australian Ballet as Sir Lloyd was a powerful patron (Chairman of the Board of the Adelaide Festival) and she couldn't afford to offend him.

In 1968, I was awarded the RAD Overseas Scholarship and my desire to use this award to study the Martha Graham Technique met with some resistance from the committee. Miss Kimberley, the administrative director told me that the way forward was cleared by Dame Margot (Fonteyn), who was then the President of the RAD. Apparently she reminded the committee that it was "The Royal Academy of Dancing" and not "The Royal Academy of Ballet".

Patronage

Ballet has always been dependent on patronage (the Court and then the Nation State) and its technique elaborated on the stability of a culturally groomed and socially compliant standing and walking body. Rarely do dancers emerge from the muscular paramilitary regime of professional ballet and attempt to elaborate or re-member differently the neurological potential of the human body. (In my research, the unstable body—the running body.)

Of all the arts, dance is the most dependent on patronage. There are aspects of all other art practices that allow them to be developed and practiced individually and in isolation. As an embodied practice, dance requires access to other bodies with their attendant needs. No other performing art is as costly to develop, produce and maintain as classical ballet, factoring in the training institutions that are an essential part of the infrastructure—The Royal Ballet School, the schools of the Kirov, the Paris Opera and even the Australian Ballet. The patronage of Royalty (initially Louis14th) and the rivalry between the European courts facilitated the development of the form. With the demise of the Royal Courts of Europe, the Nation States became the patrons in Europe and her colonies.

Many Asian theatre and dance forms also evolved in the context of royal courts. These cultural fields and their associated epistemologies are exceptionally rich and offer unique insights into contemporary Asian society. It is to our shame that we constantly ignore them and look back to Europe and persist with the contemporary dance enterprise that the Americans so aptly call "Eurotrash".

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Choreographic Artist/Auteur

In meritocracies such as the USA and Germany, the wealth generated by highly industrialised nation states and the perception of individual agency supported the development of modern dance. In other European countries the notion of the individual choreographic artists was less acceptable to their more socially conservative aspirations. There was not the individual wealth nor social will to support the iconoclastic vision of modern dance that was strongly associated with the USA and resented. Besides, private studio spaces in urban centres were in scarce supply due to the destruction caused by World War 2. It is also relevant that Germany and the USA did not have established ballet companies with the attendant implications of a cultural elite with old aristocratic provenance and long association with Royal patronage.

Agency

The dancer's persona, awareness and authorship of self ("presence"), is perhaps more essential to the performance of dance as an art form than to the notion of performance elaborated in any other performing arts practice. The dancer is always author of her dancing and presence and this constitutes a large part of agency. It is this sense of agency that the dancer will elaborate in her future choreographic practice. Integral to the emergence of dance as a discrete art practice is the concept of the individual choreographic artist. If dance is to realize its potential as an autonomous art form it needs the agency and expertise of practicing professional dancers who engage in ongoing investigative studio practices rather than the "creative producers" and "cultural curators" who are being proffered by the Australia Council.

Classical ballet and contemporary dance are historically defined in relationship to other more legitimate art practices. In fact, dance in most cultures is defined similarly. The provenance of dance as a discrete art form can be traced for little more than a century. It is important to remember that at the centre of every art practice is the singular vision of one artist. The ramifications of this fact continue to impact negatively on Australia Council dance policy through its insistence on interdisciplinary and collaborative practices.

The philanthropist gives \$100,000. (of which \$45,000 is a tax break, so his donation is in effect \$55,000 of his own money) The Australia Council gives a matching \$100,000. (from the Arts Budget, where else?) Administrative, technical and production support of Carriageworks and Dancehouse during two months pre season and two weeks of the season would be valued conservatively at another \$50,000. (This in kind support is also public money—supported by Local, State and Federal taxes) The Australia Council is perceived to be supporting individual choreographic development to the extent of \$250,000 in this charade and this creates the impression that it is fulfilling its brief.

Philip Keir is a business man and this is a good business deal. For his \$55,000 donation he gets naming rights, associated free publicity for his foundation and access to public money to the value of \$195,000. This public money and his donation are allocated according to the gut reactions of his committee (one choreographer, three administrators and a European poseur).

I am not suggesting that there is anything improper or illegal about the Keir Choreographic Award. Initially I applauded this initiative as a much-needed circuit breaker and I assumed that the money was coming from private patronage. Distributing public money without criteria or transparency is both stupid and wasteful. Financially this money is publically accountable, but only financially. Artistically it is an incredible waste of scarce public resources. Why should it be assumed that just because someone who is good at making money would know anything about art? The lack of transparency and criteria (artistic or otherwise) regarding the application “pitch” caused many artists to completely waste their time. What part of the Australian Government thought that matching the patrons “gift” with public money from the arts budget was a good idea and does this practice reflect publically available guidelines?

The proliferation of dance “service” organizations such as Ausdance (in every State and Territory), the former Choreographic Centre (Canberra), Critical Path (Sydney) Arts House, Malthouse and Dancehouse (Melbourne) has done little to challenge or support new dance development, but is taking considerable funding from developmental dance activity in the guise of full time administrative salaries and support. These organizations are primarily concerned with the development of politically fashionable vision and mission statements and business plans that ensure their own survival. They also create another level of bureaucracy and more committees to amortise responsibility for policy failure and democratise ignorance. Politically expedient proposals to create yet more professional dance companies for youth, the disabled and Western Australians, are as confused as the allocation of research funding and resources to young unemployed dancers, euphemistically referred to as support for the “independent” dance sector. These welfare agendas although clearly necessary, have nothing to do with research or support for the Arts.

