UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

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MÉMOIRE DE CRÉATION
PRÉSENTÉ
COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE
DE LA MAÎTRISE EN DANSE

PAR
AMY HELMSTETTER

JUIN 2008

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STRUCTURING THE NOW: A CASE STUDY ON THE PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE OF A DANCE IMPROVISATION WORKGROUP

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RÉSUMÉ

L'étude qualitative de ce mémoire de création est une enquête sur les processus intervenant dans la préparation et la présentation d'une performance d'improvisation dansée par un atelier de danseurs (ainsi qu'un éclairagiste et un musicien). L'étude s'est déroulée en deux parties. La première partie a donné lieu à la présentation d'une création de danse, *Everyday is a Fine Day,* interprétée par cinq danseurs, un musicien et un éclairagiste, au Théâtre Passerelle 840 en juin 2007. La deuxième partie, analytique, a permis de réaliser ce mémoire de recherche. Pour la partie écrite de l'étude, un cadre de recherche a été établi afin de répondre à la question suivante : participant lui-même au projet, comment le chercheur perçoit-il un atelier d'improvisation, récemment constitué et démocratique, et quelles sont les modalités lui permettant de structurer *in fine* une performance improvisée ? Les données réunies proviennent de notre participation active et de l'observation de 27 répétitions, de quatre représentations et de multiples échanges informels avec les danseurs, le musicien et l'éclairagiste, des enregistrements vidéo de la plupart des répétitions et performances, un entretien avec un des danseurs ayant quitté le groupe après quatre répétitions et une réunion de bilan avec les danseurs. L'ensemble de ces données ont été consignées dans un journal organisé par parties représentant les plans de répétition et de représentation, les brèves notes de terrain issues des répétitions (notamment les remarques d'invités présents lors des répétitions), les descriptions détaillées à chaud des répétitions et des performances, les réactions aux vidéos, les impressions et analyses spontanées, et les activités extérieures. Après avoir rassemblé l'ensemble des données, celles-ci ont été organisées et classées suivant un axe d'analyse thématique. L'apparition d'une série de changements dans les préoccupations du groupe et des collaborateurs constitue le résultat le plus significatif de cette analyse. En effet, nous avons constaté qu'à mesure que la performance improvisée approchait, les préoccupations du groupe relevaient principalement des domaines suivants : processus de groupe, pratique générale de l'improvisation dansée, compétences compositionnelles/ sensibilité au développement compositionnel, adaptation musicale/planification/répétition de cette pièce, et création de liens avec les collaborateurs. Utilisant la liste des préoccupations changeantes du groupe comme point de départ, nous avons pu voir comment ses soucis et ses objectifs ont conduit aux activités de répétitions. Nous avons alors constaté la formation d'un cercle vertueux entre les collaborateurs et le groupe de travail améliorant la structuration de l'improvisation. Plus simplement, les *préoccupations* du groupe ont conduit à des *activités* qui l'ont amené à développer son propre style de structuration de danse improvisée. Au fur et à mesure de l'évolution des préoccupations, des activités et de la structuration spontanée, le groupe s'est appuyé sur ses acquis pour faire progresser ses aptitudes de structuration

d'une répétition à l'autre. Les progrès réalisés grâce aux objectifs et aux soucis particuliers du groupe sont apparus dans les structures finales des représentations, reflétant ainsi son travail de préparation. La manière particulière dont les membres du groupe ont travaillé ensemble a été le fil rouge du projet. Globalement, les membres de l'atelier ont décidé de mener le projet sans *leader*, ce qui a crée un système complexe de collaboration qui, en influant sur la structure et les activités de répétition, a influé sur les représentations de *Everyday is a Fine Day*. Par ailleurs, les remarques de certains membres de la communauté locale de danse de Montréal ont eu une incidence sur les préoccupations du groupe. Tout au long du projet, des amis, collègues et les directeurs de ce mémoire ont assisté aux répétions et à une performance de mi-session afin de donner leurs impressions sur la prestation de danse et de musique du groupe. Ces points de vue extérieurs ont largement contribué à déterminer les objectifs et les préoccupations du groupe. S'inspirant de notre étude, nous concluons ce mémoire par une liste de suggestions pour un hypothétique danseur intéressé par la mise en place d'un nouvel atelier d'improvisation dansée.

Mots clés :

Danse ; improvisation ; improvisation de danse ; processus du groupe ; performance improvisée ; étude de cas ; groupe d'improvisation ; structure de danse

