

critical dance studies



Elizabeth Waterhouse

Processing Choreography

Thinking with
William Forsythe's *Duo*

[transcript]

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The series is edited by Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein.

Elizabeth Waterhouse, born in 1979, is a postdoc at the Institute of Theatre Studies at the University of Bern. She received her doctoral degree in dance studies from the Graduate School of the Arts at the University of Bern/Bern University of the Arts (HKB). Recently she was director of the project "Motion Together" at the Free University of Berlin. Waterhouse danced for nearly a decade in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company. Her activities range from research of dance practice and documentation, to artistic projects developed collaboratively in the mediums of dance, music, design, and visual art.

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Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This book is dedicated to the *Duo* dancers.

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

—*Dana Caspersen*¹

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

Introduction

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



Photo © Agnès Noltenius.

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

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

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

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

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

1 Noltenius, *Detail*.

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

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

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



Photo © Riley Watts.

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

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

Watching *DUO2015*

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

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

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



Photo © Bill Cooper.

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

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

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

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

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

Researching the *Duo* Project

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

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

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

8 This counts performances between 1996–2018.

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

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

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



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

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

9 Byrne, “Ballet’s Antichrist.”

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

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

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

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

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



Photo © Dominik Mentzos.

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

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

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

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

14 Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the Dancers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Dancer's Perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

seminated in ways that involve the democratic medium of the internet.³⁵ It is in this more self-reflexive field that I would situate *Duo* discursively, due to the published writing of many Forsythe dancers³⁶—although *Duo*'s aesthetics and labor are distinct from those of conceptual dance works, as shall be made clear in my analysis to follow.

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

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

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

The Performer's Labor

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

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

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

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

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

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

43 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Processing Choreography

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources & Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

67 I am grateful to Susanne Schmitt for her coaching.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

72 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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

74 Gold, “Roles in Sociological Field Observations.”

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

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

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

Sources

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Performances

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

Fieldwork & Interviews

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The activities of my fieldwork are listed in Appendix E. For one year (2016–2017), I cooperated with three primary dancers: *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts, and Forsythe dancer Cyril Baldy, who had served as a ballet master for *Duo* in the staging for the CCN – Ballet de Lorraine in 2015.⁸⁷ I also travelled to meet in person with four further dancers who have danced *Duo*, and reached another two dancers by phone/video-conference. Most of my interviews were duets between a dancer and myself, mirroring the primary constellation of *Duo*. When possible, I engaged with pairs of *Duo* dancers in joint interviews. Additionally, with each dancer I conducted a semi-structured interview, focusing on their biographies, the circumstances surrounding their joining Forsythe's companies, their experience with *Duo* and the occupational culture of Ballet Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.⁸⁸

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overview

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART I - ART WORLD

Introduction to Part I: Art World

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

—Arthur Danto (1964)¹

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

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

1 Danto, “The Artworld,” p. 580.

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1: Ensemble: William Forsythe & Team

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

—William Forsythe¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.1 William Forsythe

1.1.1 Forsythe’s Biography

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

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

4 See Franko, “Splintered Encounters.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 Driver, “The Life, So Far,” p. 10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 Ibid.

18 See section 3.3 Transnational Careers.

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

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

1.1.2 Choreography, Dance and Counterpoint

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

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

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

20 See Tusa, “Interview with William Forsythe.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.1.3 The Current State of Research on Forsythe's Work

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

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

28 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

34 Brandstetter, "Defigurative Choreography."

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

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

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

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

The radical nature of Forsythe's works is linked to processes and sociality. For the dancers, these pieces expand the potential of how motion can be contextualized, imagined, generated and performed; as a consequence, they also shift modes of how motion is thought³⁹ and perceived⁴⁰ for the audience. Indeed, as dance scholar Sabine Huschka has observed:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

42 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

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

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

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

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

1.2 Teamwork

“Bill is the nucleus.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.1 Supporting the Dancers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.2 Working with Forsythe

“It’s like pushing the limits.”

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

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

LIZ: And you? Stress?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

60 Forsythe dancers, anonymous interviews with the author.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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- 1 In 2020, demolition of this theater was announced, with plans for rebuilding on site or elsewhere in discussion at the time of writing.
 - 2 The plaza, called *Theaterplatz* until 1992, honors Willy Brandt, the former German chancellor and leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).
 - 3 The sculpture by artist Ottmar Hörl was erected in 2001. https://www.ottmar-hoerl.de/de/projekte/2001/2001_1_Euro.php

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



Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

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

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

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

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

2.1 Shifting Institutions

One thousand and sixty-six people currently work for the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main* (hereafter *Städtische Bühnen*), which has a long history of public performances that goes back to 1782.⁶ The organization is funded primarily by the city of Frankfurt, while also receiving money from the state of Hesse in addition to scholarships and other sources of revenue.⁷ The two primary, historic divisions of this organization are the Opera and the Theater. The Frankfurt Opera Ballet existed as a subsidiary of the Opera until 1989, when Forsythe assumed the role of General Director (*Intendant*) and the Ballet became an equal pillar.⁸ After August 1996, Forsythe additionally directed the Theater am Turm (TAT) at the ancillary venue of the Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt.⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 The “Givens”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Ibid., p. 87.

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 165–91.

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

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

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

2.3 Architecture and Stages

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

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

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

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

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

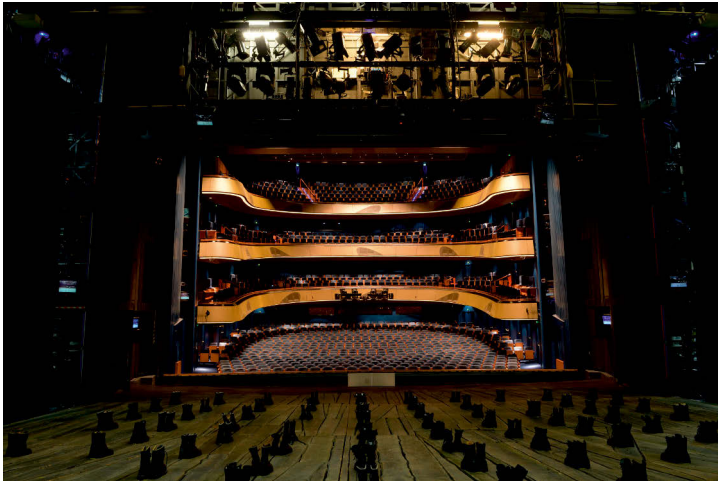


Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

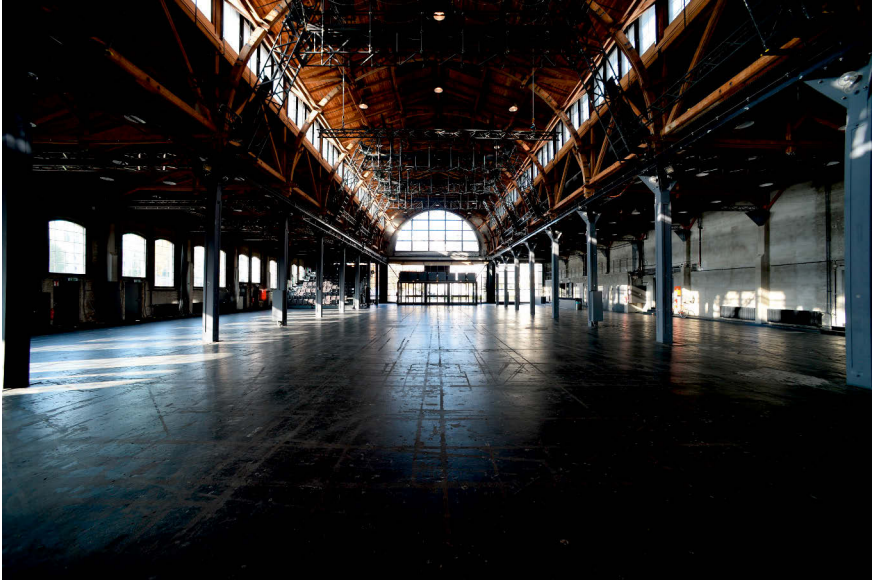


Photo © Barbara Aumüller.

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 14. Festspielhaus Hellerau in Dresden.

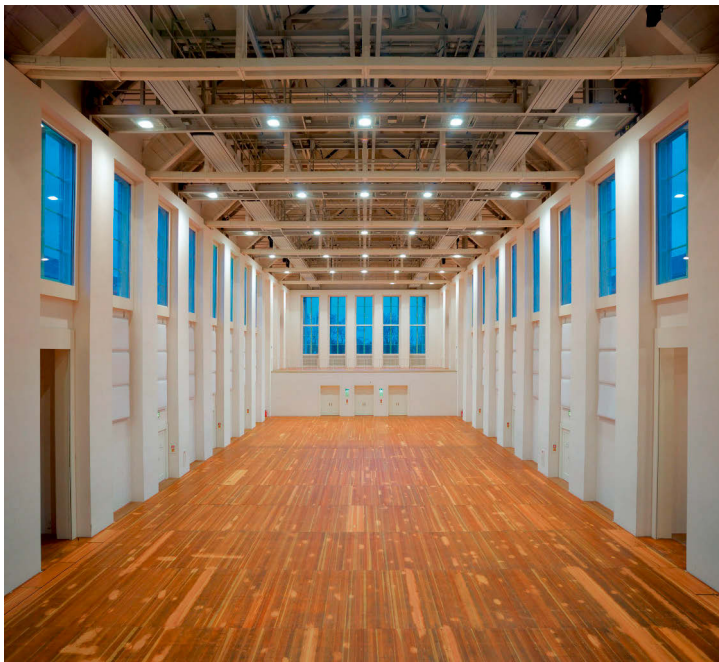


Photo © Lothar Sprenger.

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

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

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

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

2.4 Duo's Setting and Music

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.4.1 Dissonant Counterpoint

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.4.2 *Duo's Distant Piano*

A Consonant Dissonance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 3: The Dancers

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

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

3.1 Frankfurt am Main

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

Table 2. Frankfurt am Main Population (2017)^{*1}

Population	741 093
Population density (inhabitants per km²)	2 985
Up to 17 years (percent)	16.7
65 years and over (percent)	15.7
Foreigners (percent)	29.5
German inhabitants with migration background^{*2} (percent)	23.6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 The Dancers' Working Conditions

3.2.1 Auditions

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

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

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

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

3.2.2 Soloist Contracts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 Transnational Careers

3.3.1 “Ballet Across Borders”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.2 Education and Professional Experience

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

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

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

25 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

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

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

3.3.3 Statistics for Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 For further statistics, see Appendix H.

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

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

3.3.4 Diversity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.5 Change and Continuity: Ballett Frankfurt & The Forsythe Company

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.4 The Dancers' Occupational Culture

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

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

50 See section 4.2 Training.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.4.1 Habitus

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

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

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

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

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

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

60 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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

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

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

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

3.4.2 Choreographic Styles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5 Duo Dancers

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

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

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

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

72 See the artist biographies in Appendix D.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What else is this?”

Phone interview with dancer Dana Caspersen, December 19, 2018

LIZ: What were the values of Ballett Frankfurt?

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 4: The Dancers' Practices

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

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

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

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

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

2 See *ibid.*, 6:00–7:00.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1 Seasonal Rhythms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Training

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Forsythe dancer, anonymous interview with the author.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3 Rehearsal

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 Performance

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

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

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

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

24 Matinee performances were unusual.

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

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

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

4.5 Creation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.6 Touring

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.6.1 The Cost of Touring

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 5: *Duo's* Art World

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

—Howard Becker¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.1 Touring

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

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

3 *Ibid.*, p. 379.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 375.