Nepotism and cronyism have characterised the behaviour of the Dance Board and former dance committees of the Australia Council for more than three decades. This has created a contemporary dance sector (in Tertiary Institutes as well as individual practices and all professional dance companies) that in reality is a huge sheltered workshop. This is the main reason that outside of Australia there is absolutely no interest in presenting "Australian" choreography or choreographers. No one outside of Australia has any interest in these practices, even when the Australia Council pays for international travel and per diems. (We can't even give this work away.) It is time that the *future practice* policy mantra of the Australia Council and the various State Ministries is called to account. What unique or even vaguely significant choreographic practice has it ever delivered or for that matter can it ever deliver?

The needs of consumer capitalism to inculcate a desire for the latest, most fashionable bit of mobile technology have been conflated with the need for new product in the Entertainment Industry. In dance this places a premium on youth and generational churning—young bodies are always fashionable. The Keir Choreographic Competition is just the latest edition of the Australia Council "Lottery". Both are based on the aesthetics of gut reaction/cultural indigestion and this is a poor substitute for dance literacy, informed debate and intelligent dance policy.

Competitions such as the Keir Choreographic Award are already enormously successful if you believe the hype generated by the international selection committee. The notion of supporting the next generation (youth) was the initial basis of festivals such as "Next Wave" at BAM more than thirty years ago and this name and initial concept were copied, dumbed down and done on the cheap in many countries. Historically, patronage for dance in most cultures was linked to sexuality, usually understood as the domain of youth. This linkage of dance, youth and sexuality is the major obstacle to the perception of dance as a legitimate art practice – Groundhog Day.

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Peers

Before the formation of the Dance Board or dance committee of the Australia Council, dance was funded as part of the Theatre Board. Proportionately there were more practicing artists from different disciplines on this board. (After all, there had to be representation from ballet, modern dance, dance theatre, physical theatre, mime and puppetry as well as theatre.) On the old Theatre Board, administrators, accountants, creative producers and any others deemed 'peers' by the Australia Council were in the minority. With the creation of the Dance Board and prior to this the dance committee, this situation was reversed, and administrators, managers, accountants, producers and curators were in the majority. The representatives on these boards are not elected and are not accountable for their aesthetic judgements. Augmenting the

deficit of artistic advice was the need for these boards to be seen as broadly representative geographically and politically correct in terms of gender, ethnicity, youth and disability.

To rationalise and authenticate the need for its formation, the Dance Board had to assert that its scope and purpose was different from the concerns of ballet. Peer review was always going to be problematic on this new Dance Board as there are no professional modern or postmodern practices in Australia. It is precisely these practices, developed in opposition to ballet, that created the possibility for a new art. The only Australia dancers to join American postmodern dance companies were all members of Dance Exchange (initially Eva Karczag and me, then Rebecca Hilton, Lucy Guerin, Josephine McKendry, Linda Sastradipradja, Cath Stewart and currently Stuart Shugg) There were no professional modern dance companies in Australia, only ubiquitous practices of contemporary dance. As discussed above, the reality is that contemporary dance is steeped in ballet and aesthetically there is no difference between ballet and contemporary dance. In all other art boards of the Australia Council, practicing artists constitute 70-80% of the peers. The Dance Board is the only art-form board of the Australia Council where practicing artists are in the minority. Historically, it seems to me, a lack of dance literacy was never an impediment to appointment to the Dance Board or to the former Dance Committees of the Australia Council. As a consequence, dance policy is made by a group of individuals who lack the basic qualifications and competence to make professionally informed artistic decisions about current and future dance practice.

The Australia Council got around the problem of peer review by creating its own new imperial order—anyone whom it deems worthy or useful can be a “peer”. By what imperial authority does the Australia Council deem these managers, creative producers and administrators to be the peers of practicing artists? How relevant is the lack of professional dance experience in those who would speak for professional dance? Perhaps more problematic than amateur practices and the aspirational artists of academia is the Dance Board “peerage” created by the Australia Council (various combinations of thwarted artistic and political ambition, managerial competence and social compliance).

As a result of the recent Australia Council review (a cyclical demonstration of sound corporate governance), the art form specific boards have been dismantled. For the development of dance as an art form, this strategy did not work last time and it won't this time, as there is no dance specific developmental policy in place to guide the bureaucrats who select appropriate peers for any given funding round. This situation is a direct reflection of the lack of dance literacy of Dance Board and former Dance Committee members and artist peers during the past four decades.

As can be heard in the comments of politicians such as Barnaby Joyce, culture in Australia is totally lacking in kudos. Considering the national policy debacle in arenas that are perceived to matter (such as education, multi-culturalism and border protection), the likelihood of enlightened cultural policy is remote.

Interdisciplinary and Hybrid Panels

Ballet since its inception was envisaged as a theatrical spectacle, an entertainment rather than an autonomous art form. Ballet has always been an interdisciplinary collaborative practice; one defined by its relationship to other more legitimate, autonomous art forms such as visual arts, literature, theatre and music.

The ignorant but pervasive notion that ballet technique is the singular technique of all professional dance still affects arts funding policy in Europe and most former and current European colonies. Professional dance companies in Australia use ballet technique as the basis of training. The artistic directors are graduates of the Australian Ballet School or equivalent training institutions abroad. This balletic domination of Australian dance is explainable from many perspectives including the professional foundations of ballet in Australia as distinct from the amateurs who founded modern dance. In Australia, the balletic infrastructure was put in place and entrenched as an ongoing instrument of British colonialism through strong federal government intervention during more than fifty years. All Australian professional dance companies in receipt of ongoing annual or triennial funding are steeped in the practice of ballet and most professional dancers here understand dance through this colonial European balletic perspective. This is a direct legacy of Federal and State Government interventions.