ABSTRACT

The qualitative study of this *mémoire de création* was designed as an investigation into the processes involved when a particular workgroup of dancers (along with a lighting designer and especially a musician) prepares for and presents a dance improvisation performance. It was a two part study. The first part resulted in the presentation of a dance creation project, *Everyday is a Fine Day,* which was performed by five dancers, a musician, and a lighting designer, in the *Theatre Passerelle 840* in June 2007. The second part, which was analytical, culminated in this written research thesis. For the written part of the study, a research framework was designed to answer the following question: How does the researcher of this project perceive a newly formed democratic dance improvisation workgroup, in which she participates, proceed and progress in terms of structuring a final improvised performance? Data was collected from the researcher's active participation and observation of 27 rehearsals, four performances, and multiple informal discussions with the dancers, musician and lighting designer; the videotapes of most rehearsals and performances; an interview with one dancer who left the group after four rehearsals; and a post-mortem meeting with the dancers. All data was recorded into a researcher journal that was organized into sections representing the rehearsal and performance plans, quick field notes from rehearsals (including feedback from rehearsal guests), detailed descriptions of rehearsals and performances recorded just after the rehearsals and performances, reactions to videotapes, feelings and spontaneous analyses, and outside activities. After all of the data was gathered, it was organized and categorized following a thematic analysis basis. The most significant result of the thematic analysis was the emergence of a progression of changing preoccupations of the workgroup and collaborators. It was noticed that, as the group proceeded towards the improvised performance, it was mainly preoccupied with issues that fell into the following categories: group process, general dance improvisation practice, compositional skill / awareness to compositional development, scoring/planning/practicing this piece, and connecting with collaborators. Using the list of changing preoccupations as a starting point, the researcher was able to see how the concerns and goals of the group led to the consequent rehearsal activities of the group. Then, the researcher noticed a circular pattern of improvement in the developing improvisational structuring of the workgroup and collaborators. More simply put, the group's *preoccupations* led to *activities* which led to the group's particular style of *structuring* improvised dance. As the group's preoccupations, activities and spontaneous structuring changed overtime, the group built upon its own acquired knowledge to improve its structuring skill from one rehearsal to the next. The dance progress that resulted from the group's activities could be seen in the final performance structures in ways that reflected the group's particular preparation work. The way that the group members

worked together was the underlying preoccupation. Mainly, the workgroup members decided to conduct the project without a leader, which created a complex system of collaboration that—by affecting the rehearsal activities and structure—affected the final performances of *Everyday is a Fine Day*. Another influence on the preoccupations of the group was feedback from members of the local Montréal dance community. Throughout the process, friends, colleagues and the directors of this thesis were invited to rehearsals and a mid-session showing to provide feedback on the dancing and music of the group. Outside feedback helped determine much of the group's goals and concerns which led to certain preoccupations. Drawing from her study, the researcher of this project concludes the thesis with a list of suggestions for a hypothetical dancer who is interested in facilitating a new dance improvisation workgroup.

Key words:

Dance; improvisation; dance improvisation; group process; performance group; case study; workgroup; dance structure

INTRODUCTION

Roots of my curiosity

I used to dislike performed dance improvisation. Having done my undergraduate studies in dance choreography, where the craft of dance making required a process of structuring a dance over time, I developed an eye for planned choreography. I thought dance improvisation could only be a therapeutic exercise or a choreographic tool, not an interesting work of art in itself because (I assumed) dance improvisation had not been thought out. Before I began improvising more regularly, I spent about six years investigating and practicing choreography. I studied crafting techniques such as theme and development, repetition, cannons, conflict and resolution, ABA forms, time/space/energy variations, chance procedures, etc. Not only did I study these practices, but I was quite capable of reproducing them and expanding on them. I choreographed with a sensitive eye to the way the dance was formed in time and space. To create a dance, I needed to see the piece as a whole many times, so I could consciously mull over my decisions and pay as much attention as possible to the way it all went together to create the piece's whole structure. I improvised from time to time, even on stage, but I did not take improvisation seriously because I assumed there was no room or time in improvisation for complexity or development.

I knew that improvisers would sometimes choreograph a score (planned structure) before performing dance improvisation, but I did not consider this type of dance to be of high quality because it seemed too simple, perhaps random and did not require the time consuming trial-and-error process, which I assumed would give a choreographer the chance to eliminate as many "errors" as possible. I assumed that improvisers did not care about errors, that anything would be fine, because improvisers were not concerned with the aesthetic value of the dance, but just dancing for the pleasure of it. I would have agreed with Victoria Marks (2003) who,

in *Against Improvisation: A Postmodernist Makes the Case for Choreography,* states that "improvisation offers immediate gratification whereas choreography implies a long-term relationship" (p. 135). This value-laden remark implies that improvisation is less serious, or less developed, than choreography.

Because of the high value I placed on the choreographic crafting techniques and studio processes I'd studied, I assumed that, for a dance to be good, there would need to be a choreographer outside eye who could structure the dance. Even if a choreographer was making a solo for himself or dancing in the piece he was creating, he would need to have an outside eye (he could videotape himself for example) during the creation process. This was preparation! A dance work of art would need at least the following basic preparation process to be considered well-structured: A choreographer makes a piece with the dancer(s) during rehearsals; towards the end of the rehearsal process the piece is considered finished; then the piece is performed on stage, on a site, or in a video. This process would not guarantee that the piece be well-structured, but I figured that, without the basic process of building the dance in the studio, or somewhere, the piece could not really exist.

Not so long ago, choreographing in a strict make-the-dance-then-show-it way began to cause some problems for me. Mainly the choreographer/dancer relationship was not feeling natural for me anymore because I wanted to acknowledge the dancers as creative individuals and because I began to dislike the hierarchical choreographer role I would embody upon starting each new project. I had strong convictions when I choreographed, so working collaboratively was difficult for me too. It seemed my habitual choreographic process was not working for me anymore but I could see no other way to work, or none that suited me at the time.

Carrying a bit of anxiety about my choreographic process, I found inspiration in the most curious place, an improvised dance performance. It was a duet, *At the*

heart of the unknown, performed by Kirstie Simson and Andrew Harwood (Nov. 12, 2005) in Studio 303 of Montréal. Somehow, performing on a level of sophistication that could only have required years of practice, the dancers danced their own movement, but with so acute an attention that it seemed they had outside eyes for themselves. Though I did not understand it at the time, I sensed a craft. I could see that they were not simply doing whatever felt good, but were building a dance. What was interesting was how they manipulated the possibilities of their dancing selves—without stopping to reflect, as a choreographer would—and I knew that there was something complex in what they were doing. It came to me: What I was seeing was not a product of immediate gratification; there had been long-term work feeding this dance. To top it off, though the organization of the piece was not (entirely) predetermined, the choreographic choices were not random. I could not explain it in my conscious mind or relate it to what I had learned, but the dance seemed to be built aesthetically.