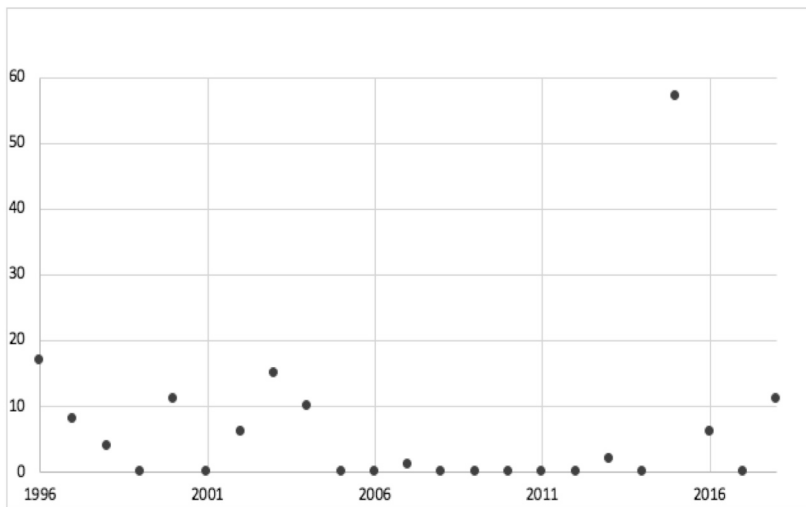
6 Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 384–85. Dance scholars Helena Wulff and Rudi Laermans both give serious consideration of Becker’s ideas in their studies of ballet and contemporary dance, respectively. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*; in particular pp. 33–35. See Laermans, *Moving Together*, in particular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

7 See Klein, “Die Logik der Praxis.”

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

of repetition and displacement shows two waves of activity. In Ballett Frankfurt, *Duo* was performed 72 times, with the highest frequency of performances within the first year and during the tours of the final season of Ballett Frankfurt. Throughout the period of The Forsythe Company, *Duo* was primarily dormant. *Duo* resurged in a new form, under the title *DUO2015*, as part of the *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* tour during which there were 57 performances in 2015.⁹

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

5.2 Reconstructive Chronology of *Duo* Performances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

involved with *Duo*. These included Cora Bos-Kroese, who had joined the Ballett Frankfurt in 2001 after a career in Nederlands Dans Theater, as well as Italian dancer Roberta Mosca and American dancer Natalie Thomas. In November 2002, *Duo* was revisited with a series of six performances in Frankfurt, with Johnson and Brown performing. Six months later, the piece toured to three cities in Italy, performed by Bos-Kroese, Mosca, and/or Johnson. At this time, a shift occurred in the musical accompaniment. Willems replaced Morrow, performing his own piano score, again modified for the occasion—a role that Willems then kept in later performances. The new program of four works would tour extensively for the next two years before the ultimate closure of Ballett Frankfurt in summer 2004.¹⁶

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

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

After the closure of Ballett Frankfurt at the end of the 2003–2004 season, Forsythe continued working with a smaller set of dancers in his subsequent ensemble, The Forsythe Company. The repertoire of the latter did not include *Duo* until 2012.¹⁷ Aside from Roberta Mosca, no other *Duo* dancers had continued from Ballett Frankfurt to The Forsythe Company.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 In Darmstadt and Weimar.

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

22 See Appendix F, section 3.

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

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

In 2014, Forsythe was asked by renowned ballet dancer Sylvie Guillem²⁴ to include *Duo* in her international farewell tour titled *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*, sponsored by Sadler's Wells Theatre of London.²⁵ For this context, Forsythe expanded the Ballet Frankfurt version of *Duo* into a longer work of twenty minutes, which he retitled *DUO2015*. Willems also changed the score, creating a more minimal composition of electronics (without piano). The suspended flageolet tones were recycled from Forsythe and Willem's piece *Sider* (2011), creating a hypnotizing yet suspenseful sonic atmosphere. New costumes were chosen, in which the dancers wore sweatpants and tank tops. Despite the dancers referring chronologically to the version of *Duo* that they had learnt, this adaptation involved more sections of improvisation and solos in which the dancers had greater freedom with *their* choices of sequence and motifs. According to the dancers, Gjoka and Watts found "*their Duo*" in this version and context.²⁶ They also acquired expertise through extensive performance in 52 cities internationally between April and December 2015. Supported by the infrastructure of Sadler's Wells Theatre of London, this tour took the work beyond Forsythe's institutional structure; the dancers performed for the first time without Forsythe's presence, organizing rehearsals and the presentation themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28 See Crompton, "A Different Focus."

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

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

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

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

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

PART II - MOVEMENT

Introduction to Part II: Movement

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

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

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

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

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

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

I was drawn to explore movement in its multiplicity and evoke its power in language. Conducting interviews like dancing this duet—alternating between listening and conversing—I served as a reflection partner to elicit the dancers' understanding of their movement. Their testimonies are cited amply in the writing that follows, without significant editing so that their voices are authentic. I wanted to give their ideas resonance and friction, like they do when dancing *Duo* with one another. While providing the reader with their stories and memories, I curate and analyze these statements; I position them critically within my own review of the traces left by *Duo*, together with some key points within the literature from dance studies, process philosophy and social anthropology.

It is important to note that my references to theory from outside of *Duo* are not intended to explain practice; rather practice and theory are placed in mutual dialogue, as I challenge concepts to adequately decipher empirical observations. The keywords "body," "material," "relation," "entrainment" and "counterpoint" will be developed in this section. Examining these terms will illustrate how an aesthetic event of performing co-movement, "with and for others," deeply hones a transformative intersubjective power.³ My writing strives to sensually convey the dancers' carnal experience of *Duo*, grappling to name what we miss when we overlook that movement emerges relationally, defining an us: *ourselves*.

Following a way of thinking already substantiated by many dance scholars, the bodies of *Duo* dancers take prominence in this writing. Within dance studies, the body is understood to be a dynamic material entrenching and expressing socio-political forces.⁴ Dance scholars have paid close attention to how choreographic aesthetics are tied to dancers' bodily lives, sociality and subjectivities—illustrating the critical interweaving of movement, culture and politics.⁵ Similarly, in the recent corporeal turn of sociology and anthropology, the body is recognized as an imperative locus to understand culture and sociality; bodies are shown to be in-progress and multiple.⁶ Approaches to researching the dancing body, using participant observation and practice-based methods as I do here, are more common in Anglo-American than German dance studies.⁷

3 See Tamisari, "Dancing with and for Others."

4 See, for example, Desmond, *Meaning in Motion*; Foster, *Reading Dancing*; Thomas, *Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*.

5 See, in particular, Kunst, *Artist at Work*; Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*; Kowal et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*; Siegmund and Hölscher, *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity*.

6 See, in particular, Thomas, *The Body and Everyday Life*; Wacquant, *Body & Soul*; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*; Wulff, "Experiencing the Ballet Body"; Mol, *The Body Multiple*; Blackman, *The Body*.

7 Cf. Giersdorf, "Dance Studies in the International Academy."

My movement analysis strives to rigorously describe and distinguish *Duo's* movement. There are many approaches to movement analysis in dance.⁸ One commonly used theory within dance studies, Laban Movement Analysis, has been shown to be fruitful for movement analysis bridging first-person and third-person perspectives, and informs my work here.⁹ I will demonstrate a novel manner of interpreting Laban's motion factors relationally. Forsythe's own movement research projects, the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* (1999) and the website *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2009), will also be reviewed in the chapters that follow.¹⁰ These present techniques of the individual body improvising and principles of composing multiple bodies moving together, leaving a gap for further study of the pair—as I explore here.

Existing studies of Forsythe's choreographic movement by dance scholars have concentrated both on the innovative properties of the dancers' movements and their aesthetic significance in performance. Notably, Wibke Hartewig's examination of the Ballet Frankfurt period has worked with Claudia Jeschke's procedure of *Inventarisierung von Bewegung* (Inventory of Movement, IVB); this has given us richly detailed movement profiles of performance excerpts. In concurrence with the work undertaken here, Hartewig demonstrates choreographic movements to be multilayered in meaning: across semiotic and sensory registers, interpreted through the rules of convention, and read within the sequence of composition and the theatrical frame.¹¹ Both Melanie Bales and Wibke Hartewig have examined the ways that Forsythe transforms the classical ballet genre of the *pas de deux*, creating duets that go beyond narrative tropes into the physics and process of partnering.¹²

In her dissertation, dance scholar Tamara Tomic-Vajagic has analyzed the interpretation of solos in Forsythe's "leotard ballets," using a blended approach that mixes ethnography, dance studies analysis and Laban analysis (motif writing and effort analysis). She finds that the dancer's contribution is influenced by training and the company culture in which they work, which she explores from the perspective of Bourdieu's principle of *habitus*. She also studies the concept of *agency* in interpretation—reminding us that Forsythe has fostered the performers to take liberties beyond their ballet *habitus*, creating an ensemble that, as Roslyn Sulcas observes, "is fundamentally inimical to the usual power relations between dancer and choreographer, and at odds with conventional ballet training."¹³ Overall, Tomic-Vajagic argues that studying variation in dif-

8 For an excellent review of movement analysis process, see Hartewig, "Observation Techniques."

9 Laban Movement Analysis is an analytic framework based upon the work of Austro-Hungarian dancer and dance theorist Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). This approach is explained further in section 9.1.

10 See Forsythe and ZKM, *Improvisation Technologies*; Forsythe and The Ohio State University, *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*.

11 See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 19–32.

12 Bales, "Touchstones of Tradition and Innovation"; see also Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, in particular pp. 176–85.

13 Sulcas, "William Forsythe: Channels for the Desire to Dance," p. 55. On the performer's labor, see also Sulcas, "William Forsythe. The Poetry of Disappearance and the Great Tradition"; Siegmund,

ferent artists' interpretations of the same piece illuminates the attributes of the dance texts and the cultural contexts in which the dancers work.¹⁴

Building upon the aforementioned studies, the following chapters will examine different scales and registers of *Duo's* movement: from the single movement of *showerhead* to the attributes of the choreographic sequence of *Duo*. I will compare movements across perspectives and times. Showing the complicated manner that dancing with a partner and for an audience defines movement, I aim to shift the conception of movement—as defined predominantly by expression, individualism and ephemerality—showing instead how movement is a quasi-malleable part of the dancers' worlds and bodily corporeality. By caring and attending to movement together, they build a choreographic field with unusual potential.

By the close of this section, the reader should have a richer understanding of the features of *Duo's* movement, and the changes that occur through longstanding practice of this motion cooperatively in rehearsal and performance. Taking the thesis that the extension from two to many dancers (that is, from one, to a couple, to a group) is not a simple matter of addition, the aspiration here is to use *Duo* as a provisional starting point to question the choreography of individuals in movement. When is a movement mine? When is it ours? How does practice lead to dancing together, and produce a choreography, itself in process?

“William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann”; see also Spier, “Engendering and Composing Movement,” pp. 140–42.

14 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, in particular pp. 285–89.

Chapter 6: The Movement of Showerhead

The movement of *Duo* involves the dancers' whole bodies moving—aside from a few notable moments of exception: for example, when the dancers both swing their right arms synchronously like pendulums, the rest of their bodies held upright without visible reverberation. Generally, Forsythe's movement style teaches dancers to investigate the potential to move any part of the body, to any region of space, using the breadth of imagination. The dancers practice refined articulations of movement that, as Forsythe says, can “start from any point.”¹ They master details of invention: joining movements of left calf, right ear, right ring finger, eyes, left ear, penis, pinky, pelvis, etc. If one has not already mastered another dance style or other sport, understanding *what* let alone *how* this coordination is developed is difficult to fathom.

For a Forsythe dancer, even when one part of the body is locally moved, the whole body is globally sensed, in living stasis around that activity. Even when one part moves in a crafted isolation of just what this elbow or this wrist can do—or can do while thinking this, or can do while someone else is doing that—the isolation is immediately in relation to the rest of the body, space, time and other movers. For Forsythe dancers, movement is perceived as passage and relation; movement integrates. Movement is felt as constant variation of qualities of more and less—a shifting texture of bodily (dis)continuities.² The *whole of my body* is formed in the articulation of its contributing parts. And in the case of Forsythe's dancers, this partaking is learned, through a rhythm of

1 This adage from William Forsythe is a cornerstone of his movement philosophy. The preposition “at” or “from” varies among citations. See Whittenburg, “William Forsythe in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg,” p. 2; see Vass-Rhee, “Distributed Dramaturgies,” p. 92. The phrase is cited in the title of Caspersen's essay “It Starts From Any Point” and the subtitle of the volume edited by Steven Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts From Any Point*.

2 With the term (dis)continuities, I wish to emphasize both continuation and difference. In doing so, I draw from the concept of relation as both connecting and dividing, as in anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's formulation: see Strathern, “Kinship as a Relation,” pp. 54–55. I also draw a parallel to Erin Manning's accounts of process, which, after Whitehead, set emphasis: “not on the continuity of becoming, an infinitely open account of process, but on the becoming of continuity: process punctuated.” Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 3.

ballet training followed by creating, rehearsing and performing Forsythe's choreography—through an organism of practices supporting, mimicking, learning and watching one another; and of course, studying the movement of Forsythe, which leads and fuels this system.

To further elucidate the movement expertise of Forsythe dancers for the reader, in this section I hone in on one movement from *Duo*: the first movement, which is nicknamed “showerhead.”³ In lay terms, this movement can be envisioned as a circular gesture of the right hand. The smooth move lasts one breath and involves an audible inhale and exhale. It's more complex in actuality. As a proliferating gesture, *showerhead* draws the whole body into action. How this propagation takes place will be revealed incrementally as this chapter develops and as I articulate principles and skills. In so doing, I define a particular *logic of practice*. For Pierre Bourdieu, a “logic of practice” is not abstract or external to practice, but a logic constituted within and through activity, “performed directly in bodily gymnastics.”⁴

Figures 17–18. Video stills illustrating the movement showerhead. Figure 17: The beginning of the movement. Regina van Berkel (left) and Allison Brown (right) dancing Duo in 1997. Figure 18: The end of the movement. Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) dancing DUO2015 in 2015.



Photo © William Forsythe.

3 The dancers' naming was flexible: “showerhead” “shower” or “head.” Jill Johnson used the term *showerhead* with me in interviews on October 21, 2016; December 6, 2016; and June 28, 2018. Allison Brown on September 22, 2016; and January 23, 2018. Riley Watts on January 11, 2017; May 22, 2018; and in prior work for the publication Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*.” In setting the piece, Cyril Baldy used the term “head” during rehearsals with CCN – Ballet de Lorraine on April 21–22, 2015. Riley Watts referenced the nickname “shower” on April 16, 2015. On naming movement, see section 10.4.3 First Studio Rehearsal: Conceptual Pacts.