The American choreographic auteurs of dance modernism signalled a distinct break with the European ballet masters of Romantic and Classical ballet. They challenged the widespread perception that dance and ballet were interchangeable activities, just because they are interchangeable words. As noted already, the only significant choreographic developments in ballet have occurred where modern and post modern dance practices have directly impacted on it. With the demise of modern and postmodern dance in the USA and the rise of government subsidised contemporary dance (Eurotrash) elsewhere, there has been no significant development in the choreographic canon during the past thirty years.

Given the pervasiveness of ballet training, what is the aesthetic difference between the Australian Ballet and any of the Australian contemporary dance companies? Classical Ballet, Contemporary Dance, Dance Theatre, Butoh, Physical Theatre and Circus are all movement practices that are defined and historically articulated in interdisciplinary, multi cultural or hybrid practices and in collaborative arenas. What part of these movement practices would not be better served by informed debate in interdisciplinary /hybrid art committees? If dance is perceived as a collaborative, interdisciplinary practice, why is there a need for a separate Dance Board?

Eight years ago I moved to Melbourne because my work was deemed insupportable by my dance “peers” on the NSW Ministry for the Arts and its art-form specific panels. Not having State support inevitably impacted on my ability to maintain Australia Council funding for my company, Dance Exchange, which had been supported by the Australia Council for more than twenty years. The interdisciplinary panels in Victoria have greater capacity to recognise and respond to ideas and my funding applications to Arts Vic have been considerably more successful in this more intellectually agile arena.

On my return to Australia in October 2013, I was pleased to learn that as a result of the recent Australia Council Review, the art-form specific “peer” boards of the Australia Council were to be disbanded. It was disappointing to see that the ‘conflict of interest’ code of the Australia Council remained unchanged. The charade of ‘leaving the room’ was never a solution; it was rather an alert to those that remained in the room that an application that involved one of the elect was being discussed.

It was unfortunate to see that the first meeting of this new panel consisted of half of the old Dance Board, recycled, and that one of the ‘peers’ was an integral part of one of the “successful” applications. It should be mandatory that peer assessors are artists and that they cannot be used more than once in a three-year cycle. This would create problems of continuity and it would be crucial to have art form specific developmental policy in place as a clear guide to staff and assembled panels.

Policy

Artists are advised to frame their applications in terms of the AC policy guidelines and funding criteria if they are to have any chance of success in the funding stakes. Most assessment criteria are heterogeneous to the developmental needs of dance as an art form and deal narrowly and reductively with the Government’s political agenda and policy in other arenas. These coercive and socially prescriptive criteria are adopted by private funding organizations as well as other levels of State and Local government.

Within the Australia Council all effective power is vested in organisational units that primarily assess the viability of the business plan, marketing strategy, sponsorship initiatives and touring potential etc. These units have power to fence off arts funding for their own developmental purposes and initiatives—somewhat ironically called “growing the sector”. The Australia Council supports “talent”, foreign or otherwise, to self-perpetuate the existing structures and system that it has created. This system supports “celebrity artists” and is dependant on the publicity they generate to self-justify.

The interest in touring the work of Chunky Moves was due to the outsourcing of interdisciplinary collaborative aspects - the very expensive German technology. The outsourcing of everything is a feature of global capitalism so it should not come as a surprise that as well as importing artistic directors and

choreographers we will soon need to import technically competent contemporary dancers as the Australian professional companies and Tertiary Institutions fail to develop them. The wholesale importation of foreign, particularly British, models of arts support totally fails to address specific Australian conditions, but it does engender the need to import foreign artistic directors, choreographers and arts bureaucrats.

Through ignorance of the pervasive nature of embodied cultural colonisation, the Australia Council since its inception has failed to develop coherent cultural policy for dance. Given the habitual emotional nature of embodiment, how can other professional dance practices, that could resist this neo-colonial quagmire, emerge here? Without clear cultural analysis, policy articulation and strong Federal leadership, they won't.

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My Practice

My work requires a complex synthesis of disparate body knowledge, and a commitment to rigorous investigative process. This physical movement based exploration negotiates the discomfort associated with cultural transgression. As embodied research it must cultivate a certain 'aimlessness', which is the antithesis of institutional knowledge and its received professional 'techniques'. It is precisely this that creates new knowledge.

My choreographic work is performance research that is conducted 'in' the body of the dancer, rather than choreography, as it is more usually understood, that is, work done 'on' the body of highly skilled professional practitioners. For many years I have been subjected to implicit and explicit criticism for not working with these professionally skilled and aesthetically branded, 'off the shelf' dancers. It needs to be understood and clearly articulated that there is a cultural consequence in the bodies of dancers whose daily training is a ballet class. In my research I have sought to involve artists whose professional practices are not primarily or formatively from ballet or its poor relation, contemporary dance. Ballet was dependent on political stability and courtly patronage, consequently its technique was elaborated on the highly predictable, stable body—the socially compliant, culturally modified standing and walking body. It is only exceptionally that dancers emerge from the neuromuscular, paramilitary regime of professional ballet and attempt to "re-member" and elaborate differently the exhilarating freedom and neurological potential of the unstable body—the running body.

In my practice I elaborate the aesthetic potential of the unstable body and its potential to destabilise and re-imagine existing dance techniques. I explore the reflexes and patterns of running as a basis for new performative techniques that are not based on the assumptions of the stable balletic body. Neurologically we manage the unstable body in the action of running without conscious thought or control. I seek to harness the relationship of virtuosity, efficiency and ease in the unstable running body to the aesthetic underpinnings of my dance and choreographic practice. When you are walking or standing you are making

decisions about how you use your muscles and how you compose your body. When you run you are falling and your body is making decisions about survival. I seek to develop a practice of dance that utilises this old brain survival efficiency of the running body rather than one that has to contend with the diverse inscriptions of religion, morality, culture etc.