With a hint of understanding that artistic work could be involved in the improvised dance performance, I began to watch and practice more dance improvisation. I began to develop, partly thanks to Andrew Harwood and Judit Keri's improvisation workshops[1] and through my own rehearsals and performance experiences, tacit improvisational knowledge and skill. I could feel my improvised dancing improve in ways that I did not consciously understand. This experience led me to change my understanding of improvisation and what constituted a well-prepared, well-structured dance. I knew in my body that my improvisations were not random and that I was improving my dance improvisation craft. I was hungry to expand upon my knowledge with other individuals and to gain more conscious

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[1] *Emptying, Landing, Soaring*, a workshop for professional dancers with Andrew Harwood and Judit Keri at Studio 303 in Montreal, Nov 21-Dec 2, 2005; *Advanced Contact Improvisation*, a workshop for professional dancers with Andrew Harwood and Judit Keri at O Vertigo in Montreal, Feb 20-Mar 3, 2006; *Design and Instantaneous Composition*, a workshop for professional dancers with Andrew Harwood at Studio 303, Oct 9-20, 2006

insight into the processes involved in making improvised dance. My drive and curiosity to expand upon my knowledge with others and to improve my conscious understanding about dance improvisation led me to this research project which will be explained in the following pages.

Values and positioning

Before stating my research question I must position myself by defining certain terms that are important to my study and by explaining the lens through which I conducted the research.

First it is necessary to define my understanding of the term "dance improvisation." Though "improvisation is a word for something that can't keep a name" (Paxton, 2005, p. 69), in this world of words, I'll say that, for me, the term "dance improvisation" implies first and foremost the prevailing notion of movement spontaneity. When the content of a piece is mostly determined in the present time, in the performance venue (on stage for example), it can be called a performed improvisation. If the content is mostly predetermined in the studio ahead of time it can be called a choreography. Improvisation and choreography are not mutually exclusive and can be used as elements within each other. To illustrate: a dance improvisation group might decide ahead of time to perform four solos, then a duet section, then a group section. In this case some of the structure of the final piece was decided ahead of time or "choreographed" but the bulk of the piece was decided on the spot, making the piece, according to my definition, an improvisation. I can position myself further by agreeing with Kent De Spain (1997) who defined dance improvisation as "non-choreographed, spontaneous dancing as developed and practiced within the modern and post-modern dance traditions of the United States and Europe" (p. 5). I add Canada to this list because many of the Canadian dance improvisers that I know are part of the ever-exchanging North American dance

improvisation scene, myself included as I am an American who has studied and performed dance improvisation in America and Canada.

Also important for clarifying my intentions, I need to define "workgroup." The term was coined by Daniel Nagrin in 1969, when he called his dance improvisation performance group *The Workgroup* (Nagrin, 1994, p. 33). I did not know this when I began to use the word workgroup to refer to my own improvisation performance group—I had just heard it used in the street from time to time—but I like the connection. Nagrin started his group to study and advance the form of improvisation. He wanted to develop a "special and specific skill within the craft of performing improvisation" (p. 106). So, following the spirit of Daniel Nagrin, I use the term "workgroup" to describe a group of dancers (and maybe musicians and/or lighting designers, etc.) who come together to practice improvisation with the intention of an eventual improvised dance performance. For this thesis "workgroup" is used as a shortened version of "dance improvisation workgroup."

The term "dance structure" demands clarity as well. The term is all over the place in writing on dance and dance improvisation and understood a little bit differently by all. For me "structure" implies the notion of the whole, of how dance content fits together to create a phenomenon, or object, in this case, the final performed dance. Therefore "dance structure" refers to the organization, i.e. order, i.e. composition, i.e. form of dance content. Some dance elements of dance content have been identified as time, space and energy by various dance teachers and scholars (Blom & Tarin Chaplin, 1982; De Spain, 1997; Fraleigh, 1987). A bit of elaboration is required to include all that I consider dance content. When I think of dance content I think of all that the dancers are working with so this must include, in addition to time/space/energy, bodies, relationships, themes, stories and images.

How the improvising dancers organize the dance content determines the structure of the whole piece. In this sense, structure is inherent. When a dancer (or many dancers) goes on stage, he or she is in the space, time elapses and he or she has an energy. Absolutely nothing can strip the piece of structure. Once a piece has happened, it can be referred to—materialistically if you want—as a structure but until the piece is finished it is being structured, mostly in the studio for a choreographed work, or mostly on stage for an improvised piece.

Sometimes dance improvisers will refer to predetermined dance contents of the dance (the rules, game, score, theme) as the structure. In my definition of structure the predetermined elements only contribute to the structure and determine parts of it but are not the structure. To avoid confusion I will refer to the predetermined aspects as the "score" of the piece.

"Structuring," as I understand it, signifies what happens in the moment as it relates to the whole. It is simply the action of deciding (consciously and unconsciously, according to personal and collective values) what is about to become part of the structure. Dance improvisers work with dance content when they structure the dance. They reveal the structuring process right in front of the audience. Revealing the structuring process is an important characteristic of improvisation that separates it from choreography. What interests me in this research project is the structuring that happens both before and during the improvised dance performance as it is developed by a particular workgroup. In other words what is it that the workgroup in question does in the rehearsal process that contributes to the final performed dance structure?