4 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 89.



Transferred from generation to generation of *Duo* dancers, the motion *showerhead* refers to an image that has become associated with the movement: the image of twisting a faucet on. What is imagined most explicitly is the surface of the shower wall in front of the body, upon which there is a bulbous dial. The image is associated with a gesture of twisting the water on—a twist of the right hand. This image is helpful for learning the movement, but does not become loaded with meaning in a semiotic sense. The dancers do not aim to convey or communicate the object of the showerhead to anyone. Nor does the movement mimetically reproduce what they do in daily showering. The geometry of the dial, and the fun of moving around it, become a lure for moving with the image.

From discussion with the dancers, I learned that this movement was highly cared for and virtuosic. New dancers practiced it frequently, often in tandem. The movement was also enacted as a short burst of practice for dancers to get ready to dance in rehearsal—similar to the way a singer or a musician might practice a short compositional element before beginning to play the composition chronologically. *Showerhead* became a microcosm within my research and a common referent for asking questions. This helped me to pinpoint defining principles in Forsythe's movement style generally, which have been opaque or isolated in the literature. Dancing *showerhead* revealed how the practice of a movement defined the adventure of becoming a *Duo* dancer, showing how dancers' movement experience produced a choreography with a specific character. For these reasons, *showerhead* merits the close attention that I shall give it here.

6.1 Épaulement

“An épaulement.”

Studio interview with Duo Dancer Jill Johnson, Boston, December 6, 2016.

Duo dancer Jill Johnson is wearing a black sweatshirt with stylish silver zippers at the sides, navy blue loose training pants, and black leather sneakers with white soles. We have met at a studio in Boston to discuss Duo and move together. I ask to make a video on my phone of her informing me about showerhead. The rich interplay of Johnson's language, gesture and movement, show how intertwined these are in her practice—cultivated by her work as a dancer in Ballett Frankfurt, where such studio exchanges were common.

JILL: Thinking of it [the showerhead image], as this surface (*she gestures a flat horizontal surface with her left hand*) and this part of the hand (*she touches the medial surface of her fingers*) is going (*with vocal emphasis*) around the showerhead. The bulbous ones, it's not the handle one (*she shows the different gestures of working with each, and looks at the camera and laughs*) to be specific.⁵ And then, you're going along with this part of the hand around it, and then when you go to *tendu* (*she steps back*) it extends very gently, rather than it being (*she does the movement deliberately incorrectly—quickly, with no torso movement and the leg and arm very back*) this way. So, you'll be standing (*she inhales and demonstrates correctly*). If it involves sides of the body [through a series of diagonal or cantilevered alignments] it is most legible, I would say. Because it can easily (*she exaggerates to demonstrate incorrectly, by pulling her right shoulder up towards her ear and showing a unsequential isolation of her arm*) if it's just one side, so it's just this back shoulder *épaulement*. In other words, if I do it without this (*she gestures to her left*) shoulder, it can easily become a hunched-ey thing as opposed to (*she smiles and unfurls her arm*) an *épaulement*.

Showerhead orients around tracing the fingertips of the right hand around the imaginary shower dial—especially the medial surface of the pointer finger, the part that you can stoke with your thumb. The pointer finger curves around the shower dial clockwise, from 9:00 p.m., all the way around to 8:00 p.m. (Imagine your fingers tracing along the inside of a bowl, so that the palm turns; now make that movement in front of your ribcage and you've started to *showerhead*.)

While moving, the dancers' hands are loose and alert, fingers as sensitive as if they were moving through water. Their bodies are not locked in an upright posture of accomplishing a hand motion or gesture. Rather, more like how a clarinetist would swirl out a sound, the dancers develop the spiral potential of the circular image, the *showerhead*, through subtle shifts of their reverberating centers.

5 Through my fieldwork I realized that the dancers used the term *showerhead*, but imagined a round shower dial. This did not confuse them, though it did confuse some exchange partners reading drafts of this manuscript.

“If it involves both sides of the body it is most effective, I would say,” explained *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson.⁶ By including or integrating the left side of the body, the gesture of the right arm is consumed in a movement of the full body. Twisting the torso, the showerhead image begins an interplay called *épaulement*.

Épaulement, from the French for shouldering, is a term describing the style of positioning of the upper body in ballet—part of one’s carriage of the arms, or *port de bras*.⁷ Forsythe dancer Dana Caspersen explains: “In classical ballet, *épaulement* is the practice of creating specific linked patterns of complex, dynamic relationships between the eyes, head, shoulders, arms, hands, legs, feet and the exterior space, as the torso engages in rotation.” (You can experience *épaulement* yourself by trying the following exercise. Stand and face a wall with a window, in a place where you can move your arms around freely. Lift your chest slightly and grow a few mm taller. Then rotate your waist so that the right shoulder moves forward towards the window; your left shoulder moves back away from it. Then twist the opposite way. Repeat this twisting motion of your torso a couple of times, slowly and smoothly. Add the alertness of your eyes, which may move to look through the window at the scene as you continue to shift your shoulders. If you like, improvise some movement with your hands and arms as you continue to twist and untwist. Beginning a dialogue of internal torsion, vision, space, and rhythms outside the window and within your body, your upper body has started to be in *épaulement*.)

Épaulement is a cultivated practice of micro-coordination, expressed in every ballet company as a style. With dance expertise, styles of *épaulement* are easy to differentiate. Generally, *épaulement* is a manner in which twists and counter-twists are coordinated within the body and relate to the space in which ballet is danced. This intuitively the body not as a set of linear elements, but as a system of winding and unwinding sheering force. Forsythe has described *épaulement* as a “perceptually gratifying state” that “synthesizes discrete parts of the body with multiple layers of torqued sensation that leads to the specific sense of a unified but counter-rotated whole.”⁸

As a dancer in The Forsythe Company, I was told by my peers that *épaulement* originated within the performance of imperial ballets in Russia—that deferent ballerinas learned to keep their eyes positioned upon the Czar in performance, who was seated at a special place, in the center loge of the theater. As she moved and turned, this led to angles and shading of her movement.⁹ In Ballett Frankfurt, *épaulement* was explored beyond this deference, as an aesthetic, expressive and physically rich *habitus*. This coordinative potential of twisting the body and relating to space, was drawn upon in nearly all

6 Jill Johnson, studio session while dancing in Boston on December 6, 2016. She adds, when the left and right sides of the body dynamically relate, creating “cantilevered” and “diagonal” alignments, the movement becomes clearer. Jill Johnson, email correspondence with the author, September 12, 2020.

7 Caspersen, “What *Épaulement* Also Is,” p. 12.

8 Foster, “Why is There Always Energy for Dancing?,” p. 17. Elsewhere Forsythe explains, “All my teachers actually tried to teach me that dancing was an astounding phenomenon. I think the teachers I had were always fascinated with the complex beauty of dancing. I just happened to have that group of people who said it was a complex form of beauty and it verged somewhat on the ecstatic.” Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” pp. 22–24.

9 Compare to Anderson, *Ballet & Modern Dance*, p. 101.

Forsythe's choreographies. The dancers experimented with sensing, enhancing, grooving, fragmenting and inventing *épaulement*.

As a generator, Forsythe catalyzed movement around him. But *épaulement* would be mistakenly characterized as only a top-down process—of contamination and the reproduction of Forsythe's bodily style. Forsythe also shaped the performance of *épaulement*, as is common in western dance and athletic training, through spoken "collective correction."¹⁰ This shaped concepts and understanding collectively, as people demonstrated and dialogued with their bodies. Additionally, Forsythe's rehearsal assistants and the dancers themselves further cultivated *épaulement* in the dancers' ballet class each morning. In rehearsal, teaching and learning from one another was also fundamental.¹¹ As a new dancer, I discovered the style, through osmosis and doing. The affective capacity of this sharing was often "ecstatic."¹²

This illustrates how the practice of *épaulement*, a significant aspect of *Duo*, was embedded in an intricate social system and web of professional activities, producing a movement style that was communal. The dancers *shared* this practice. Yet the dancers did not view their custom as homogenization or limiting. No two dancers performed *épaulement* identically, and this in itself was significant. My *épaulement* was part of my signature as a dancer, as well as a sign of my membership within a specific group. Our *épaulement*, as Forsythe dancers, was more extended and shaped differently than that of other ballet companies.¹³ We expressed form differently, because of our intersubjectivity through this practice—how we sensed the potential of our own bodies, in relation to others and space. The practice was, to name it clearly, *individual-collective*.

Épaulement is one way of manifesting the potential of collective bodies; there are certainly others, as the plethora of dance techniques makes clear. The manner in which Forsythe dancers became expressive through *épaulement* shows how choreography drew

10 Such "collective corrections" are a part of many physical practices learned in groups. For a fascinating account of training in boxing, see Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 104. In rehearsal with the San Francisco Ballet, for example, Forsythe instructed: "Show me everything you know about *port de bras*." "*Épaulement* is a conversation between your foot and your hands. So make a wonderful conversation." "You are the experts in the room. Show me." See Ross, *San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*, p. 107. These comments however do not reflect the broader and changing modes of dialogue between Forsythe and his ensemble dancers, which varied extensively, based upon context (i.e., during a creation rehearsal, after a performance, outside of rehearsal, etc.). Further examples of how Forsythe spoke to *Duo* dancers are provided in sections 10.4 and 11.2.2.

11 See Vass-Rhee, "Schooling an Ensemble," p. 227. Here Vass-Rhee describes such scaffolded learning in her analysis of the devising process making Forsythe's piece *Whole in the Head* (2010).

12 Caspersen, "What *Épaulement* Also Is," p. 2. Forsythe, "Observing Motion," p. 24.

13 Supporting these claims, *Duo* dancer Allison Brown described: "I think it has to do with the sensing through them, through my arms. Like I'm always, like reaching through them. In my Balanchine-days I was like that (*she places her arms in fifth position, circling above her head*). And then more working with Bill I became more like that (*she changes pose, the stretch becomes more extreme and the quality emphasizes more awareness of the feeling of her body and the space around her*). [...] When there's like a group I can tell which one is me just by how I'm holding my arms. So my arms have kind of always been my how I can find myself." Allison Brown, interview with the author, Bern, January 23, 2017. Forsythe also concurred about the ensemble style: "And we're very arm conscious. I think that's, for us, the key to our style. One *tendu* is perhaps someone else's *tendu*, but our *port de bras* is really indicative of what we do." Driver et al., "A Conversation with William Forsythe," p. 91.

upon relational practice. This is true in Forsythe's choreographies generally, providing further substantiation for why ballet practice was so central. *Épaulement* was a practice critical to making *Duo*, what Forsythe named as, "the crowning accomplishment of great ballet dancers."¹⁴

6.2 Residual Movement

In *showerhead*, the dancers intuit movement residue around the start of the image—the shower dial. Meaning, *showerhead* is not like the pedestrian motion of twisting a key into a lock, with a posture oriented on getting an action done, an object manipulated, a problem solved: door open! Rather, this movement brings the rest of the body into relation with the twisting of the hand. Forsythe's term for how this takes place is "residual coordination." It can be understood as a movement idea that has a residue that reverberates within one body. The residue is reflexive: a learned and perfected habit. Forsythe explains: "We use the reflexes that we've learned in classical ballet to maintain a kind of residual coordination, which allows the body to acquire elastic surfaces that bounce off one another. This elasticity is derived from the mechanics of torsion inherent in *épaulement*."¹⁵ In *showerhead*, Jill Johnson describes this sensation as "a series of diagonal or cantilevered alignments" smoothing the arm into the contrapuntal interplay of the body's reverb.¹⁶

Dancer Dana Caspersen calls this expertise not just coordination, but "residual response." With the term response, Caspersen highlights the feeling of the body responding to a proposal, such as the movement evoked in response to the image of a showerhead. Caspersen finds that in working with novices, there is often a "lack of coordinative reaction between the shoulders and the hips" as well as a "lack of shaped response in the upper arms."¹⁷ This is not to say that the idea comes first and the body responds, but rather that the body thinks through its reflexes. The complex skill of residual response accumulates with ample practice.

6.2.1 Improvisation Technologies

Developing residual motion is a key aspect conveyed in Forsythe's CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* (1999), an educational tool now online and referred to worldwide.¹⁸ This collaboration with digital artist Paul Kaiser acted upon Forsythe's wish to consolidate the techniques that the Ballett Frankfurt had amassed in their choreographic projects, so that new dancers could catch up more

14 Forsythe in Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

15 Ibid.

16 Jill Johnson, studio session while dancing in Boston on December 6, 2016.

17 Caspersen, "Methodologies."

18 The first version was produced in 1996 for use within Ballett Frankfurt, and titled *Improvisation Technologies (Self Meant to Govern)*. See Vass-Rhee, "Schooling an Ensemble," p. 225, footnote 14. At the time of writing, many of the videos have been uploaded to the internet and are freely accessible. See the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography.

Figure 19. Video still from William Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*.