I am questioning the foundations on which dance and movement practices in Australia, USA and Europe have been built. The poised, sustained upright deportment of Italian and French courtiers was instrumental in developing balletic aesthetics. The perception of ballet as an embodied heritage art with an ancient provenance was seen as an integral part of the foundation myths of most European colonies. In reality, this was an extravagant subterfuge; dance, and in particular the ballet, was always a high-class bordello for the aristocracy in the time of syphilis! Yet the spectre of this anorexic sylph still haunts the colonies and even to-day in capital cities and country towns across Australia, techniques of ballet are policed and controlled by English organisations such as the Royal Academy of Dancing and the Cecchetti Organisation. Is this European balletic body still a desirable basis on which to structure Australian cultural identity or, for that matter, as the all-pervasive basis for Australian dance and choreographic practice? How can cultural diversity emerge from this same colonised body?

A radical body is a contradiction in terms. Our bodies are inherently conservative. Our bodies were colonised, isolated and abandoned.

My body is old and inherently unstable. It has a provenance and has engaged with divers movement practices. Does the nation state insure the sovereignty of my body?

Our bodies crave new possibilities, new metaphors and aspirations.

Our bodies need a Republic.

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Sketches for Winterreise: a choreographic proposition for a future project

Sketches will elaborate an aesthetic of the unstable body (the running body) in physical encounters of inter-dependence (duets, trios and quartets). The degree of physical difficulty and risk of failure increases exponentially as complex counterbalances are accumulated. I am interested in the empathy we feel for the unstable body of the runner in full "flight" and the way that the audience knows in their bones how this movement feels. Understanding is always contextual, but this unstable running body creates its own context, a kinesthetic bridge, which can be read across diverse cultures. This aesthetic dimension of instability and its relationship to running functions as a catalyst for audience empathy.

The solo dance is already a spiraling duet between right and left sides of the body as well as between breath and heart. Every solo dance is fundamentally multiple narratives that share both a heartbeat and a breath. The heart generates and reflects emotional climate and orchestrates different rhythms. The breath gives melodic phrasing to both movement and language—and in that order. Melodic phrasing, dance phrasing and audience empathy are linked through the physiology of breathing and its effect on our fundamental experience/perception of time.

In the songs of Schubert I am interested in the way that the breath impacts on the phrasing of the accompanist and the singer and how both these emotionally invested fields affects the phrasing of the dancer and of course how the audience assimilates these different sensory fields. In this work I will use the song cycle, *Winterreise*. Part of my interest in the songs of Schubert is the recurring metaphor of the journey and a concern with the human psyche that is shockingly contemporary. *Winterreise* moves through shades of white— icy landscapes, all colour and none. This is a dreamscape although it is also both landscape and narrative. Time is non linear as in Japanese Noh. A duet between then and now.

Ultimately *Sketches for Winterreise* will result in a film that explores through dance, how the senses are differently impacted by human emotion—in this initial stage, I am interested in the relationship between sight (seeing) and sound (hearing) and the somewhat surprising way that hearing trumps seeing. A Hitchcock film without sound is not scary. How we see is shaped by what we are hearing.

Filming the work captures both time and traces of new dance practices. The enduring nature of film media (unlike live performance) makes these experiences available to future generations as well as developing technologies. It also provides an ongoing forum and virtual meeting place for some of the creative concerns that are the provenance of postmodernism as well as a means to create an international community and audience for new dance imaginaries and thought as it is created and developed.

In postproduction editing, *Sketches* will utilise Schubert's song cycles to explore the ways that the senses are differently implicated and impacted by human emotions. Through incorporation of this music in post production the intention is to develop a broader base of support for experimental embodied practices that are often perceived as inaccessible or "difficult" for a general public, particularly when access is through the reductive two dimensionality of videodance.

Rhythm and Running: Breath and Running

Standing and walking are not necessarily rhythmic activities, which is perhaps why the dance techniques and choreography elaborated on these bodies is married to the rhythm of the music that usually accompanies them. Rhythm is not necessarily implicated in the activities of the standing or walking body,

but always in the action of running. Clearly this rhythmic sense developed in the movement of the body in running, before it was used by music. It seems strange to me that dance as an art form must look to a relationship to music for a sense of rhythm rather than the activity of running which is a managed instability of its own unique embodiment.

Breathing and running are activities that are integrally linked through rhythm but they are not “attached” to rhythm in the same way. It is this embodied potential for difference in their relationships to rhythm (as well as to each other) that is elaborated in many human activities, particularly dancing and singing.

Dance and music are both usually elaborated through notions of rhythm and melody. Through an examination of the reciprocal and interdependent relationships of running with rhythm and breath with melody, I seek to renegotiate the terms of engagement of dance and music. I am interested in how breath is implicated in the multiple rhythms of the body and how melodic phrasing and dance phrasing are both shaped by breath. Music directly impacts on the human emotions and this changes how we breathe, how we feel and how we see. I am interested in the relationship between sight and sound and the somewhat surprising way that hearing trumps seeing. This is not Cunningham and Cage, Trisha Brown and her musical collaborators or even ballet.

In *Sketches for Winterreise*, the plural is understood as the possible juxtaposition of multiple radical singularities. The relationship between the treble and bass in these songs, often between the right hand (melodic) and the left hand (rhythmic). Between the melodic line and the emotional context or physical environment that is usually implied. The relationship between the literary text and the musical setting. Between the poetry of Muller and the music of Schubert - the way that the breath shapes the phrasing in the poetry and differently in the singing. Between major and minor modes—the use of (positive) major keys is usually ironic in these songs. Between the singer and the accompanist. Between the singer and the dancer. Between the song and the dance. Between sound, movement, film and light.

INTERVIEW

Sally Gardner interview with Russell Dumas December 2010

SG, You call the current cycle of work in the studio, and the performances that come out of this work 'dance for the time being'. Could you tell us about this?