I recognize that the organization of the dance is subjectively experienced by the dancers and the audience. As the dance structure is subjectively experienced by the dancers and the audience it acquires qualitative value. This qualitative value

becomes important when one is trying to improve, which might be a goal of a dance improvisation workgroup. What one is trying to improve upon might be called the "craft," i.e. the way one structures, or the way the dancers put the pieces of dance content together into a dance.

Deeply ingrained in my investigation into structuring dance improvisation is the belief that some dances are better than others. I would not proclaim that it is an objective truth, but I would say that this dance is better than that one. Developing my own quality criteria to assess the value of a dance enhances my experience as I watch dances and perform them. I do not run through a conscious list of quality criteria in the moment but I feel, as I watch dances, that some dances "work" better than others. I also believe that when a dance workgroup has the chance to prepare themselves together, in a rehearsal process or even a simple discussion, they increase their chances of being able to make better dances. Of course it always depends on the individuals involved, but I suspect that most improvisation performance groups increase their chances of creating good dances, according to their own criteria, after they've prepared themselves together.

Though I do not realize it in the moment, when I reflect, I can sometimes put my felt understanding of what makes a dance good into words. One word I use to describe dances that work for me is "well-structured." When a dance is well-structured, the dancers have organized the content (ahead of time or not) in ways that support the whole piece. In dance improvisation, as I experience it, it happens when dancers seem dedicated to the dance before anything else. They are capable of seeing the structure of the dance as it arises and are involved in structuring the dance content. Then they make choices that serve the dance as something outside of themselves. If the dancers are not able to see the arising structure or are too caught up in themselves, they are likely to make choices that distract from the dance, rather than support it. This does not mean that there is no room for moments of solo

discovery or even self-indulgence on stage, but just that it is the dance that calls the solo discovery or self-indulgence into existence and, in the moment, the dance is more important than the individual needs. The direction of the dance might even need to be interrupted or shaken-up but it is the dance that demands this kind of change and the individuals respond by changing it.

Before I even began this project, I had my own understanding of what this improvisation workgroup would be working on and it is important to recognize this position. My assumption was as follows: Improvisers in a workgroup are working to prepare themselves to respond to the energies of the moment in time and space with skill and heightened structural awareness. I saw the process as an attempt by the dancers to improve their abilities to structure, or to improve their craft. As long as the group had the shared goal of preparing for a final performance and the shared understanding that this required practice or discussion about what to do—as did the workgroup that I studied for this project—I can look at the process from my "structuring" point of view. It was an assumption that I maintained, or at least it applied to the workgroup of this study. I experienced the process in this way, and I saw the organizing process of a workgroup as such. I would be wearing "structure" lens when I performed a case study into the process and progress of an improvisation workgroup.

Research question

So, with as much clarity as possible about my terms and positioning, I arrived at the decision to conduct a case study with a research question: How do I perceive a newly formed democratic dance improvisation workgroup, in which I participate, proceed and progress in terms of structuring the final improvised performance? I formed an improvisation workgroup and decided to investigate the happenings of the group with this question in mind. It was essentially a question about how we would

prepare ourselves for the spontaneous exposition of dance-making. This question addressed the rehearsal process as well as the final performed improvisation because, in my mind, both were in service of the final performance.

I was interested in enhancing my understanding about the process of collectively preparing for the structural components of an improvised dance performance so I could see how the process related to the progress. It seemed useful to me to make connections between what was done in the studio for the advancing dancing and the final performance. Many sub-questions came to mind such as: What do we do in the studio to improve the structure of our final dance (e.g. do we score off some of the piece)? How do we prepare ourselves to be able to make spontaneous structural choices (i.e. what activities do we conduct for skill development)? How do we need to organize ourselves to work collectively toward a common goal of performing dance improvisation? What changes, or improves, in our collective dance-making as we advance in time? Essentially I wanted to observe, participate in, and reflect on how a dance improvisation workgroup organized itself in service of the dance it was creating in terms of the dance's structure.

Shortly into the project I realized that in looking at the proceedings of the group, though I was focused on the dance structuring, it became important to notice the group structuring as well. Therefore I wanted to note how group structuring was important for dance structuring. It became apparent to me that the group process influenced the dance progress, and I was interested in noticing the relationship in more specific terms.

Methodology

To find answers for my questions, I formed a dance improvisation workgroup of six dancers.[2] Data was collected from the process of developing the piece *Everyday is a Fine Day* and then categorized and analyzed with the goal of explaining how the group proceeded and progressed their group organizational structure and the dance structure. For the first phase of my research project, I participated in, observed, videotaped and took notes on the process and progress of the group as we prepared *Everyday is a Fine Day.* Then I organized my findings into themes and came to some conclusions about how the group organized itself, ourselves, and the dance for which we were preparing. I was looking to note consistencies as well as inconsistencies in group process and dance structural progress.

It must be noted that the workgroup was run in aspiration of a democracy. That means that the dancers—though I held the position of rehearsal and production coordinator—tried to make all artistic, rehearsal content and production decisions together. We all led parts of the rehearsals and were encouraged to be equally responsible for the development of the group. This decision became and important attribute of the way the workgroup structured rehearsals and its dancing.

It is important to acknowledge that the musician and lighting designer contributed to the structuring of the dance and rehearsal process as well. The musician was especially influential in the dance and rehearsal structure as he participated in conversations about the work development and rehearsal process. His contributions were often treated along with those of the dancers. The lighting designer entered the group almost at the end of the process and consequently held less weight in the group process and performance outcome. However her

[2] After the fourth rehearsal, we lost one of the dancers. The bulk of the research was conducted with the remaining five.

contributions influenced the structures of the final performances and, whenever appropriate, her influence on rehearsal and show proceedings was treated.