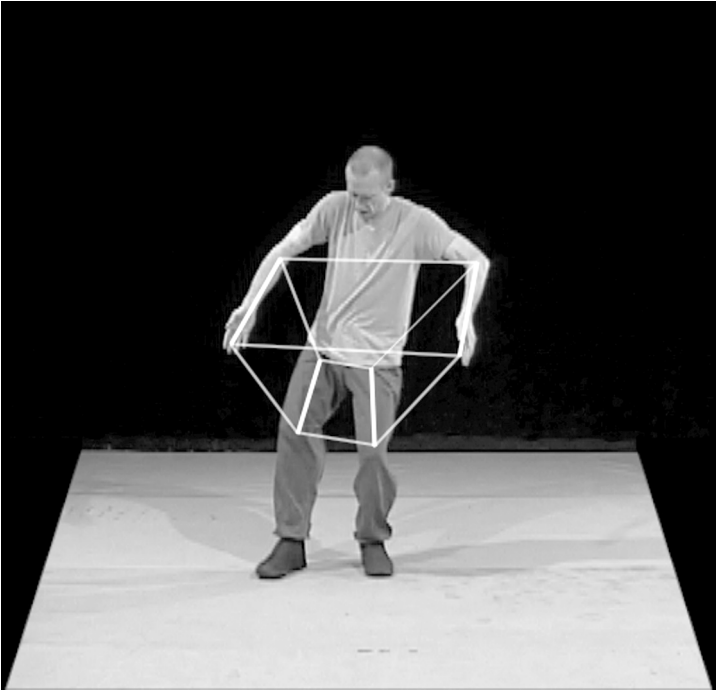


Photo © William Forsythe.

quickly.¹⁹ Though these operations were no longer used explicitly in the choreographic process of The Forsythe Company, and the CD-ROM was no longer present in the studio during rehearsals or brought out to train new dancers, I can testify that most new dancers had encountered the information before arriving—having purchased, borrowed or found the instructional videos online.

Kaiser and Forsythe's project explored the challenge of visualizing choreographic thinking with the aim to help dancers understand what Forsythe was imaging while he was improvising. Kaiser recalls:

I first met choreographer William Forsythe in his kitchen in Frankfurt in 1994. The first thing Bill did was to try to explain how he goes about creating new movements. He started drawing imaginary shapes in the air, and then running his limbs through this complicated and invisible geometry. As a non-dancer, I was completely lost.²⁰

19 In practice, these techniques were called "procedures," "operations," and also "modalities." Discussing "operation" and "procedures," see Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," pp. 27–28; and Kaiser, "Dance Geometry," throughout. For references to "modalities," see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 25.

20 Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

To remedy this, they had the idea to animate lectures of Forsythe with white lines superimposed on the video, representing the imagery that was present in Forsythe's phantasmagoria as he improvised movement. The white lines made visible Forsythe's strategies of having ideas while moving. For example, Forsythe imagining a line in the space between his fingertips; extruding, bridging and matching lines with his arms; "writing" in space with every conceivable body part. Forsythe explained:

The CD-ROM is a short lesson in a kind of rigor. It teaches you how to form concrete goals that are geometrically inscriptive. And the reason they are geometrically inscriptive is that I work with ballet dancers. It was easy to represent things this way—thinking in circles and lines and planes and points. That's not so unusual for ballet dancers, this system is basically a manipulation of their existing knowledge.²¹

Improvisation Technologies not only developed ballet dancers' "existing knowledge" to imagine the geometries of their bodies. Forsythe was also teaching them strategies to change their *habitus* by enlarging the possible range and dynamics of their movements: to use all parts of their bodies and reach to any place in space and, in particular, to practice the awkward moves of going backwards and down. Unlike other styles of dance in which mimetic and mirroring processes are primary, the improvisation and compositional aspects of Forsythe's movement laboratory meant that dancers had to learn skills for developing their bodily tendencies. The procedures were not routines intended to be repeated verbatim, but rather as Forsythe's description suggested, *A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*. Through training the dancers' analytic and creative competences, Forsythe advanced the speed and quality with which they could invent movement and opened up the tender territory between imagination, flesh and invention.

Residual response is a way of studying the physics of the body moving in the gravitational field and changing one's habits to maintain balance and equilibrium. An "authentic residual response," for Caspersen, allowed "the rest of the body to respond in an accurate way, i.e. with physical mechanics that are functional and not extraneous."²² Through the practice of residual response, the dialogue between voluntary and involuntary could be felt with increasing intensity. Residual response adds potential to movement following a choreographic design. *Showerhead* progresses through the enabling constraint of the image, and reverberates the potential of movement moving the imaginary.

21 Forsythe, "Observing Motion," p. 18. Forsythe also explained another aim: "If you're dancing, how do you actually say what happened? The technique is one way of taking mental note of what just happened to you while improvising." *Ibid.*, p. 16.

22 Caspersen, "Methodologies." In addition to the word "authentic," I remember dancers also speaking of natural residual response. Thanks to my education in feminism and cultural studies, both these terms were irritating for me when I was a novice in Ballett Frankfurt. The natural for me was a constructed category. But through my practice in The Forsythe Company, I came to understand something about what my colleagues meant. One had to un-learn a lot of habits for holding the body up, to let the body fall and adjust in the gravitational field—in a residual way.

6.2.2 Skills, Strategies and Potential

Showerhead is a complex curvilinear motion that relies on practical understanding—sensing movement as it progresses. The movement cultivates its own logic. Forsythe has observed the challenges in moving this way, noting generally: “I think the biggest difficulty in the kind of improvisation we practice is not consciously shaping your body, is actually letting your body fold and to develop a more reactive and a many timed body as opposed to a shaped body.”²³ Sparked by a potent initiation, willed and practiced, the dancers doing *showerhead* must follow the residual movement through their confidence in *épaulement*. In rehearsing, one then judges the passage, and repeats it again; one iterates trying and incorporating feedback into a series of repetitions. Mis-actions are controlled: the dancers remind me “don’t hyperextend your right elbow” and “back your hips up more.”²⁴ Reflection is not omitted from practice, but interspersed within its pacing.

Though not a ballet movement of the *dance d’école*, the accomplishment of *showerhead* relies on mastery of many ballet skills. Using the affordances of balletic training, the pelvis twists accommodatingly, letting both legs rotate into a turned-out position. Rolling through the feet, the steps are quiet, and the weight transitions are smooth. Moving through a soft bend in the knees, or *plié*, the legs unfold with renewed potential to straighten. The right ankle and toes extend into a balletic stretch, or *tendu*. Dividing the body into multiple efforts, one leg provides support, while the other gestures; one arm reaches, while the other reverberates with residue. Stabilization and mobilization intertwine. *Épaulement* brings the spirals that pull throughout the body into balanced counterpoint. *Showerhead* is a proprioceptive panoply, supported by bodies trained in ballet. To perform this virtuosic movement, extensive ballet training is helpful.

Sensorimotor skills are dancers’ muscle memory—the habits, good and bad, that influence their decisions. Yet in *showerhead* (as well as many other movements of *Duo*), the movement mechanics and style also diverge from ballet, and these divergences must be practiced. For example, take the usage of the “ass.”²⁵ The ass is rarely named and called upon in classical ballet technique, which focuses more demurely on the hips and the property of turning out. But generally, within the movement style of Ballett Frankfurt, dancers tried out and were encouraged to move their rumps, down and back, finding turn-out with new freedom to maneuver their tails. Pragmatically, this tendency afforded a means of shifting the center of mass away from a gesture. This brought dancers outside the habitual control of the familiar bodily center within ballet, into a realm for experimenting with new ballet tendencies and adaptations. One might call dropping the “ass” a strategy: an invention that cultivates disorientation.

23 Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” p. 24.

24 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

25 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016. Notably, in my interview with Forsythe Company dancer Riley Watts, he described the “hips” and “pelvis” moving backwards-forwards. Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017. While dancers in both ensembles communicated using rich jargon specific to their knowledge, in The Forsythe Company there was less profanity and sexual slang.

Let's follow the motion again: you start to *showerhead*, unfurling a spiral forward, through the twist of your right hand. You simultaneously step back on the left leg, following the curvature started by your pointer finger. Stepping back gives space for your right arm to extend—letting the spiral develop into a longer arc. Moving backwards-forwards, and reaching the arm: “It’s as if the skin of your right hand could stretch forward” one dancer reminds me.²⁶ Not naturally, yet easily, the movement unfolds a logic from a cultivated thought.

In *showerhead*, the dancers begin the motion together and then readily bend their knees and softly retract their hips (that is, drop and move their pelvis backwards). Trying the movement with the dancers in the studio, I experience how this action becomes layered with more timings and trajectories—polycentric and polyrhythmic. This polysemy makes one center hard to define. The body dis-places. One singular thing is not happening, but rather multiple processes seem to take over the body. As I negotiate sensing and shifting my body weight, I gain losing control of what transpires—a gain that can be felt as a sort of play. Following the curvature of my arm unfolding its spiral, the ride of weight displacement takes my mind away from a concrete grip on what is happening. In *showerheading*, the dancers’ astute skills of proprioception are challenged: proprioception as the marrow, skin, gush of organ and cellular sense of where a part of the body is in relation to the center or whole.²⁷

Polyrhythmic and polycentric, the movement *showerhead* is not merely moving the hand forward, like the voluntary gesture of handing over your keys. It is a gesture involving the whole body—sensing the potential of the entire corpus. As a dancer becomes more experienced and fluent with the movement, control is enacted by sensing and following as shape unfolds. The dancer acts and re-acts, in the “in-act.”²⁸

Learning to drop the hips and move backwards are practiced strategies that enable residual movement and *showerheading*. These are strategies throughout Forsythe’s repertoire, not only in *Duo*. In them, the dancers cultivate spatial attitude, neither direct nor indirect, but plural—progressing backward-forward.²⁹ Recognizing how a contemporary culture of forward action (such as walking forward, driving forward, taking food from the table in front of you, and so on) has choreographed pedestrian action, Forsythe cultivated this backwardness strategically, motivating his dancers to unlearn

26 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

27 Einav Katan, after British neurologist Charles Scott Sherrington, defines proprioception as “the sensual awareness of movement within the body. As a body sense it is responsible for feeling the relative positions of neighboring body parts, and how their strength and effort are engaged through motion.” See Katan, *Embodied Philosophy in Dance*, p. 54, with relevant discussion pp. 57–59. See also Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 110.

28 The “in-act” of experience is a central component of Manning’s activist philosophy, recognizing experience as in-movement and in-the-making: “variously commingling with the limits of the not-yet and the will-have-been.” See Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 47. Her differentiation of act and in-act is made to emphasize the real processual, relational, ecological and virtual aspects of experience.

29 I take the terms “direct” and “indirect” from attitudes of Laban effort in space. See Maletic, *Dance Dynamics*, pp. 14–15.

their habits. The dancers frequently go-forward-while-going-backwards. In *Improvisation Technologies*, he reminded his dancers to move behind themselves and to have “fun” with this increased range of motion.³⁰ In rehearsals, he asked dancers to sense the skin on their backs: back of their shoulders, back of their necks. All this is to open up the potential of movement, enabling the dancers to pay attention to kinesthetic response and repattern their habits.

In *showerhead*, the connection of the upper and lower body is also typical of the ensemble style. The body hinges. The fingertips stay nearly where they were in space; the lower body *retracts* back. By stretching the lower body backwards, the right arm is given room—unfolding and addressing the space in front of the body. In Labanotation, this fixation of the hand in space would be notated as a *space hold* if it were more precisely enforced and rigid.³¹ But in *Duo*, space is created and felt rather than held. It is addressed three-dimensionally, through a body that is responsively relaxed: subtly alert.

“Moving backwards” and “dropping the hips” are repeated efforts within Forsythe’s movement apparatus, causing refraction of movement, already reverberating and multiple.³² To choreograph movement is thus to gain access to practices that enable perception of movement’s nuance and micro-variations—to have more experiences at the conscious fringes of movement control. *Duo* dancer Riley Watts names “disorientation” as essential to his process of becoming a dancer in The Forsythe Company—that is, discovering his movement habits and finding new ways of movement by deliberately disorienting himself.³³ While most of *Duo*’s movement is planned and repeated, this does not mean it is without variation, or even disorientation. Disorientation in *Duo* happens in three ways: First, through a sort of attunement to movement which displaces the subject, backgrounding them to movement taking place, emerging relationally. Secondly, the disorientation of following one’s body, not knowing exactly how the movement will unfold. Thirdly, and more broadly in their practice, when the dancers invent and improvise movements, they may deliberately practice disorientation with the hope that this might enable them to find new movements.³⁴

Inventing techniques for surpassing habits are part of the work of being a Forsythe dancer. This makes choreography an “entanglement” with organization, not only fixing

30 On the “back approach” Forsythe says: “So be careful not to limit any of these technologies of sliding and folding and all this to the front of your body, but practice this also moving towards the back. Let it move through the front, but towards the back. So that you get used to feeling what it’s like to move towards these areas. If it is easier for you to move this way, practice moving this way. And dropping things towards the back. Moving towards the back. Very helpful. I think if you can practice that regularly, that the coordination will begin to spread itself out over the whole kinesphere. And you will have more fun.” Forsythe, “Improvisation Technologies: Transcripts of the Forsythe Lectures,” p. 59.

31 On “space hold” and “spot hold” see Guest, *Labanotation*, pp. 398–99.

32 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 20, 2016. Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017. Allison Brown and Cyril Baldy, studio session dancing in Bern, January 24, 2017.