RD, The name lends itself to different contexts and has an ambiguity which allows for multiple political usages. It is something to do with being in a situation that has been evolving here for decades, which is about organisations and structures- how and why they were created, how they've evolved and how, supposedly, they were going to ensure that dance as a practice would flourish here. I am thinking about the way that government funding tends to support the tip of the iceberg, the flagship companies (for obvious reasons to do with electoral cycles) yet fails to create policies to support the developmental practices that support this visible tip. Without such policy to support Australian dance practices we will become increasingly dependent on foreign artists to direct Australian dance companies and research organisations. (As the spate of recent appointments verify—Dance North, Qld Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, Chunky Moves, Dance House, West Australian Ballet.) Directing these organisations is a rare creative opportunity and unique learning experience that should be given to Australians. I am not suggesting that these appointments were not to the best applicants, but clearly they are symptomatic of the failure of Australia Council dance policy during the past thirty years.

SG, Are you referring to policies?

Yes, but indirectly. I am talking about organisations such as the Australian Ballet and “peak bodies” such as Ausdance as well as buildings such as the Sydney Opera House, the Wharf Theatre or the Australian Ballet Centre: the idea that you had to have buildings

and national organisations that are implicated and understandable in the social and political arenas as ‘significant things’ and iconic objects.(Edifice complex) You can't just let these structures go. An investment has been made, public money has been spent, and then

you must put in place machinery that actually furnishes these places – administratively, bureaucratically, professionally and industrially. These things interface with government and are what government understands. Australian Arts organisations must reflect back to government an image of itself and this is how ‘best business practice’ has become de facto arts policy in Australia. The main responsibility of artistic directors of arts organisations is not to lose more money than has been granted to the company to furnish a vision of government to itself—arts as propaganda. Whose vision is being catered for here? Ballet has always been useful in this context because of its ephemerality. It doesn’t stay there as evidence or lend itself to critical opinion or its revision. It doesn’t come back to haunt you like ‘Blue Poles’.

SG, ‘Dance for the time being’ is not graspable in terms of those structures?

No. The name suggests impermanence. It came from my interest in Haiku and the idea of impermanence in Zen Buddhist thought. I was interested in a poetics of time in Haiku, a poetics in which movement was central. And I began dancing because I was interested in movement. I studied dance techniques and I joined various dance companies — like The Royal (Ballet), Ballet Rambert and Nederlands Dans Theater — and I just thought ... this isn’t really what I’m interested in.

SG, Working in these dance companies didn’t satisfy your interest in movement?

In these companies it was very much about pyrotechnics and putting on a show. It was based on the assumption that the dancers were there to furnish skilled bodies for a choreographer, but the trouble was there was no choreographic thought- there were only vacuous spectacles. Looking back, works such as *Dark Elegies* [1937] had a relationship to something that was poetically very beautiful, and pieces that had a provenance in folk traditions like Bronislava Nijinska’s *Les Noces* [1923] interested me. These works ‘stylised’ ballet while referring to something that was completely outside of ballet. But you did all

these other works that were just silly. I eventually thought, 'I'm out of here'. I kept looking, because, coming from Australia, it was usual to go to England and Europe...and it took me a long time to realise that the thought of dance was in the dancing and that this was most clearly articulated in the choreographic structures of modern and postmodern dance in New York City, not in Europe.

I guess I realised quite early that what interested me was *dancing*. But there was this notion that dancing was somehow less significant than choreography or the choreographer... and it took me some time to work out that the dominance of choreographic practices was to do with economics. Capitalism needed a product and a brand name to market it. The name of the choreographer was something that would identify a work so that it could be sold. The audience needed the reassurance that it was seeing the already or almost famous as quality guarantee. This was as important for dance, as it was for say the artist Picasso, or Chanel and you can see this very clearly in Diaghilev's entrepreneurship of the Ballets Russes.

This notion that the thought of dance actually happens in the embodied practice of dancing has not been clearly articulated. The idea of thinking usually suggests association with language. But language is useful as thought only when it enters a political or social domain. Utilised thus it provides cultural context. The idea of just learning *vocabularies* is not thought or language. Learning say, Cunningham or Graham or even ballet — talking about these techniques as languages is nonsense. They resemble language only when they're used to communicate a particular social and political construct in choreographic *écritures*. Without this you're left with hived off bits of choreographic thought and isolated phrases. And this is precisely what is being taught in technique classes in professional companies and Tertiary Dance Institutions across Australia.

SG, Your own practice is the means to create both the dance material and an environment that questions and addresses the possibility of a cultural context for it.

Yes, against an idea that isolated bits of words/moves will give you the means to express yourself or something. And even more against the idea that the context will be provided by a sociologist, psychologist, musician, visual artist or “new media” artist. As if a collaborative endeavour will somehow give a framework for understanding these words which you call dance – which are called dance because there’s a dancer there, but which is only a muscularly etched body with technical facility. Without any kind of thought or proposition other than the demand to be looked at--the demand for attention, the dance “means” only what its context suggests. It’s just smoke, screens and mirrors.

SG, Previously a lot of the same dance material found in ‘dance for the time being’ was in a cycle of work that you called ‘in the room’ – which referred to a ‘salon practice for dance’ or performances with an audience of one, but which Jonathan Sinatra also performed in the Studio theatre of the Sydney Opera House.

The material was developed earlier than that with you and Warwick Shillitoe, in 1984, Nick Sabel and Jo McKendry in the film duets *Approaching Sleipner Junction* (1991). When different bodies do the same material, it’s not the same material. Bodies are differently inscribed by a changing social, political and cultural context. Changes in the thinking that surrounds the body, changes the work you’re doing and also the kind of knowledge that is in those bodies is different from the knowledge of the present dancers because the earlier dancers had more time to take on the concerns of the provenance of that work and I had more time in the studio with them and they engaged in a rigorous studio practice.