Our work culminated in a three day performance run in which we performed four shows of the piece *Everyday is a Fine Day*. The performances were held in the *Theatre Passerelle 840*, June 14-16, 2007.

State of the question

It has been my experience that questions about structure in dance improvisation performance among dance makers and researchers often exist in the studio and/or classroom. As a result of the advances made among those who practice the art form, improvised dance performances are becoming more and more common and sophisticated. In Montreal alone, the weekends of Jan 27, Feb 2, and Feb 9, 2007—three in a row—saw three different improvised dance improvisation performances, *R.A.F.T. 70*, *Treize Lunes*, and *Chalk*. Each group chose to approach the preparation process in slightly different ways, but I can assume that they shared a concern for structure because the artists of each group made certain decisions about structure ahead of time by designing scores and left other decisions to be made on the spot. The groups shared some of their structural decisions in program notes and in after show conversations, but no academic research was conducted to follow the processes.

In Montréal, as the practice of dance improvisation is developing, researchers are showing an increasing interest in the processes involved in the performance/creative art form. At the Université du Québec à Montréal, this *mémoire* and Susi Weber's developing doctoral thesis are current examples of this interest. If dance improvisation continues to thrive in Montréal, I suspect local researchers will continue to address the form.

An example of how improvised dance structure is being addressed in the classroom is Andrew Harwood's *Design and Instantaneous Composition* workshop in which students are lead through scores and exercises that encourage attention to structure and design. For Harwood,

> Improvisation is not only seen as a device for research and experimentation, or merely used as a means of generating innovative movement vocabulary; rather it is viewed as a demanding form of instantaneous choreography or live composition in which dancers, attuned to an abundance of information, must make in-the-moment decisions as they fashion a dance piece presently in performance. (Ah Ha Productions website, retrieved Feb. 20, 2007)

Here again we see that there is a real interest in the art of the spontaneous structuring, or "instantaneous choreography." I see Harwood's statement as implying that it is beneficial for the artistic integrity of a dance improvisation that the dancers have a heightened sense of choreographic craft.

There have also been a few writings suggesting techniques and practices to enhance structuring in dance improvisation. A few books and articles have been written that provide examples of scores that improvisers can use to practice various skills and awareness techniques that would help improvisers prepare for structuring their performances (Nagrin, 1993; Halprin, 1995; Blom & Tarin Chaplin, 1982, 1988; Rubin, 1991). In addition the bi-annual journal *Contact Quarterly* dedicates a section in each issue to what they call *Essentials. Basic CI principles & Practices* where they publish articles that describe contact improvisation exercises. Though these examples validate improving structural capabilities in dance improvisers, by suggesting ways to do it, they do not explain how the skills will manifest on stage, or how acquiring the skills will improve an improvised dance.

I have identified only three writings that directly discuss improvisation in terms of structuring the emerging performance (De Spain, 1997; Montuori, 2003; Sgorbati, 2007). The most relevant one is the article, *The emergent improvisation*

project: Embodying complexity by Susan Sgorbati (2007). In the article improvisation is discussed in terms of the emerging organizing process involved in structuring the present. The article offers a thorough explanation of how the author has linked the creative work of dance improvisation to the emergent structuring processes evident in the natural world and in social structures.

Based on my preliminary research, when I chased information in various databases and library collections, the question of how a democratic workgroup proceeds and progresses in terms of structuring a final performed improvisation has only been answered in the partially satisfying ways previously mentioned. Also everything I found describing improvisation groups referred to groups that had artistic leaders, and not groups that were trying to work together on equal terms. That means my question is original. Essentially my research project is inherently original because it is a case study of a group that has never danced together before, seen through the eyes of me who has never conducted a project like this before. But it is also original in that it is likely that no one else has bothered to track, and then present in written form, the process and progress of any democratic dance improvisation workgroup in any terms.

Contribution of the study

Given that what has been written thus far addresses my research question only in part or not at all, it is my expectation that, in addition to enhancing my personal dance practice, my study will contribute to current dance improvisation theories. I doubt seriously that I am the only dance improviser who wonders how workgroups proceed and progress in terms of structuring so, perhaps by sharing my observations and interpretations, someone might understand his or her practice better through identification with me. Also I hope my study will lead me to insights about the process of improvised dance making and how creative forces are at work in a

democratic workgroup. Most importantly though I hope that by writing about the process and progress of this particular workgroup, I will demystify an aspect (the structuring aspect) of the work that is involved when an improvisation workgroup comes together to prepare themselves for an improvised performance.

CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I will present a mini-review of practices and literature that address (directly or indirectly) the notion of structuring in dance improvisation. Most of the examples will relate to improvisation in dance, but, as writing on dance improvisation is relatively limited, I will incorporate the ideas of other theorists who have addressed the processes of improvisation in general.

1.1 Spontaneity and structure

It is of utmost importance that, before proceeding, a mention is made about the opposing duality that many contemporary dance makers maintain. The supposedly inherent opposing duality in question is that of spontaneity versus structure.