33 Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017.

34 Forsythe is not alone in his choreographic study of habits and development of techniques to “perturb and disrupt” those. On choreographer Wayne McGregor’s approach, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge,” p. 462.

rules but developing potential. Philosopher Alva Noë expounds: “Choreography disorganizes. In doing so it sets the stage for letting us reorganize. Choreography, in this sense, is a reorganizational project.”³⁵ Approached in this way, we start to see how the dancers’ expertise is *a process itself for learning about practice*, and how to go forward practicing. These remarks give insider clarity to what dance scholar Wibke Hartewig has found from her meticulous analysis of Ballett Frankfurt performances. She finds: “[Forsythe’s] work is not geared towards the presentation of aesthetic elements, but places the process-related movement in the center of attention.”³⁶

Forsythe and the dancers’ understanding of dance values the body’s potential to learn and develop. We find striking evidence of this in Forsythe’s own testimony. He comments:

At any given moment, you have to be able to say: what is the potential of this configuration of my body. And at one point, I guess a long way down the line, you know intuitively what it is. And then I would suggest you try the results of that which you don’t know, move on from there, with no idea how it’s going to turn out. For me, that would be a truly successful dance, because then the body would take over and dance at that point where you had no more idea. I see that as an idealized form of dancing: just not knowing and letting the body dance you around.³⁷

The potential of one’s body—of oneself—is developed through Forsythe’s *Improvisation Technologies*. Between focusing on one’s body, a dancer learns from and with *other* bodies, both live and mediated. Between letting the body “take over” during improvisation, a dancer discusses and analyzes movement with others. In my interviews, one dancer linked this approach to improvisation to his understanding of Buddhist philosophy, in which, free of expectations, movement could always be discovered—there was always something small, something new, something unexpected to find out.³⁸

With time, the dancers’ practice of *showerhead* becomes rich with the potential of micro-variations. The dancers’ expertise enables nuance and sensitivity. This is how a movement can, to an outside eye, become consistent—while to the performers, it becomes rich with the potential to vary. Attunement to potentiality creates a rich set of micro-variations of and between bodies. These minute differences become rich and exciting for the dancers, keeping their practice evolving—a generative sort of doing.

35 Noë, “Newman’s Note, Entanglement and the Demands of Choreography,” p. 234, p. 230.

36 Translation by the author. Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, p. 184.

37 Forsythe, “Observing Motion,” pp. 24–26. When describing *Duo*, dancer Brigel Gjoka concurs: “I feel like I am in a position where I can go anywhere. When he [Forsythe] says: ‘it starts from any point.’ That is how I feel. Well, I can go from any point. And then, it can start any point, at the same time, and it can start any point, and it can arrive to any point.” Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2017.

38 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bologna, October 25, 2017.

6.3 Cultivating Sensation

Dancer Allison Brown took me under her wing in the dance studio to teach me about the practice of *Duo's* movement. Standing next to me, she demonstrated how the dancers would practice the movement of *showerhead* to synchronize time and form. Sometimes they would stand nearly touching, almost hip to hip. In this close proximity, Brown recounts, they had time for comparing and contemplating, shifting the fingers so that your and your partner's hands look identical, "you looking at your hand and your partner's hand."³⁹ This began to equate a kinesthetic sense of one's own body moving with the visual attention to another body: a feedback loop. I felt that my body and Brown's were being superimposed—not just imitation or mimicry, but a feeling of being fused. For Brown this is an unusual type of vision: "this seeing each other with other senses and other body parts than the eyes."⁴⁰ Sensing fused with relation and kinesthesia.

6.3.1 Sensation in *Showerhead*

Enacting *showerhead* in performance, one does not look directly upon the right hand, as if contemplating one's gesture.⁴¹ Rather *Duo* dancers typically keep the environment—the black of the stage space, the audience, and other dancers—in their visual field, placing their own body in the visual periphery. During *showerhead*, the vision is broad, the hand peripheral. Dancer Riley Watts explains that he has the wish to catch a glimpse of his partner in his peripheral vision—as the first movement is usually performed at a distance, with one's partner in indirect, rather than direct, sight. Given the absence of scenery in *Duo*, the black background provides little for the dancers to focus upon. Despite the audience members near the stage being visible to the performers, the audience is predominantly heard and felt. The dancers are not coached by Forsythe to visually address the audience with their eyes. Watts explains that he knows a performance is going well when he sees a video and he and his partner's heads are turning to watch one another. They do this, he explains, to stay in-sync.⁴²

Thus far I have described the movement of *showerhead* holistically, as both a movement of the body and a movement of thought. Now I wish to add that the movement is also a way of awakening the senses—attuning to one's partner, one's body and the audience. Vision—"hawk-eyed" on one's partner—combines with listening for the sound of one's partner's breathing movement.⁴³

The dancers described the richness of this experience: Combined with breath, one hears one's own and one's partner's body, inhaling and exhaling. One feels the heat of the stage lights, the texture of one's clothes or costume. One feels the temperature of the air. One sees one's own body peripherally and kinesthetically feels movement

39 Allison Brown, studio session dancing in Frankfurt, September 20, 2016.

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

41 In Forsythe's work generally, a dancer rarely looks at their own body moving, but keeps their focus externalized in space.

42 Riley Watts, interviews with the author, Bern, January 11–15, 2017. See also our co-authored publication: Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*."

43 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

passing. Once the spiral of the right arm is nearly extended, the hand is not stared upon. Instead, one looks beyond one's hand, taking an external focus that includes the arm movement in peripheral vision. This panoply of sensation moves beyond the classic five-sense model by involving heat, skin, balance, breath and proprioception. Generally in *Duo*, sensations overlap and relay between modes, mixing into the feeling of moving and being moved.⁴⁴

In *Duo* rehearsals, the visual appearance of the movement was not unimportant, as the dancers know that how they appear is critical for the spectators. Despite this, they cared for and nurtured the *experience* of movement, through the process of dancing the movement together and for an audience. The dancers remember rarely using the mirror in the studio, as is common for ballet dancers, to evaluate and correct their posture. Rather the vision of how the movement should appear was reinforced through seeing one's partner more than oneself. Later generation *Duo* dancer Riley Watts concurs: "the big thing was to understand, to appeal to what does this [movement] feel like, not only what does it look like."⁴⁵ By the dancers employing comparisons of feeling and appearing, thus began the entanglement of bodies critical to *Duo*.

6.3.2 The Hand and the Skin

Writing about Forsythe's work in the Ballett Frankfurt, Sabine Huschka has observed: "Instead of an intensified experience, Forsythe's choreographies seek to create a difference and to make perception perceptible."⁴⁶ Such refinement, even "hypersensitivity," is cultivated throughout Forsythe's repertoire, requiring dancers to acquire perceptual acumen. Observing the interaction in a duet from Forsythe's *The Room As It Was* (2002), Hartewig observes interaction similar to that in *Duo*:

The partners do not exchange [...] primarily through application of touch and force: communication takes place on a visual and acoustic level, through the same dynamic and rhythmic sensation and through a hypersensitive body perception, with which the other body can be felt even when it has disappeared from view.⁴⁷

As in the example described by Hartewig, the relays of sensation in dancing *Duo* go beyond the five-sense model and entwine sensations of oneself and the other. How does this come about?

One answer is that the sensation of hands and skin are cultivated. Given the amount of nerve endings and dexterity of the hand, Forsythe believes that it is a keystone to train the whole body. For instructing ballet dancers, who have often laid more emphasis on training their feet than their hands, a Forsythe adage is "the shape of the foot is the

44 Caroline Potter, in her ethnographic research of a contemporary dance education institution in London, similarly finds the five-sense model inadequate for describing dancers' experience. See Potter, "Sense of Motion, Senses of Self."

45 Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, February 25, 2015.

46 Translation by the author. See Huschka, "Verlöschen als ästhetischer Fluchtpunkt oder 'Du musst dich selbst wahrnehmend machen,'" p. 106.

47 Translation by the author. See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, p. 172, footnote 71.

shape of the hand.”⁴⁸ This instructs dancers to articulate their hands as if they had the same cultivated capacity of their highly trained feet. Forsythe encouraged the dancers: “*Épaulement* is a conversation between your foot and your hands. So make a wonderful conversation.”⁴⁹

In Forsythe’s ensembles, the hand was studied not in isolation, but in relation: the hand in relation to the shoulder, moved from the back, reflected in the hip, and supported in the feet and knees. The hand was a keystone linking the body—a transducer of sensations. Though *showerhead* is explained as a movement initiated by the fingers of the right hand, the action is that of an arm in relation to the entire body; an energetic whole of sinews feeling twist, stretch, reach, and unfurling.

The integrated quality of movement was also developed through sensual attention to the borders of the body: through the skin. Sensitivity to skin is nurtured in Forsythe’s choreography by directing attention to all the delicate surfaces of the hand and its relation to the stretch of the skin in the arms, neck, and back. This skin sensation produces an intensity of movement that differs from daily life, where such awareness is often not refined. *Duo* dancer Riley Watts described skin sensation as a way to register form.⁵⁰ Feeling light, heat, temperature, tension and release, the skin also seems to register movement around the body, through a sensation of moving with and for others—a quality of excitement.

“The sensation of form.”

Email from Riley Watts to the author, March 3, 2013, RE: How did you learn *Duo*?

It’s kind of hard to describe the sensation of form without showing it ... In some moments we were told to use the sensation of “hanging” by a single point in the elbow, to be light in our feet like crystal (in my own words, I chose this to mean sharp and slightly ahead of a comfortable, even, and heavy musicality), to use the curvature of the arms as extended descriptions of the rest of our bodies and potential space, but without being overly tense.

In the very beginning my partner and I were both doing it with quite a lot of muscle tension and we found it exhausting and musically predictable. We were told we were working too hard and that we needed to *plié* less and spend more time off the ground with the crystalline *ballon* I mentioned earlier.

The *épaulement* and torquing of the spine can be uncomfortable and dangerous when done with too much muscle tension and we found it necessary to simply relax more while dancing. Another sensation we used was to pay attention to what Bill [Forsythe] describes as the stretching of the skin. When I am extending my arm behind me there is a particular sensation of the skin stretching across chest and down my arm to my

48 Forsythe, personal memory of the author of rehearsals in The Forsythe Company.

49 See Ross, *San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*, p. 107. Caspersen also foregrounds teaching dancers’ hands in her writing about dance practice. See Caspersen, “Methodologies.”

50 Riley Watts, email to the author, March 3, 2018.

hand. I could show you this movement and you could copy it easily, but without you paying attention to the sensation of stretching that I described, we both would be experiencing something slightly different.

The email cited above, written during Watts' process of learning *Duo*, gives a first-hand account of many kinesthetic sensations, and catalogues the different images and feelings he encountered in his learning process. Watts, as a later generation *Duo* dancer, used the word *sensation*, describing *Duo* as "a process of attention to sensations that the dancers are experiencing simultaneously."⁵¹ Not only having sensations, but considering and comparing them, *Duo* dancers build a common reserve of understanding.

6.3.3 Breathing-Movement in *Duo*

The last quality of sensation that I would like to focus on is the sensation of breath. Over the course of *showerhead*, the dancers phase through inhale and exhale—typically inhaling through the nose, with a light and long sniff, and exhaling through the chest, the mouth and lips slightly open. The more tired the dancers are from prior exertion, the more this might sound like a sigh. Unlike singers, who have extensive breathing training, the dancers breathe *implicitly* with their movement, learning by doing—without breathing concepts or training techniques. *Duo's* breath is a logic of practice. It is a subtle and functional layer of the choreography, helping to create the right movement quality (delicate and precise) and sustain synchronization with one's partner. One dancer told me, "We synchronize breathing, not the steps."⁵² Forsythe concurred: "*Duo* is finally, for me, a breath score that has choreography that generates it."⁵³

The names denoting this practice varied from: "breath score" to "breath opera," "breath song" or simply the breath.⁵⁴ Neither Forsythe nor the dancers considered *Duo's* "breath score" to be extraneous or outside the choreography—like the unprescribed sound of musicians' breath and motions, when playing classical music. Rather, it was part of the choreography of *Duo*. Forsythe agreed: "The breathing in *Duo* is so specific. It really is the common dimension on which everything operates."⁵⁵

I have chosen to name this practice *breathing-movement*, to emphasize the way it is a hybrid medium of movement, sound and sensation. The dancers would typically use inhales as upbeats and rises in actions, and exhales for lowering actions and other forms of exertions (such as the end points of twists or swings). For example, in *showerhead*, following inhale and exhale, respectively, the weight of the body rises and descends. The dancers also used the breath communicatively, to signal timing via cues.⁵⁶

51 Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 9.

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

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

54 On Forsythe's term "breath score" see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, in particular pp. 232–56; on "breath opera" see Eckert, "Taking a Look at *Duo*"; on Riley Watts' term "breath song" see Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," pp. 10–11.