The idea explored in working with these dancers now is working with the material’s provenance in other bodies, so I’ve asked them to learn it from the video with an “investment” in Nick’s (Sabel) body, in Jo’s (McKendry) body coming through to Jonathan Sinatra with Anneke Hansen (In New York), and Jonathan with Satu Reola (In Finland), and Jonathan with Nicole (Jenvey) and Stewart (Shugg) and Linda (Sastradipradja) in

Melbourne. The ways these dancers interact forms a new thing – they’re not trying to do what the other bodies did and even if they try, they can’t. So there is great benefit and no harm in trying to do precisely what the other dancers did, but, *performatively*, what they have to do is *what they are doing*. And in fact that’s the most interesting thing *that* they do. I select a set of movement propositions and yes, there is an aesthetics of selection. I hear people saying to them, ‘you’re trying to be Russell, you’re working with Russell’s vocabulary’ and I think this proposition is advanced by individuals ignorant of provenance, embodied heritage and studio practice.

SG, You have worked on two fronts: maintaining a studio practice and also travelling, going to Bali and Japan on many occasions and establishing the Larret studio in France...

This was something I worked out a long time ago. My interest in provenance is to do with the need for both history and dance literacy. It is an attempt to ameliorate the damage to mind/body of generic dance ‘techniques’. When I came back to Australia in the ’70s I thought that I could somehow buy time here to initiate a movement-based practice for dance - because at that stage we didn’t have all of this infrastructure in place. (Ausdance, creative producers and the edifice complex etc.) And I suggested ways that this could be done where we would travel and learn by going to other cultures and understanding something of embodied cultural difference. Because what became clear to me was that all non-indigenous Australian dance was in the one paradigm – it was all this Western view of itself and it was impossible to see it from within. And yes, there were regional and national differences – in America, England, Germany - but they shared a whole lot of assumptions, not just about dance but about culture, and not just about culture but about civilization and the advantages that came out of the industrial revolution and increasing materialist wealth and ‘getting ahead’. Western dance evolved within a capitalist paradigm. Dance had to meet industry criteria and it had to reflect them. Then there was the reality that dance is totally dependent on patronage, that it couldn’t function as an independent practice or as a

vehicle for individual thought like many of the other arts. The body is inherently conservative and it is difficult to change its habits as thought and movement are both emotionally invested. And there are a lot of neurological and probably sound evolutionary reasons for this. That was why I rationalised that if you look outside of the cultural framework that we are within and you went to, say, an Asian country it allowed you to experience your senses differently and gave you other ways to imagine things within your own body and culture. I wanted to create a context for people who are interested in asking physical questions through their practices and to explore the potential of dance to maybe reveal something of the different ways that we could have evolved. Because every turn we took in evolution meant that other possibilities atrophied. The potential that remained within bodies to think differently and to do things otherly is enormously constrained by how we got to where we are now, by the fact of that.

But a different dance also needs to be made accessible through a certain kind of poetics - it needs that to resonate and communicate within your own culture. It needs to have some hooks. It's not just that it needs knowledge. I knew from Ideokinesis that you can understand something, rationally but that doesn't actually change how you experience your body. Experiential anatomy gave you knowledge of the potential of the body to change but it didn't necessarily cause you to *want to* change. Then I looked at other practices like martial arts that seduced the body into certain efficiencies and I thought that they had worked something out there. And I think that that's what you had to do if you are going to change a pattern, you have to literally find some way to make it pleasurable and seductive to the body to say, 'OK I want to do this' not just 'I understand this'. I was trying to find a structure that would engage some of this potential for change with a group of people who were interested in asking these questions. The problem was then I actually had to look like I was a choreographer because everyone understood that the person who asked questions was the choreographer - not the dancer. The dancer was there for some

kind of thing that was at best, improvisational. They gave a certain kind of feedback on the themes put out or the structures put forth or, in post-modern dance, the games suggested. Then the choreographer came and ordered that and put it into a piece for presentation in black box theatre or an open space or something - very much into an existing paradigm of entertainment. I was looking for ways to go outside this, trying to find other spaces, other ways.

SG, How would you characterise the material of 'dance for the time being'?

The material is a reflection on the idea of what a provenance for dance is and where it comes from. '*dance for the time being*' tries to subvert notions of dance and temporality: what is this dance's relationship to the past and the future, or to *a* past and *a* future and thus to culture. It is the idea of something that is constantly evolving. When I have been asked to show work — you know a producer would see something that was an existing work and say, 'We want you to do this in Japan in two years time,' I have just thought, well, the bodies that are doing that will be completely different to the bodies that did *this*. It seemed like I had to convince people that the most interesting thing that you could do was just have those bodies — they'd be more interesting in two years time if they continued to evolve, rather than somehow set them in aspic and then plonk them down and ask them to recreate the choreographic thought or the concept that was there previously. I thought that this was just not a very interesting thing to do as a performer. Or it wasn't interesting *for me* to do as a performer. I was much more interested in continuing to ask questions.

SG, You seem to be using the idea of 'provenance' to counter the notion of the contemporary. What do you mean by this idea of provenance?

My understanding of practice embraces an embodied understanding of the past in the present for the future. I utilise the notion of provenance as a strategy to resist the vacuousness of much Contemporary Dance. This idea is important to an embodied practice. It is the idea that work comes from somewhere: that it doesn't just come from, 'I

went out and I had this idea and I thought I could put on a show'. If you're a serious artist you have to know what's gone before you and hopefully take it a bit further. All artists have to have some understanding of the past of what they're doing to be able to see what territory has been left uncolonised or if they're going to go in to a colonised area to know why? What is the purpose of going in there? You might have no purpose and you might find something because of your very aimlessness. In a sense all research has to have a certain aimlessness about it, because if you already know what you're looking for its not really research.

