

critical dance studies



Elizabeth Waterhouse

# Processing Choreography

Thinking with  
William Forsythe's *Duo*

[transcript]

Elizabeth Waterhouse  
Processing Choreography

The series is edited by Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein.

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## Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This book is dedicated to the *Duo* dancers.

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

—*Dana Caspersen*<sup>1</sup>

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





## Introduction

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



Photo © Agnès Noltenius.

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

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

Dozens of similarly stunning photographs of dancers fill the pages of Noltenius's book tribute to the Ballett Frankfurt, combined with her own words and citations from choreographer William Forsythe.<sup>1</sup> The images I've included here, with her kind permission, show the dancers enacting the duet *Duo*. This piece is the subject of this manuscript: a duet made in 1996 by Forsythe for the Ballett Frankfurt. The dancers are Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson, both of whom are cisgender women. In these photos, we see them in their black *Duo* costumes, the long sleeve leotards, as well as wearing their practice clothes. They are in the Ballett Frankfurt studio on the seventh floor of the Opera House, with natural rather than stage lighting. To my eye, they are enacting *Duo*'s movements a bit differently than in performance—as they are closer, brought together for the camera lens, on the verge of touching. This staging of *Duo*, with Noltenius, brings out what the dancers feel as they dance this duet: a particular art of *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.<sup>2</sup> As with Noltenius's *Duo* photographs, the figuration of the face is absent. The image frames the common torso, core and arms. The dancers' bodies are different yet amalgamated: *together*.

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

1 Noltenius, *Detail*.

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

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

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

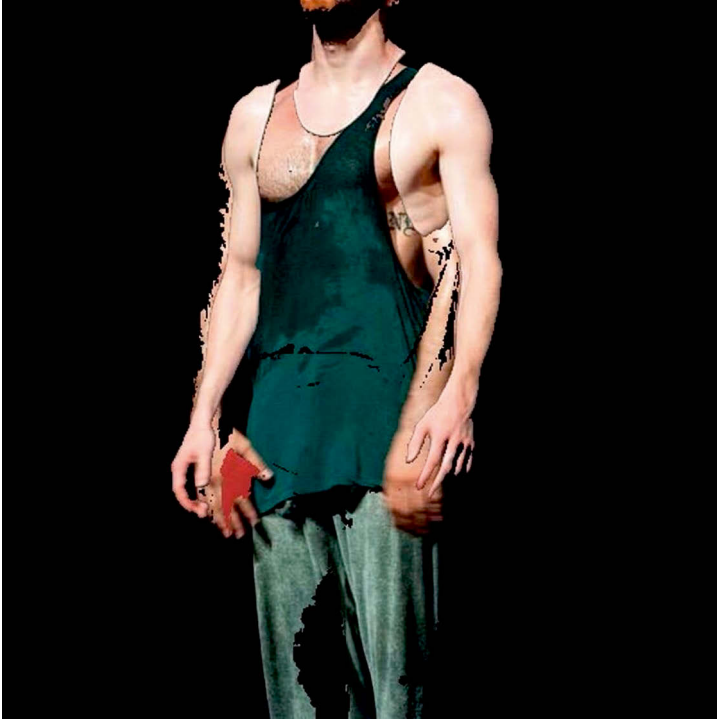


Photo © Riley Watts.

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

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

### Watching *DUO2015*

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

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

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



Photo © Bill Cooper.

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

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

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

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

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

## Researching the *Duo* Project

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

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

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

8 This counts performances between 1996–2018.

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

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

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



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

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

9 Byrne, “Ballet’s Antichrist.”

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

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

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

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

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



Photo © Dominik Mentzos.

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

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

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

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

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## With the Dancers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Dancer's Perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

35 I would like to highlight three examples of European projects with internet platforms. First, since 2000 the platform *Sarma* in the Netherlands has acted as a "laboratory for discursive practices and expanded publication in field of dance, performance and beyond" with a website offering materials publicly. Second, the internet platform *Everybody's* aimed to expand the discourse in the performing arts and to make that accessible to everybody. Compiled primarily between 2009–2011, the website provides games, scores, description, artist statements, interviews, performance documentation, publications and a calendar. Third, the *Motion Bank* project researched choreographic practice from 2010–2013. The website currently features online scores for the artists Deborah Hay, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert. For links to these websites, please see the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography.

36 See writing by Dana Caspersen, Anthony Rizzi, Thomas McManus and Prue Lang in Siegmund, *William Forsythe: Denken in Bewegung*. See also Caspersen's extensive writings: "It Starts From Any Point"; "The Company at Work, How They Train, Rehearse, and Invent"; "Methodologies" and "De-creation."

37 On Balanchine's choreographic process, see Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*. On Forsythe's work, see Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*; Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*; Vass-Rhee *Audio-Visual Stress*; "Dancing Music"; "Distributed Dramaturgies"; "Schooling an Ensemble." On the dancers' work within Pina Bausch's ensemble, see Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, in particular pp. 145–62.

38 Cf. Leach, "Choreographic Objects."

39 Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, p. 6.

## The Performer's Labor

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

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

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

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

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

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

43 Ibid., p. 80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## Processing Choreography

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sources & Methodology

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

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

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

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*.