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

56 For further discussion of these cues, see section 9.2.3 Counterpoint Model.

Ordinarily, breathing is an involuntary motion, intimately associated with the border between life and death. In *Duo's* breathing-movement, the involuntary and voluntary become entangled. In this way, the prescribed choreographic organization of movements goes even deeper into the internal organs of the body and the neurological mechanisms for enacting movement. Biomechanically, the muscle of breath—the diaphragm—creates an inner unit with the pelvic floor, directly shaping the internal support of the motion around the organs, wrapped in the abdominals. Awareness of one's breathing, while listening to one's partner, also produces a feedback loop, tethering connection—visceral, communicative and meditative. Breathing-movement sutures the becoming as repeatable: becoming learned, becoming controlled with the becoming new, becoming present and becoming expressive. The intimate and subtle integration of breath in *Duo* changes action, from an "I do" state to a "being" state, a change in effort from "I act" to "I am with you."⁵⁷

Though it is difficult to reconstruct the sounds of *Duo* from the archival videos because of the poor audio quality, by moving with the dancers I learned about breathing-movement. The practice extends across much of the repertoire in The Forsythe Company, which I myself had performed; works such as the first act of *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *Decreation* (2003), *The Room As It Was* (2002) and *N.N.N.N.* (2002). In *Duo*, breathing-movement was cultivated implicitly through practice, with pairs finding their own style of communication. In the Ballett Frankfurt it was rarely explicitly worked on or acoustically directed. In The Forsythe Company however, Forsythe gave more directive and explicit feedback about breathing-movement—suggesting that he could hear the togetherness through how the dancers' breathed.⁵⁸ After this feedback, one dancer noticed that he had to avoid making an effort to synchronize his breath (which sounded to him affected). Rather, he wished to find a way for the breath to operate functionally through sensitive attention to his partner. Listening, more than breathing, was the substance of alignment.

Breathing associated with a movement, or movement phrase, may change from performance to performance. *Duo* dancer Brigel Gjoka (Watt's partner) demonstrates this with me while dancing in his kitchen, vocalizing "eee-ahhh" or "and," changing pitch and tone melodically. His breath interlaces with his voice; this musical language defines a specific style of breathing-movement.⁵⁹ Similarly, performer Regina van Berkel (who originated the role that Gjoka dances) also used her sonorous voice melodically in breathing-movement, though never forcing her breath or deliberately trying to sing.⁶⁰ Her partner, Jill Johnson, used her nasal passages more than her throat, but was there to whisper words as needed: such as "new beginning" and "Almost there!"⁶¹

Late generation *Duo* dancers—male dancers Watts and Gjoka—breathed more loudly than early generation *Duo* dancers. Despite this, no *Duo* dancer viewed the breathing practice as gendered. Rather, the shift in practice of later generation *Duo*

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

58 Riley Watts, videoconference interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing, January 14, 2014.

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

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

61 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

dancers reflects the greater emphasis on acoustic elements in the work of The Forsythe Company, in parallel to Forsythe's increasingly explicit interest in the "exploration of the visuo-sonic affordances of movement and its presentation in performance."⁶² The breathing practice was never "ornamental" for the dancers.⁶³ Their quality of breathing-movement was a sign of their relational bond.

The dancers remarked on the difficulty of teaching the breathing of *Duo* to students or to dancers in other companies. Dancers with considerable ballet training enforce that they silence their breath—dancing without making any noise at all. Such dancers had to cultivate the freedom to acoustically release this breathing-movement. Moreover, it was not an expressive line of one-voice, but a result of shared experience. Breathing together was produced through ample experience and practice together. *Duo's* breathing-practice composed the dancers' subjectivity at a deep level, at the cusp where dancing meets music, communication and sociality.

6.3.4 "Perceptual Performativity" of Forsythe's Ensembles: Freya Vass-Rhee

Dance scholar Freya Vass-Rhee, writing with insight as a dramaturg working with The Forsythe Company, identified "perceptual performativity" in Forsythe's oeuvre. By this, she draws attention to a chief aspect of Forsythe's aesthetic: the composition of the sensual proclivities of the dancers and spectators, comprising unusual degrees and combinations of sensation.⁶⁴ Concurring with my own arguments, Vass-Rhee has described how the dancers distribute and scaffold learning cooperatively; she has also analyzed how teamwork extended co-perception between the dancers to the larger team that included Forsythe, the technicians and the musical performers.⁶⁵ Building upon Vass-Rhee's writing, in which *Duo* has been analyzed only briefly in terms of its sonic properties,⁶⁶ here I contribute the dancers' own review of their sensual panoply, and analyze how such perception is *practiced*.

I find the term *practice* helps to show what Vass-Rhee has already emphasized with the word performativity: subjectivity shaped through perception, in the context of choreographic labor. In Vass-Rhee's words:

[...] the construction of the subject can also be illuminated by a different perspective on performance, one which addresses a more fundamental level: the subject as a *perceiving agent* immersed in and interacting with a world of sensory information which, in the case of performance, is composed in ways intended to elicit specific effects and affect.⁶⁷

62 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 1.

63 Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 15, 2017.

64 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, in particular pp. 120–61. Vass-Rhee frames her study within Hans Thies-Lehmann's diagnosis of the perceptual composition in postdramatic theatre; see *ibid.*, pp. 129–34.

65 See Vass-Rhee, "Dancing Music"; "Distributed Dramaturgies"; "Schooling an Ensemble."

66 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 240–44.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 128 (italics in the original).

Duo dancers' testimonies concur regarding the importance of constituted perception as a layer of *habitus*. The agency of *Duo* dancers is complexly immersed in an organizational array of activities—cooperatively constituted. Unlike approaches of movement analysis, which focus solely on form and first-person experience of one's body, co-movement merges sensation and action in complex feedback loops. Implicit attention to sensation by dancers in Ballett Frankfurt is made explicit in The Forsythe Company—reflecting Vass-Rhee's participation in shaping the discourse upon this layer of choreographic process.⁶⁸ Further exploration of these matters will arc through this manuscript, illustrating how sensory perception is complexly instituted and choreographed, and how the practice of choreography retains multiple views and contours of emergence.

6.3.4 Bodies

Figure 20. Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) performing *Dialogue* (DUO2015) in 2018.



Photo © Bill Cooper.

68 Additionally, this could be an effect of dominant discourse seeping into rehearsal, as suggested by the research of Kleinschmidt. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 157–58. In my dialogues with the dancers, sensation was a pivotal concept to later generation (Forsythe Company) dancers' understanding of *Duo*. While it was described in my interviews with Ballett Frankfurt dancers, with vivid accounts of their sensorium, few dancers used the words sensation or perception. I believe Vass-Rhee is entirely correct that perception is an essential aspect of Forsythe's choreographic craft, and that this is true across Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. The manner by which this became explicit in The Forsythe Company reflects Forsythe's, as well as wider discursive interest in this topic; from Vass-Rhee as well as visiting philosophers Alva Noë and Erin Manning.

One of the central notions within this chapter is the way dancing together emerges through bodies *individual-collective*: through bodies with individual histories and proclivities, who collectively fabricate and negotiate their choreographic project of *Duo*.⁶⁹ One final example from my fieldwork is intended to bring this argument into focus. What dancer Riley Watts described to me as one of the fundamental essences of *Duo* is a way that he senses himself reaching and twisting with his upper body. While shaped by the collective training in *épaulement*, this practice is also something that he adapts to fit his personal style of moving—going a bit beyond what dancers in *Duo* have done before him, due to his particular flexibility (see Fig. 20). Watts tells me these differences also reside in individual particularities of what bodies can do: “Part of that is just the way your body’s built. My rib cage is just weird like that.”⁷⁰ Yet Watts also shared a picture with me that he had made (see Fig. 5), in which he had digitally superimposed his body onto an image of his partner’s—telling me that this feeling of togetherness, of becoming one body, was central to *Duo*. Through Watts, and from other stories throughout this manuscript, we learn how intimately dancers come to define themselves by the knowledge and sensations of *their* bodies and *other* bodies. We also see how this is begotten by one’s particular body aptitude, while also changing in accordance with the communities in which the dancers move and the dyad of their *Duo* partnership. In this, bodies are individual and collective: developing what they can do, with potential for extensive transformation.

The movement of *showerhead* opens up a world. Splashing the reader with this movement has been my strategy to introduce the dancers’ *logic of practice*. By examining the dancers’ testimonies and attempting to make sense of this movement using my own body, I have staged an encounter in writing that strives to animate the reader off his or her chair.

The movement *showerhead* is a significant constitutive element of *Duo*. Working with the imagery of a shower dial, *showerhead* reverberates the dancers’ bodies, holistically connecting body parts into an integrated whole. *Showerheading* undermines dualities of conscious/unconscious, voluntary/involuntary, body/mind, my/our, formal/informal and theory/practice. The choreographic movement is not representative, rule-based, normative and static; rather, it is built up, negotiated, individual-collective, with micro-variations of complexity.

Most significantly, what *showerhead* has shown us is how a dance company’s style of movement is honed through bodily techniques that are the “work of individual and collective practical reason.”⁷¹ In this chapter, I have argued that we view choreographic movements like *showerhead* as the community achieving movement based upon the ensemble’s history of practice. The dancers not only magnified and reverberated *Forsythe’s* gestures, but also manufactured movement through exchanges with one another. The precise movement emerged through phases of doing and reflecting, rehearsing and

69 Compare to Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, pp. 17–18.

70 Riley Watts, studio session dancing in Bern, January 13, 2017.

71 Marcel Mauss cited in Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 17, translation by Wacquant.

performing, observing and being observed. The bodily practice of *showerhead* thus combined “doings and sayings” and was based upon the dancers’ shared investment in the *Duo* project and in one another.⁷²

The terms that the dancers and Forsythe used to describe their movement, (I have highlighted *épaulement*, residual movement and sensation) and their strategies for doing so (going backwards-forwards, dropping the hips, breathing-movement) give insight into their process. This terminology helps as well to highlight how the movement practice of *showerhead* enmeshed different modes of intentionality (thinking, sensing, feeling) and phases of moving-thinking. When examined longitudinally, *showerhead*, like most of the movements in *Duo*, went cooperatively beyond one person—or even couple—rehearsing and practicing the piece—linking the dancers in recurring activity. In other words, the dancers’ logic of *showerheading* relied heavily on individual coordination and sensorimotor skills, amassed through histories of relational interaction.⁷³ Though each dancer’s body was unique, through moving together, they fused.

Showerhead has given us an indication of *Duo*’s movement, but a limited one, based upon one movement. In the following chapters I will broaden this depiction, to decipher the arrangement and dynamic variance of movements within this choreography. In the next section I begin this by foregrounding the concepts of movement *material* and movement *relation*.

72 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 73.

73 Tacitly, later generation *Duo* dancers profited from the research conducted by the ensemble prior to their arrival. Both Ballett Frankfurt dancers and Forsythe Company dancers shared the term *épaulement*. While the practice of residual motion was shared by all *Duo* dancers, the term *residual* was not: Ballett Frankfurt *Duo* dancers used this terminology, but Forsythe Company *Duo* dancers did not. Conversely, while all *Duo* dancers described the sensation of *Duo*’s movement richly, Forsythe Company *Duo* dancers used the term *sensation* whereas Ballett Frankfurt dancers did not.

Chapter 7: Movement Material & Relations

7.1 Movement “Material”

My conversations with the dancers about the choreography of *Duo* often involved dialogue about the “material.” As could be substantiated by the evidence of multiple field notes and interview transcripts, *material* is a common way that both Forsythe and the dancers described choreographed movement: that is, inventing material, learning material and performing that material as choreography. They also used the word to define, more broadly, the elements at the focus of their choreographic process—whether ideas, themes, physical objects or movement itself. At a later phase of my research process, I took notice of these remarks and began to study them systematically, trying to learn what the materialization of *Duo* had to do with dancers’ labor and the reality of their practice.¹

A key moment of my fieldwork helps to introduce this: While reviewing a performance video with a *Duo* dancer, I asked her a question about an instance in the choreography when the dancers, who were previously performing different movements, arrive strikingly in a synchronous pose. I wished to understand how the dancers gauged their time to arrive together so seamlessly. Part of the dancer’s pragmatic answer was that they rely on their practice, knowing the length of the individual sequences in time. They do not demand that this time be perfectly equal, but equable. She explained that her partner, “always has more *material* there.”² Another dancer described the structure of *Duo* as an alternation of different phases—durations when one was occupied, fulfilling the movement, followed by phases when one had more availability to attune to one’s

1 The word “material” occurred 178 times in my fieldwork notes and interview transcripts. Talking about movement material is not specific to *Duo*, but common in Forsythe’s ensembles and across many contemporary dance practices. For example, considering the work of British choreographer Wayne McGregor, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”

2 Allison Brown, videoconference interview with the author, May 8, 2016, emphasis mine. Because she knew her partner was busy with a longer sequence to perform, Brown could catch a glimpse, and pay extra attention to her, making the alignment work out. Her partner in that performance confirmed the same.

partner.³ Supporting this, a third described it as “coming together” to dance in unison and then “going apart” performing in counterpoint.⁴ This give and take of being busy and attuning, based on knowledge of the movement material and prior practice of performing together, makes *Duo* distinctive. Realizing the subtle way that movement materialized for the dancers—becoming concrete, lasting and real—helped me to better understand their sense of the choreographic.