When people say that they're doing dance research, often what they are really doing is taking a concept and making some kind of illustration of this concept in the fairly restricted 'language' of the dancer's technique. And I haven't seen anything in the country that's doing anything other than this and I keep thinking well, is it different elsewhere? And at the moment – particularly in Europe – I don't think it is. I think that it *has* been and I think it could become interesting again but I think we're currently in this real cul de sac. It's partly due to governments putting resources into infrastructure and stuff that is bureaucratically driven and panels that decide policy are primarily producers and curators or administrators. In dance there's no notion of the artist's vision or voice being heard. So the work I am doing actually becomes a way of trying to create *a community* 'for the time being'. It also recognises that this is one thing that these dancers are doing amongst many things they have to do to make a living. It might be the main thing that *I'm* doing – why people would say, 'Well, you're "the choreographer"' and I think, well, the choreographer is a particular concept within that framework that we've just talked about and I'll say that I'm a choreographer if it actually gets money to buy time for these artists to invest in their individual practices. To ask questions through movement, of movement and with movement rather than through other parasitic art practices that are much more developed and lend themselves to language more readily than dance. They collaborate

with dance more assertively and are much more understandable to the audience. And again dance is silenced and reduced to some kind of illustrative relationship to these other art forms that surround it. It becomes the thing that's mute and vulnerable, the body that the audience can empathise with. This mute thing is called 'dance'. But it's not the dance that I'm interested in.

SG, You were suggesting that to some extent you don't accept or assume the paradigm that the term 'choreographer', and by extension, 'dancer' tends to set in place. Can you talk about your work with dancers in the studio and with developing what might be called a technique?

My relationship to a dancer is through a physical dialogue. I will put a proposition forward from my body that I haven't quite worked out, usually from a perspective of a half-formed idea that I'll have in relation to something like gravity, to falling in relation to running. I've talked about the idea of running as something where empathy is created. Not actual running, but movement that evokes the use of the oppositional patterns deep in the body. We all run the same way as an evolutionary given, but how we walk and how we stand is culturally specific. I utilise these sweeping propositions to provoke /facilitate thought and physical challenge in my dance practice. Because the things that we're bringing together, they're things that are not connected or haven't yet been connected. It is a type of play or improvisation.

SG, You have also used the idea of 'falling behind' in this way. What are these 'things' that you are connecting?

These things become the material that we work on, but the overarching thought relates to the 'pre-thought' of that material: for example, I go to the beach and I see things like the footprints in the sand that don't line up in walking, whereas the heels of runners do line up. And I think of the body...and recall the overcrossing gait of fashion models on the catwalk and the forward leaning stance of the Noh actor. There are many everyday events and phenomena that can be thought about through the body. My friend is having his third prosthetic knee operation because of certain ways that specialists have misunderstood

how gravity works in particular bodies that has caused the tibia bone to split. Things like this impact on you from the messiness of life and cause you to think physically about them. Another example is a prosthetic device such as an arch in a shoe to relieve pain in the foot—a medical system that treats the symptom rather than attempting to identify the underlying causes. Knowledge is so detailed and specialised that we have lost the possibility of a more holistic understanding of the body. And in a way the thought of movement and the movement of thought have to be brought together, have to resonate. I know that this is a broad sweep but it allows me to look at other broad sweeps and bring them together and shift them around in my mind. If I just had these tiny fragments — the moves and phrases that we're working on— it doesn't suggest the potential richness of unimagined possibilities. It's like treating the symptoms of pain in the foot through a prosthetic device, which doesn't allow me to understand what the future alignment consequences are for the rest of the body, let alone the body in another context. Somatic knowledge usually evolved in a context of self-healing or therapy and often retain traces of how they came into being and this can get incorporated unchallenged and inappropriately in the context of dance and individual practices. So it's really important for me to look at broad abstract possibilities —such as suggested by the instability of the running body in addition to the stability of the walking or standing body. But there are also things that are so obvious that we overlook, that have ramifications for dance training. For example, the way we stand in parallel in modern dance techniques. This wide stance gives a bracing support to the pelvis through the legs and this stability facilitates the articulation of the spine in Cunningham and other techniques. The consequences of such stability in the body are often a denial of the body's sensuality. The stabilized body moves like a block. I call this multi-purpose stable body an "Ikea" body – assembled by a universal key and articulated by the limbs. By contrast, standing with the feet *close together* (and so that the right sit bone is in the same plane as the experiential centre of the right foot and ditto the

left foot and sit bone), creates a dynamic instability, and that instability and its management is potentially a very rich field for dance. This is a lot more interesting to me than the demand for stability. These insights inform my own practice and I share this practice with the dancers I work with. Such thoughts often generate resistance within the bodies of dancers and sometimes, new insights.

SG, It is both the otherness of other bodies and their conscious resistance that challenges you?

The major challenge is how to work with the kind of inscription in these bodies given the paucity of information and training here and the lack of access to the heritage of dance modernity, or even ballet - other than as a colonial practice. And because of the need for body-to-body transmission in embodied practices ... In Bali I look at the way these things are passed by touch and the way this communicates something that is richer than the codified, named things that we do in ballet. And often in modern dance it just becomes this copying of what the master teacher does — very much about, say, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Twyla Tharp, what *they* did and this doesn't even have the potential ballet has for distancing yourself from that inscription. This is both empowering and disempowering. I think the one exception to this was Contact Improvisation (CI). CI suddenly opened up an enormous potential for learning through touch and it gave a form to a certain set of values — and Steve (Paxton) didn't want to own it in a funny way because he was resisting that notion of the choreographer and the power dynamic that this term implied or that it was his choreographic vehicle.

SG, He was certainly able to communicate and even inscribe his values through the practice of contact...