1.1.1 Bringing spontaneity and structure together

In *The complexity of improvisation and the improvisation of complexity: Social science, art and creativity*, Alfonso Montuori (2003) observes that, for improvisational experiences to be successful, there is a need for rules, or acquired knowledge, as well as openness. He notices that jazz improvisation, for example, valorizes subjectivity, emotion, the aesthetic, but also openness and uncertainty. Jazz musicians assume that one can collaboratively create through the interaction of

constraints and possibilities rather than *either* order *or* disorder. It seems to me as though Montuori treats structure and spontaneity as two different flavors that can go nicely together, like oil and vinegar and when they come together they create a new flavor that contains the other two flavors.

This phenomena, of opposites coming together to create new experiences, seems to be the same formula, according to Montuori, for that which concerns the new science of complexity and the phenomenon of self-organization. He suggests that people traditionally think of pairs like order/disorder, risk/security, discipline/spontaneity, and individual/group as being disjunctive either/or dichotomies. However, if one introduces new ways of thinking—like Beech & Cairns' (2001) postdichotomous, Kegan's (1982) post-formal, or Morin's (1994) complex—that allow us to view the interdependent nature of these apparent oppositions, then one can view them as "opportunities for creativity and improvisation" (Montuori, p. 253).

In sum Montuori shows how creativity can be seen as an emergent property of the relationship between "order" and "disorder" or, as in jazz, "pre-existing structures" and "openness." Therefore, he concludes, complexity scholars (those who are interested in emerging creation and social science theory) would do well to study improvisation; "life is participation and participation is creation and improvisation, because life does not occur in a vacuum, it occurs always in a network of inter-retro-actions and of organization, in a constant play of order, disorder, and organization and ongoing learning" (p. 244).

I interpret one of Montuori's main arguments as being that structure and spontaneity can come together and can work together in creative ways. This explanation of creativity falls short in my view of the relationship between structure and spontaneity because it does not take into account the possibility that structure

and spontaneity can actually be the same thing, can emerge together as indistinguishable parts of some new creation.

1.1.2 Structure and spontaneity as one

According to Susan Leigh Foster (2002), the dualistic approach to structure and spontaneity was very common among the white post-modern choreographers and composers of the 60s and 70s. Foster reports that John Cage, for example, "judged improvisation as an exercise in self-indulgence" (p. 162). Some Judson Church choreographers would address this problem by scoring their performances. The scores gave the dancers rules to think about which could act as structural bases from which dance improvisers could explore imaginative possibilities. Trisha Brown (1978) asserted that having a score separates this kind of improvisation from what she called "therapy or catharsis or your happy hour" (quoted in Foster, 2002, p. 28).

Foster contrasts the post-modern dualistic approach to spontaneity and structure, which she considers to be a Eurocentric assumption, with African-American dancers and musicians of the 60s and 70s. She argues that in free jazz, for example, musicians were not encouraged to abandon structure, but rather to implement whatever structures seemed relevant in the moment. Foster explains how George Lewis (1998) saw this notion at the heart of the Afrocentric approach to music making which "sees spontaneity as inflected with both personal and cultural history and profoundly informed by form itself" (Foster, 2002, p. 164).

In the influential book, *The Intimate Act of Choreography*,[3] Blom and Tarin Chaplin (1993) assert that "forming is as basic to art as it is to life" (p. 83). The authors felt that in art one takes and uses natural patterns and forms (read structures) and condenses them. Improvising with an advanced structural attention can fuse

[3] I say that it is an influential book because I noticed that it was referenced in many books and articles that have been written since.

spontaneity and structure. This fusion possibility is reflected in the following quote taken from *The Intimate Act of Choreography*.

> Improvising and choreographing become one as the processes (creating movement and critically crafting and forming it) work together. As the movement is flowing out, it is being shaped and developed by intuition interlocked with skill into a finer organic aesthetic whole. (p. 7)

Evidence that dance improvisers create with the premise that spontaneity (improvisation) and structure (choreography) can coexist in process can also be found in the way some dance improvisers name their work. Andrew Harwood, for example, teaches improvisation workshops in which he refers to the work as "instantaneous design." Susan Sgorbati (2007) calls her work "emergent improvisation," with "emergent" meaning "the process by which some new form, ordering, or pattern develops or some new ability arises and moves toward the creation of another idea, which opens up or exposes the potential for something new" (p. 41). I've heard improvisation performance being referred to as "improvised choreography" or "live composition" or "dancing choreographies." It seems to me that many current dance improvisers are experiencing the in-the-moment act of improvisation as being a process that involves structured spontaneity, or spontaneous structure. Whatever you want to call it, the two supposed poles of order and disorder seem connected here.

1.2 The audience's curiosity about structure

I recently witnessed a question-and-answer session after a dance improvisation show that showed how spontaneous dancing being structured in the present can spark dance performance goers' curiosity about the relationship between planned and spontaneous structure. The dance performance in question was *Chalk*. It was presented in a contemporary dance theater in Montreal, "Tangente," as a "dance improvisation" with no information in the program to explain the preparation

process. There were four dancers, one musician, and a lighting technician all improvising. Here is my reenactment of the kind of conversation that happened after the show. It is not word-for-word but a loose description of what was said based on my notes.

> Audience member: How much of the structure was decided ahead of time?
>
> Dancer: Almost nothing. We kept a prop and decided to be sure to include a solo from each of the performers. Other than that, it was left open.
>
> Audience member: Did you decide the order of events?
>
> Dancer: No.
>
> Audience member: Did you keep any interesting movements?
>
> Dancer: No
>
> Audience member: How could you let go of interesting movements and not want to repeat them?
>
> Dancer: The more we can let go of interesting movements the better it all gets. We can let go and trust that something important will emerge.
>
> Audience member: The whole time I was watching the performance, I was trying to figure out what had been decided ahead of time and what was spontaneous.
>
> Dancer: If you didn't know it was an improvisation, would you still be asking yourself these questions?
>
> Audience member: I can't just push a button and stop asking myself these questions.