By exchanging or concatenating the words movement and material, the dancers demonstrated movement to be the opposite of ephemeral. The movement material was not an ideal or consensus about the ideal of the choreography, nor was it the actual movement when the dancers enacted *Duo*. By saying *material*, or *movement material*, the dancers displayed their proficiency in gauging the duration of movement, based upon an abstract sense garnered from repetition and knowledge that the movement is precisely unique, in actuality. The material reflects this enmeshment, across labor, abstraction and actuality. When movement is described as material, it indicates the way the artists understand *how* they work with it, in a teleological activity of making and performing choreography. In this, movement is mutable, sharable, teachable, transmittable, edit-able, improvable, even lose-able. There are a “bundle” of practices associated with it.⁵

Movement material and bodily material are interweaving substances. Forsythe dancers often reference movement in association with a person—typically the person who invented or first performed the movement (for example, in *Duo*: “Jill’s material” or “Allison’s material”).⁶ When the dancers had learned movement material well, they described it as “in my body” (singular) or “in our body” (plural).⁷ “In my body” meant memorized and danceable. To embody someone else’s movement material, a dancer might incorporate aspects of the other person (their coordination, intention, rhythm, and so on). Yet in this transfer there were also gaps, which could allow for freedom

3 Roberta Mosca, videoconference interview with the author, April 27, 2018. See Chapter 9.

4 Riley Watts, see Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 8.

5 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 71. Schatzki defines practice as a “bundle” of activities and “an organized nexus of actions,” a view that considers activity and organization as two interdependent dimensions of practice. With the term “bundle” Schatzki recognizes that human practices are not coherent domains but are a “nexus” of activities (which he defines as “bodily doings and sayings”) and organizations (i.e., an “organized constellation of actions”). Thus, while some scholars define practices as a domain of activity, Schatzki differentiates his view that these domains are subdivided: composed of “integral blocks” and “particular packages” which are “temporarily unfolding.” In their unfolding, they are “open” to new actions. The bundles therein take different scale and scope, for example aggregating different activities within “tasks” or “projects.” See *ibid.*, pp. 71–73. My view takes Schatzki’s metaphor of bundles more in a string-like direction, looking at how activities (as threads and chains) may interlace, tangle, untangle and separate, as they extend in time. For example, *showerheading*, *épaulement*, dancing *umpadump*, doing *Duo*, taking ballet class, and warming up, are all activities of different scope that interweave. By discussing movement material in this section, I explore how conceptualization and abstraction are part of the array of movement activities, often interlacing physical practice.

6 In setting the piece on dancers of CCN – Ballet de Lorraine, Cyril Baldy used these terms during rehearsals on April 21–22, 2015.

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

of incorporation, especially when the bodies and persons were markedly different.⁸ When describing such a transfer between Francesca Harper and Dana Caspersen, one of the tallest to one of the smallest women in the company, Harper recounted:

He [Forsythe] was interested in seeing what chemistry each couple would propose. We learned [*Duo*] from Regina [van Berkel] and Allison [Brown], so we were very aware that it would be different. I was once second cast of Dana [Caspersen]. I remember we had to change a lot. (*laugh*) I know, exactly! I'm the complete opposite of Dana. He loved that experiment and he could trust me.

The dancers seem to possess movement, not in terms of ownership but in the sense of giving it life—through passage within and between changing bodies, building trust between dancers and with the choreographer. The dancers rarely spoke of *Duo's* movement as Forsythe's. Instead, they commonly referenced their teacher or the previous pair's material. One dancer said poignantly, “the work itself emerges through the dancer, through their material; it is not imposed on them by the material.”⁹

During the span of a dancer's professional career working in Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company, one would invent and learn many peoples' movement material. Reference to the *original* material described a returning to the origin of a dance—how the movement was performed in the early versions of the piece, before forgetting, adaptation and editing set in. The dancers admitted occasionally forgetting—being unable to recall material, months or years later, when a piece had been taken out of the repertory. Cognizant of this, dancers in the Ballett Frankfurt used personal notebooks to capture material so that there could be a reference for reconstruction. Rather than having a rehearsal director responsible for knowing all parts, each dancer held responsibility to preserve and remember the roles that they had invented and performed. Forsythe also employed an archivist who made rehearsal and performance videos for study.¹⁰

Accounts of movement material anticipate, or are spoken within, a choreographic process as a form of construction. The first phase was the making or gathering of material. Here dancers used the term *material* for not only movement but anything that came up: movement, ideas, textual sources, and so on. Forsythe did not have one recipe for making movement material.¹¹ In the case of *Duo*, Forsythe improvised movement phrases that were recorded and reconstructed from video.¹² Forsythe dancers believed that movement material withheld traces of the first people who danced it and the context and labor in which it was made. They also recognized that movement changed and carried traces from the passage of material between one dancer and another. These important aspects will be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters.¹³

8 Klein also highlights the importance of these gaps, naming them as processes of “translation.” See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, in particular pp. 148–49.

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

10 Nicholas Champion, see section 10.1, footnote 4.

11 For a comparable ethnographic study also considering movement material, see Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”

12 This is substantiated in section 10.4 The Chronology of Making *Duo*.

13 See Chapter 11.

In one way, movement material changed movement into something common, sharable, repeatable, usable—that is, something for use within the choreographic realm of making performances. In another way, Forsythe’s creative process set movement material in a contingency in which the dancers no longer could control what would take place. “Forget that—anyway forget that with Billy” one *Duo* dancer reminded me. After the first rehearsal of *Duo*, “the material had entered her, but there was no way to control how it would be developed.”¹⁴

The practice of the movement of *Duo* is thus to be regarded as a special materialism. Movement material is produced through bodily exchange; movement is constituted along with concepts, theory and talk that shape it. To understand this materialism, I argue, does not warrant a phenomenological approach, valuing “bracketing or putting out of gear any and all preconceptions about whatever it is one is investigating such that one experiences the phenomenon as if for the first time.”¹⁵ Rather, it requires participant observation of practice, trying to understand the interlacing ways that movement is called upon and put to work.

Movement material is distinguished from dance. It describes, to Forsythe dancers, what the dancing is made from: the choreographed steps, tasks or other anchors that enable the dancers to practice. Movement material is the ‘thing’ that the subjects work on, physically and cognitively, in phases that may foreground different modes between thought and perception. One can differentiate this, along the vectors of dance and choreography. The dance of movement is what resists its objectification; the choreography of movement material is what gives it potential to be reflected upon, manipulated, observed, constructed, planned, structured and organized. These observations about Forsythe dancers’ movement practices concur with what Rudi Laermans has defined as choreography: “the virtual space in which in principle repeatable (series of) movements or non-movements are both recorded and rationalized.”¹⁶

What I wish to convey within this section is that the dancers’ enactment of movement in the context of *Duo* involved many sorts of practices, which were shaped by the labor of a choreographic workplace. While the dancers ‘highest’—in the sense of the most respected and coveted—form of movement practice was the presence of performing *Duo*, many cognitive and teleological movement-related activities were vital for the constitution of choreography.¹⁷ We learn about movement when we consider its ability to transform in and out of a material useful within a choreographic workplace. Movement is not just a body changing position or an action with a preconceived goal. Nor is human movement experienced purely through the sense modality of kinesthesia, inarticulately and without theory. Rather, movements are processes—they are practices entwined with other practices. And as processes, they range from the ephemeral and singular (dance) to those resilient and enduring (choreography).

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

15 Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, p. xxiv.

16 See Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 29. Cf. Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” p. 120.

17 This is not to say that choreography is purely a teleological project, or a means to a designed end. The dancers also described choreographic process as explorative, playful, wandering and open-ended.

As a choreographer interacts with dancers, proposing various methods to make movement, their bodies leave traces upon the process. Observing the working process of choreographer Wayne McGregor, social anthropologist James Leach and dance scholar Scott deLahunta observe: “What is *interesting* in that movement, the *substance* or material that emerges in the generation, has something to do with the quality of the body’s relationality, its presence eliciting feeling response and movement in others.”¹⁸ In the next section these relations and their impact on *Duo* will take focus.

7.2 Erin Manning: “Relational Movement”

The interaction that happens between dancers in *Duo* involves bodies that are not pre-given matters, producing a relation that does not change them, but is constituted through moving in relation—or so is my preliminary thesis. To further describe this, in this section I draw from Erin Manning’s writing on bodies and *relational movement*.¹⁹ Relations are becoming increasingly cited concepts within dance studies.²⁰ This momentum may come from the impact of art critic Nicolas Bourriaud’s pivotal book, *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)—a text written to grasp experimental visual art in the 1990s, in which artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija and Félix González-Torres foregrounded new sorts of material presences and participatory encounters with artistic spectators.²¹

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- 18 See Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge,” p. 465 (italics in the original).
- 19 For orientation see Manning, *Relationscapes*, Chapter 2, pp. 29–42. Erin Manning was philosopher-in-residence in The Forsythe Company in fall 2010. This view of relation has aspects in common with Karen Barad’s concept of “intra-actions”; see Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” in particular p. 817.
- 20 Approaches within this vary. Pirkko Husemann, drawing initially from Nicolas Bourriaud, then further defining her concept of relationality through Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, examines how the choreographies of Xavier Le Roy and Thomas Lehmen handle such a view of relational art through “making their cultural field an object and simultaneously bringing producers and recipients closer to one another.” Translation by the author, Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*, p. 19. Petra Sabisch has also foregrounded the category of relation in her writings, drawing on a different approach influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of assemblage, as well as the radical empiricism of William James. The relations Sabisch foregrounds are those made during performance with the audience: “relations to objects, to music, to bodies, relations between bodies, relations of visibility, relations between forces, relations of movement and rest, etc.” See Sabisch, *Choreographing Relations*, p. 7. On William Forsythe’s later work, since 2003—developed with particular regard to relations within and between bodies and space—dance scholar Kirsten Maar draws together many theoretical sources (phenomenology, Deleuze, architectural and spatial theory), see Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*. As a final example, anthropologist James Leach and dance scholar Scott deLahunta take an anthropological approach and focus on the work of choreographer Wayne McGregor. In doing so, they consider an interesting example: What it would take to manifest the sort of interaction between dancers and the choreographer in dance-making, through digital technology? Their solution: a body. See Leach and deLahunta, “Dance Becoming Knowledge.”
- 21 Bourriaud’s text, drawing from theorists such as Louis Althusser and Félix Guattari, places intersubjectivity at the center of artistic production: “an art form where the substrate is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the ‘encounter’ between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning.” Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 15.

Noting the obvious contradiction between these projects and modern art, Bourriaud defined relational art as: “A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”²² While my intention here is not to categorize *Duo* as a work of relational art in Bourriaud’s sense, a few further connections between relational art and shifts in Forsythe’s aesthetic are worth clarifying.

Already in this manuscript (sections 2.3–2.4) I have shown that the change of Forsythe’s working context from the Ballett Frankfurt to The Forsythe Company corresponded with performances foregrounding new proximities, materiality and sensory experiences by the performers and the audience. Additionally, after the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe increasingly produced and situated artworks within multiple markets: in the economies of dance (ballet and contemporary dance) as well as within visual art. Investigating Forsythe’s performances, art objects, and installations two-fold in contexts of dance and visual art since 2003, dance scholar Kirsten Maar has designated relationality as a key aspect of Forsythe’s aesthetic, observing a continuity between the relations of space and moving bodies between performers in the stage works, and what participants co-existing with one of Forsythe’s “choreographic objects” might experience in a visual art context.²³ In my view, relationality is not seeping into the stage works from Forsythe’s foray into visual art; rather this relationality emerges from his history as a choreographer who works within a team and makes artworks perceived by a mass of spectators. In my view, choreography is a preeminent relational art because the sorts of movement and media organization it produces are socially implemented and anchored. By introducing the term *relation* at this point in my study, I hope to further clarify a concept that I believe helps to articulate the *Duo* dancers’ experience of enacting *Duo*—though admittedly not perfectly. To do so, here I draw upon the relational philosophy of Erin Manning, in which she considers dancing together and the experience of bodies in relation.

As a process philosopher, Erin Manning doubts that individuals precede their relations. As an anti-nominalist, she also believes that collectivity “does not emerge from a group of individuals but precedes the very concept of individuality.”²⁴ Manning also doubts that the dancer’s body is a natural or expressive matter, moved by the will and volition of a single subject or self. Rather, her philosophy is defined on a mobile concept of the body as a verb, as a process of bodying: “bodies-in-the-making” and a “becoming-body.”²⁵ Her philosophy also celebrates the blending of thought, sensation and movement as modes of articulation. By stressing the flux of a body, and the manner that bodies interweave, Manning softens the borders of *a* body and thereby challenges the western construct of the individual. Bodies, for Manning, are a matter of continual process or passage. They are also social and plural: “always more than one.”²⁶

22 Ibid., p. 113.

23 Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*. On Forsythe’s term “choreographic object,” see Forsythe, “Choreographic Objects.”

24 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 22.