But from an audience's point of view he resisted certain choreographic expectations. CI was sometimes kind of disappointing for the audience because it didn't engage with any of the other fields that you were expected to have "mastered" as a choreographer or the things that had been loaded onto the notion of a choreographic auteur - and which have

all been much more articulated in other art forms. And additionally dance has this problem of embodiment. As a site this is problematic: it brings in all of the problems of, say, women's bodies ... and, what (Lawrence) Louppe brings up, its power to create out of itself, out of its own matter. And it is fearful in the patriarchal order to have the sense of that power. I don't know, I just feel that we are at a point of stasis in any kind of development..

SG, And that's the 'dance for the time being'?

Yes, but it also refers to what it is possible or impossible to do without funding to actually pay the dancers, to buy their time so that they spend enough time in the studio to effect changes in their bodies and in their practices. The Australia Council has never understood the relationship between intelligent dance practices and choreographic development; consequently we have failed to produce any unique choreographic practices. My work has not been funded for years because it is outside the industrial paradigm that the Australia Council has put in place and due to the lack of developmental dance policy and the absence of any intelligent vision or even any vision. I went along with the Australia Council's charades for years but eventually there were no workarounds for the idiotic dance criteria. Lucy Guerin, Becky Hilton, Jo McKendry, Cath Stewart, Ros Warby —the development of these artists would not have been possible if I'd played the company game. I slipped through and it worked for a while. I could buy time to create the possibility for these practices to emerge. Since then there haven't been any significant dance or choreographic practices here although millions of dollars of public money have been wasted on this futile endeavour. If there are no significant dance practices there are never going to be choreographic practices. The notion of the choreographer as someone who controls traffic, forecasts weather or prepares meals still passes as radical thought in Europe and Australia. I have little tolerance for these semantic games or dated 1960's re-

runs of “everyone is an artist”. The idea of a choreographic practice understood as an art form is totally dependent upon a dance practice. And it’s the dance practice of the choreographer because otherwise it’s a vicarious thought — because thought is embodied. You can’t actually borrow someone else’s — well you can in fields such as collaboration and improvisation. You can see the potential of that thought in some bodies that improvise and then you have a choreographer come in and nip and tuck it and say well, this is mine, the concept was mine therefore the work is mine, therefore it can enter into the circulation of products. Creative producers will select this work because they don’t know any better and besides it can be toured in the name of the choreographic poseur.

SG, In performances of ‘dance for the time being’ it is not as though anything has reached any culmination, or that the dancers have somehow mastered something. Performing is also part of the embodied practice.

And it is also something that you get better at by just doing. Within the economy of the spectacle, the dancer’s performance is the thing that’s most often judged— your competence or your feeling of ease in the public gaze. In ballet it’s dependent on virtuosity and if you have that kind of virtuosity then you’re confident, you know that you’re a straight ten (like Nadia Comaneci) so that you have got no problems about being looked at. You’re there to be looked at and that’s part of your confidence as well as your competence. This was never very interesting to me. I liked the thought but I understood that if you’re going to engage in a practice that is performative ... it’s like a conversation. What we’re actually doing here: we’re using the same vocabulary but we’re not having the same conversation. We might meet periodically and over time go over the same things and it would be just too boring if we actually went over the same conversation or tried to reproduce it—like we are supposed to do in a performance. Why would someone be interested in re-creating the same conversation two years later in front of a public and

actually trying to remember what was engaging about it originally. And in a way the thought that actually happens that interests me is in the idea of a community of people who will return and engage with how perceptions shift over time and will be able to articulate these shifts in some kind of feedback situation. But it's a bit utopian: it's a big ask of people... This was my intention for the 'associate artists'. You want them as a very engaged audience and you're saying, 'Give me your best critical thinking on what's happening here'. But ... 'Well, buy my time and I might do that because otherwise I've just got to go and work in this restaurant to pay the rent' or something. And we don't have that kind of engaged community of artists. But we're the poorer for it — maybe if we were smarter as a culture — to try to support that because it would lead to new knowledge of the body. When you have spent your life trying to articulate through the body, with the body and in the body because the body is everywhere so what are the ramifications for the ageing body... what does it mean to get older? I mean that idea of the loss of that muscular confidence where you feel incompetent in daily life. We put this label round this period whereas it potentially has richness. We say, 'I don't like this, I'm becoming incompetent'. I'm kind of interested in, well, was *competence* then only to have a body that I didn't have to pay attention to. You know. Was it just these habits that I didn't have to think about? Not only did I not think about it but also I didn't sense and I didn't experience it. I just *behaved* in all kinds of programmed ways... to try to find a way to be interested in that stuttering and that falling over. I remember Jamie Murdoch inviting Christina (Formaggia), Libby (Dempster) and I to a dinner and recital with these old Balinese dancers. It was just extraordinary and they were embarrassed and fell around a bit and giggled. But they did it because Jamie had asked them to do it and there was a group of them doing it - but there was also clearly something there that when they looked at each other they could see and that we could feel. It was like we were looking at embodied time.

SG, It reminds me of a work I saw recently in Amsterdam where elderly people, former citizens of the soviet republics were asked to remember the physical exercises they had to do as part of the youth groups they belonged to. They showed such pleasure and concentration in remembering these moves even though their often overweight and ageing bodies were not that fit or supple. You could see another body and another time.

This loops back into the question of provenance that we spoke of before. It is not just this connection to the masters or whom you learnt from, but is a lot richer. It summons up a whole memory and it implicates time differently and I think the potential for the body as it gets older to do this increases because the loss of a certain kind of muscular competence is already an implication of time. Why would you not want to use this? I've been interested in muscular virtuosity but I'm also interested in its loss. If virtuosity was a way to illustrate something about movement, about its potential richness as a field of thought then the loss of this and the implicated bodily changes are also potentially rich.

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