When I think about the interaction between improvisational creators and audience members, the dance improvisation event, *les Treizes Lunes*, presented by Danse-Cité, also comes to mind. For this performance Danse-Cité provided their audience members with detailed program notes explaining all of the "games"

(scores) with which the dancers and musicians were working. This is an example of another way to allow curious audience members to gain a bit of knowledge about the processes involved in preparing for dance improvisation performance.

1.3 Structuring skills are being taught

> Continuously evolving and continuously changing movement that relates to the other dancers and has a sense of form rather than a mess of arbitrarily changing moves is no slight achievement. It is a special and specific skill within the craft of performing improvisation. (Nagrin, 1993, p. 106)

Whether or not dance improvisers decide to plan some of the structure of the performance pieces before going into the performance venue, the fact remains that the piece will be improvised and this leaves much of the structural work to the moment. This fact raises questions about how dancers can prepare for the moment. If one examines the dance improvisation scene, one will find that, though there is little theory written about the processes involved, instantaneous structuring skills are in fact being taught in classes/workshops and suggestions are being made in books.

1.3.1 Classes / workshops

In classes and workshops across the United States and Canada, improvisers are teaching the form of performed dance improvisation. Various individuals, or groups of individuals, offer classes promising to help students enhance their abilities to form improvised dances. *The Big Picture: Ensemble Thinking and Contact Improvisation* taught by Nina Martin, Margaret Paek, Andrew Wass and Kelly Dalrymple; *Opening to the Unknown* taught by Chris Aikin and Andrew Harwood; and *Design and Instantaneous Composition* taught by Andrew Harwood are examples of such workshops. Also dance improvisation is being taught and practiced in numerous universities around the world. In my undergraduate program at Ohio University, for example, we practiced improvisation in our choreography

classes to help us generate movement. Susan Sgorbati teaches dance improvisation as a structured art form in itself at Bennington College in Vermont.

I recently attended one of the previously mentioned dance improvisation workshops, which provided an explicit example of how skills are being taught to improve dance improvisers' abilities to structure spontaneously. The two-week workshop, *Design and Instantaneous Composition* (Studio 303, Oct 9-20, 2006) was taught with the following objectives:

> Through spatial design, various forms of improvisation, chance procedures and games, we will practice instant inventiveness, refine our sensing skills and develop various compositional strategies, which in turn will become the framework for creating solo, duet and group material. (Studio 303 website, retrieved May 2, 2007)

One specific way Harwood helped students "refine [their] sensing skills" was by teaching the students to be sensitive to audience focus while they danced. Probably due to his many years of experience—Harwood is well-established in the North American and European dance improvisation scenes—he had come to a general structural rule which was as follows: At most times the piece can only contain three events (for the audience to look at) or less. He taught the rule as one which could be broken but which usually applied. He differentiated the events into "dominant," "sub-dominant" and "subordinate" focuses. The "dominant" focus was the main event on which the audience was focusing. Dancers taking part in this event could take the focus and run with it. The "sub-dominant" focus was an event that supported the "dominant" event. Perhaps the sub-dominant event related to the dominant event but was careful not to distract the audience from the main event. A "subordinate" event was one that sort of floated in the background and tried not to take the audience's eyes. It existed to create atmosphere only. With these rules in mind, the students of Harwood's workshop improvised with a heightened sense of awareness to where the audience (the other students in the workshop) was looking.

The way I understood it, the idea was that this kind of awareness could be useful to solidifying the whole piece because it helped the dancer avoid getting too absorbed in what she was doing and thinking the attention was on her when it was actually elsewhere. Without knowing where the audience attention was, one could not pay attention to the structural development as it happened and could not know if one's actions were distracting from or supporting the dance's emerging structure.

A similar activity is taught at the Second City Training Center in Chicago. Anne Libera (2004) explains the activity "giving and taking" in *The Second City Almanac of Improvisation*. In the activity students enter the space and practice, through mime or dialog, passing the audience focus around the group. The goal is to be able to clearly communicate to each other, who has the audience focus. This activity, as Harwood's, demands that the individuals be capable of working together with the other individuals in the group to negotiate the audience focus. For this students need to be able to stand tall when they have the focus and to back off when not, to take the focus when it is given to them, and to give it away when they are done with it. By teaching skills, like how to pay attention to audience focus, to improvisation students, teachers pass on experiential knowledge about how to make more structurally sound improvisation.

In my research on improvisation teaching in classrooms I came across a published research study into dance improvisation teaching practices. It was made by Madeleine Lord (2001). Lord and her research assistants observed two dance instructors who were teaching beginner dance improvisation to high school students. The researchers reason that the main objectives of the teachers were to encourage the students to learn to: "1) generate movement spontaneously; 2) concentrate; 3) be physically alert; 4) take responsibility for decision making; 5) relate to one another while moving; 6) observe movement" (p. 19). The article explains how the teachers proceeded in facilitating learning these objectives. Although it cannot be assumed

that the goal was to prepare the students for dance improvisation performance, I speculate, due to the objectives, that the teachers had specific skills in mind that would lead to better dance-making (or structuring to use my term) ability.

1.3.2 How-to books

There have been a few books written to explain activities that dance improvisers can use to prepare themselves in various ways for performed improvisation. Nagrin's *Dance and the Specific Image: Improvisation* (1993), Blom and Tarin Chaplin's *The Intimate Act of Choreography* (1982) and *The Moment of Movement: Dance Improvisation* (1988) and Rubin's (1991) *Creative Dance Keys* are examples of such books.