25 Ibid., p. 6.

26 Ibid., p. 13; see also Manning, *Always More Than One*. Manning’s concept of relational movement is, in my view, a culturally cultivated means of perceiving movement, other dancers and things. It is in-

One *Duo* dancer to whom I described the concept of bodies in relational movement (as best I could) wrinkled her eyebrows and responded that *her* body was *hers*. She found *Duo* was *personal*, not defined by a relation that backgrounded the personal or made her body less her own. She added that dance students need to learn how to use *their* bodies and love their bodies, because that was what they would work with over their entire career and life.²⁷ But she also explained that *Duo* happened because of something that only her partner could ‘do’ to her, something that was brought out through their relationship—something through their bodies yet also beyond them. The agency they took in dancing was not control of one’s flesh or another’s flesh. Rather, it was a sort of merging and affecting and relating with the other. *Duo* is, I would tentatively suggest, both a choreography *produced* by persons and a choreography *producing* personhood—in the sense of a nexus of practices that organize and constitute dancing subjects, through making the intersubjective differently cared for than was common within their lived histories as western dancers. Because of the element of partnership, *Duo* relationships were also more intimate and co-dependent than in the other relational group works by Forsythe for his ensemble.

In *Relationscapes* (2009), Manning draws upon many examples of dance and art, including her own practice as a tango dancer, to illuminate relational movement. I wish to examine these to further appraise *Duo* dancers’ description of partnering. Manning, who can both lead and follow in the tango writes: “I move not you but the interval out of which our movement emerges. We move time relationally as we create space: we move space as we create time.”²⁸ Rather than viewing a tango duet as the movement of two people who manipulate each other’s bodies, Manning senses in tango a creative engagement in space and time in which a “we” emerges. This we moves without concern for their external image or form—foregrounding decision through experience. They improvise together, feeling the potential based upon their shared experience of codes of the practice. They linger in the elasticity and pleasure of inventing movement.

Tango, unlike *Duo*, is a dance with touch and physical contact. It is also improvised, rather than based on a prescribed sequence. Yet the co-movement in tango bears similarities to the way that the *Duo* dancers attune to one another to connect from step to step. In both, synchronizing movement is important. Dance scholar André Lepecki,

teresting that Manning does not cite anthropological literature about personhood. Summarizing this literature, Fowler explores how personhood can operate other than the western concept of individuality (as personal uniqueness and the constant sense of being “unitary, totalized and indivisible”), for example within the realm of *dividuals* and *dividuality* (in which “the person is recognized as composite and multiply-authored”). Relational movement is a way of *dividuation* in which people “are composed of social relations with others to the degree that they owe parts of themselves to others.” Both Fowler and Manning’s writing seek to recognize “features of personhood undervalued in the west.” See Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, pp. 7–9, pp. 11–22; citations p. 8, p. 21. Published after *Relationscapes*, Manning’s *Always More Than One*, takes the problem of individuation more head-on, drawing extensively from Simondon, Deleuze, Guattari and Whitehead.

27 Importantly, not all *Duo* dancers were confused by my attempts to link *Duo* and Manning’s philosophy of relational movement. Two informants were eager to discuss this. They had read parts of Erin Manning’s text, *The Minor Gesture*, after I left a pile of books in the studio, curious to see which texts the dancers would choose to read, without instruction or pressure.

28 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 17.

drawing from his reading of Manning, calls the manner of moving without a prescribed leader and follower “leadingfollowing.”²⁹ This involves the dancers’ cooperative attunement to one another and to time, sharing responsibility for the progress of the dance. When people dance in this way, Manning suggests that the “I” and “other” dissolve as individual subjects. The movement does not emerge from the leader and get communicated to the follower, but comes from the *betweenness* captured in her concept of the “interval.” Manning specifies that while the interval is imperceptible in itself, it becomes perceptible in the actual step getting made. In tango, this might be the feeling of a step finishing or landing on the ground. Manning presents the interval as the linking that enables experience: “The interval is the metastable quality through which the relation is felt.”³⁰

With her concept of relational movement, Manning describes not one body moving another body, but sensing the relational unfolding between bodies in the movement—writing theory that draws strongly from Deleuze and Guattari, Whitehead and Bergson. Bodies become: “This becoming-body (connecting, always) becomes-toward, always with.”³¹ Manning insists on examining movement as incipency, rather than displacement towards a position, placing emphasis on the “preacceleration” of movement, rather than the ending.³² Becoming and changing, movement is always on the “verge of expression.”³³

Relational movement is movement with a highly generative virtual component. The virtual is felt as intensity burgeoning in movement—in which movement is creative. It is an intensity that is real. For Manning, it is typically ineffable because it is a process of gesture or expression coming to the fore, not finalizing.³⁴ For Forsythe dancers experienced in improvisation and the negotiation of various procedures of planning movement as choreography, they become masters in feeling the different ways that relations unfold. These experienced dancers follow *becoming*, feeling movement rich with micro-tendencies that bring it in and out of the habitual.

The virtual component of movement is hard to identify (from the outside) through studying a photograph or a movement-still. It is perceived most easily in its felt effects—felt by the dancers and (I suggest) many spectators. As a dancer-scholar studying *Duo*, I attempted to learn about this sort of sensing in two ways: first, by dancing with the dancers and second, by taking a longitudinal view and observing how movement shifts with potential, from night to night, in the performances of *Duo* documented on archival video. This topographic view of the choreography shifting (see section 9.2), convinced me of the plasticity of this practice, in part because of coveting potential.

Not all movement is relational; nor is all relational movement dance. Without stressing the distinction, Manning clarifies that relational movement is different from cus-

29 Drawing from Manning, see Lepecki, “From Partaking to Initiating,” p. 34.

30 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 17; see discussion pp. 16–19.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

32 “Preacceleration: a movement of the not-yet that composes the more-than-one that is my body: Call it incipient action.” *Ibid.*, p. 13.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

34 *Ibid.*, in particular p. 42.

tomary motions in daily life (such as office work, or walking, or cooking) in which one moves, without awareness, through habit. For Manning, relational movement is a sort of dance—a dance that does not emphasize form and position. When dance is relational movement, virtual components become active, affective factors. But, for Manning, not all choreographed movements are relational. In cases of reproduction of movement, she observes the relational qualities prove challenging: “Relation must be reinvented. To dance relationally is not to *represent* movement but to *create* it.”³⁵ When choreography engenders relational movement, that involves: “bringing to expression the patterning of incipient activity toward the definition of a movement event.”³⁶ Choreography for Manning is not an organization of bodies in space and time—as the knowing ahead and prescriptive disciplining of outcomes and rules—but the speculation and activism that dynamically fields incipient movement, potentializing action.

What is the experience of relational movement like? Tango dancers, embraced on the cusp between movement-making and perishing, may feel the potential of movement being made. They feel the “elasticity” of movement becoming. Manning writes: “To remain in the elasticity for as long as possible is the goal—but remaining on the edge of virtuality is a challenging task.”³⁷ Outside of the tango, she adds: “Even a simple walk can feel elastic when the movement carries us, when the goal is not the first thing on our mind.” Manning concludes: “What relational movement can do is make this elasticity felt, actualize it in an almost-form that takes shape in its incipient deformation.”³⁸ *Duo* dancer Riley Watts had described *Duo* similarly as comprising stretching of time: an exploration “of moving together in its many permutations, performing the art of *elastic* temporal integrity.”³⁹ In *Duo*, elasticity is found in the choreography plastically shifting with the dancers’ attunement. It stretches through the reverberation of residual response, the pliancy of breathing-movement, the feeling of being “Almost there!”⁴⁰ Rhythms shift dynamically between sections as cues well up with intensity, as the dancers feel themselves coming and going in alignment. A dance of relation, in which the two partners invest extensive time to learn how to co-navigate the motion, *Duo* builds movement potential cooperatively.

When bodies are understood to be always in-process and movement regarded not as that which is produced by singular bodies but kinesthetically elicited through and between bodies, bodily-movement is more readily understood as a singular-plural process. Relational movement joins bodies in processes that are individual-collective. Indeed, singular bodies do linger; they are enduring, as the *Duo* dancers know. But with

35 Ibid., p. 26 (italics in the original).

36 Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. 76.

37 Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 37.

38 Ibid., p. 41. Manning’s use of the term “elasticity” to describe the pliancy of the moment, draws from Leibniz and Deleuze to express the curving potential of matter. Not intellectual, elasticity is a quality of relation not always expressed, but always possible. Manning places elasticity in the plane of the ineffable—the plane of coming to articulation, gesturing, being in movement—the plane of emergent modes of meaning. She writes: “Moving the relation is a striving toward the ineffable experience of the elasticity of the almost.” Ibid., p. 42.

39 Riley Watts cited in Waterhouse et al., “Doing *Duo*,” p. 8, emphasis mine.

40 Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, June 28, 2018.

the concept of relational movement, Manning wishes to point out a collectivity that is different from the western norm. She writes: "When articulation becomes collective, a politics is made palpable whereby what is produced is the potential for divergent series of movements."⁴¹ This focus on movement, not as a representational medium but rather as a creative one, suggests for Manning its political force. Relational movement creates potential for change. It is experienced through collective attunement to this potentiality, feeling the edges—the elasticity—of movement invention.

In her entire oeuvre, Manning writes critically about identity politics and theories that stake the individual as sacrosanct.⁴² Manning shares with practice scholars the view that the human body is a central locus of politics, and that acts are complexly shared socially and constituted historically. Her theories acknowledge that movement composes through the finite variation of what has been, through historicized becoming. Manning's expansive writing desists from locating or bounding the singular body, "de-centering the subject" like many practice theorists.⁴³ Without prioritizing the human or theorizing identity, form or social order, Manning's theories however differ from Bourdieu's emphasis on positioning, limitations and competition, and the scarcity of values defined as forms of capital; instead Manning emphasizes movement, relation and creative surplus. Her theories also do not juxtapose with Judith Butler's concept of performativity, foregrounding the force of norms and the processes of iterative rehearsal, where change occurs through "a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style."⁴⁴ Instead of iteration and foregrounding the power of speech acts, Manning examines process and the diverse kinesthetic-sensory modes of coming to articulation. While concerned with the disciplinary and the discursive, Manning's writing is less a critique and analysis of power than an activist advocacy for new powers (celebrating the autistic, the artist, the animal, etc.).

Manning's emphasis on process and relational movement makes creativity one of the central issues of her philosophy. This is what I will take forward in part III, when

41 Manning, *Relationescapes*, p. 27.

42 See in particular *ibid.*, pp. 10–11, p. 27; cf. Manning, *Always More Than One*. Through her fluid concept of the body and its obfuscation of subject-object constructs, Manning writes identity into a process at odds with relational movement. Identity's temporality is fleeting and ephemeral, like movement. If anything, identity is a process of collective becoming, as "conrescence" (Whitehead) and "infra-individuation." Manning, *Relationescapes*, pp. 22–28.

43 Translation by the author. Reckwitz cited in Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, p. 96.

44 See Butler, "Performative Acts and Gendered Constitution," p. 524. In her introduction to *Bodies That Matter*, she writes: "It is not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never really complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law." Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. xii. A closer account of these similarities is beyond my scope here. This could involve the discussion of practice and performance theory in Klein and Göbel, *Performance und Praxis* and then bridge to close readings from Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Butler, *Performative Acts and Gendered Constitution*; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Foucault, *The Subject and Power*.

I examine *creation* in *Duo*. The sphere of politics for Manning is relational—that is, ontogenetic and creative, through bringing diverse people into contact. It is this sense of relationality as political and creative that I believe is insightful for understanding *Duo*: a concept of togetherness based on mutual negotiation of the virtual. *Duo* dancers submit themselves to a relational *togetherness* that lets them feel power as a sort of creative potential in becoming rather than as discipline. They find a manner of thinking through their bodies together, which not only is limited to their bodies but to their connection to the presence of the audience. This almost superhuman *togetherness* is a peaceful and sensitive alternative, a fluid substitute to the styles of subjectivity that were learned in their competitive dance training. For Manning: “This is what dance makes clear: it is not the displacement as such that makes the difference, but the quality of becoming of the micromovements and microperceptions that pass through not just the composing body but also the vibrating space of thought.”⁴⁵ In the next chapter, I will turn to these micromovements and microperceptions concretely, offering another term for *Duo* dancers’ *relational movement*.

Chapter 7 has explored *Duo*’s movement with regard to the concepts of *material* and *relation*. Section 7.1 analyzed my fieldwork activities in view of the dancers’ special materialism, in which movement material is produced by bodily exchange, as well as through concepts, representations and medial capture. This has informed us about the way *Duo* dancers understand *how* they work with movement, in a teleological activity of making and performing choreography. Movement is illustrated to be mutable, sharable, teachable, transmittable, edit-able, improvable, even lose-able. There is a “bundle” of practices associated with it.⁴⁶ Rather than epitomizing the ephemeral presence of movement, I have argued that looking across the array of movement-oriented activities helps us to better understand the relevance of movement as a constructive potential for human subjects.

Section 7.2 has considered the growing literature concerning relationality written by dance scholars, engaging in close reading of artist-philosopher Erin Manning’s writing on *relational movement*. By observing the convergences between Manning’s theory and the dancers’ experience of relation, and problematizing divergences, I critically explored the experiences (plural) of identity and subjectivity brought out in *Duo*. I also addressed a paradox: that the dancers were both western individuals experiencing their unique body and pairs relationally constituted. Overall, im/materiality and relationality are demonstrated to be entwining aspects of the reality of *Duo*.

45 Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. 15.

46 Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 71.