In *Dance and the Specific Image: Improvisation*, Nagrin gives a detailed account of the progression of his dance improvisation performance group from 1969 to 1974 and his improvisation teaching practice, which started in 1969. In auto-biographical form, Nagrin explains 59 scores, "exercises," that he taught to his performance group and to various dancer workshop students. Throughout the book Nagrin provides some, though not much, theoretical reasoning for teaching the chosen exercises. I find the book to be an excellent example of how a dance improvisation workgroup can proceed and progress the craft of dance improvisation. It is also useful for finding materials and activity ideas that might respond to the particular needs of a group as they are working together to prepare for performance.

The Intimate Act of Choreography, by Blom and Tarin Chaplin, is a how-to book for teachers who want to use improvisation in their choreography classes. The approach is to provide activities, "situations," in which learning results from experience, where students can acquire tacit knowledge about form in dance making that they can then use in their choreographing. They assert "this is the way life teaches" (p. 5). The book contains a series of exercises that encourage students to

explore phrasing, space, time, energy and form as they move spontaneously. Unlike Nagrin's book the activities presented in *The Intimate Act of Choreography* are always accompanied with explanations about the goals or purposes of each activity.

The Moment of Movement, written by Blom and Tarin Chaplin, a few years later, is also a how-to book, but it is for teachers, or leaders, and dancers of dance improvisation specifically. It too provides exercises with theoretical basis but the goal is to improve improvisational skills, not just so that the students can take the knowledge to their choreographing practice, but for dance improvisation on its own. In *The Moment of Movement*, there are also sections that discuss how leaders can create a conductive environment for their groups and how dancers, of beginner to intermediate level, can address certain problems.

Rubin's *Creative Dance Keys* comes in the clever marketing form of 20 "experience" cards shaped as keys, and five "guide" cards, strung together by a metal clasp. Teachers can use the experience cards as instruction in class when teaching dance improvisation creation. Each exercise key lists the skills being taught right on the card. The "conversations" key (#12) for example presents a duet score that aims to improve "non-verbal communication/body language." By declaring the desired skills for each exercise, Rubin's keys present a clear example of how teachers of dance improvisation can encourage improvement in their students' abilities to make spontaneous dances.

1.4 Groups investigating the form

I suspect the bulk of discourse on structural development in improvisational dance rehearsal process remains in the studio and among friends and collaborators of dance improvisers. In my experience, though improvised dance performances pop up here and there, artists rarely talk about the rehearsal processes involved that lead to improvised performances. Sometimes audience members have the chance to ask

questions during question-and-answer sessions (as with the example discussed earlier), or sometimes the dancers will provide program notes describing the rehearsal process a bit, but often the spectators are left wondering.

Luckily there exists another way to learn about how dance improvisation performers are preparing themselves for performance. Explicitly some dance improvisers have told their tales, about their experiences working in groups or solos and preparing themselves for improvised dance performance, in writing. Many of the tales appear in article form in *Contact Quarterly*, the journal published twice a year, which is dedicated to publishing writing on contact improvisation and dance improvisation. Among these articles are scientific-style research reports, first hand journal-like entries, interviews by Nancy Stark Smith with prominent improvisers, and other styles of articles. The journal is particularly influential on the dance improvisation scene as there have been few longer publications that describe dance improvisation. Since there have been few long studies or descriptions on how to prepare for the moment of dance improvisation, it is appropriate that *Contact Quarterly* has a very accepting, undefined style. One can find many thought provoking tidbits (Forti, 2003; Paxton, 2003; Zapora, 2003; etc.) on the experience and practice of spontaneous dance structuring. Some of the articles discussed in this *mémoire* (most significantly Sgorbati's article discussed in section 1.4.2) were found in *Contact Quarterly*.

Though few some longer studies, or theories about how improvisation groups can proceed, have been published and circulated among dance improvisation researchers.[4] They focus, for example, on kinesthetic discovery (Halprin, 1995); history (Novak, 1990); movement therapy (Adler, 2002); and skill development (*refer to section 1.3.2*). I will focus on one book and one article where improvisers

[4] Again the statement that the books about to be discussed have been circulated among the dance improvisation scene is based on my observation that many of the articles and newer books I found referenced the same books as being influential and valid.

clearly discuss the processes of particular groups theorizing about and preparing for the spontaneous moment of dance structuring. The book is Susan Liegh's *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (2002) and the article is Susan Sgorbati's *Emergent Improvisation Ensemble* (2007).

1.4.1 The Judson Church Theater

Before speaking about Richard Bull's work it is important to discuss briefly the general view of improvisation at his time. He came about in New England around the same time as the Judson Church Theater (which existed in the late 60s and 70s). Bull's first evening length improvisation was in 1968 and he continued to lead improvisation groups through the 1990s (Foster, 2002). Susan Leigh Foster reports that most of the Judson Church Theater choreographers of that time "pursued indeterminate, tasklike, and random approaches to spontaneous decision-making" (p. 48). Rainer, Brown, and Summers are examples from this group who "cultivated a look of randomness" as Foster put it (p. 53). Foster speculates that these choreographers were exploring indeterminacy in order to avoid the stereotypic conception of improvisation. She felt that most of the choreographers of Judson Church, along with other Eurocentric choreographers of the time saw the "deep immersion in the chaotic evanescence of physicality" that could be brought about in improvisation as insignificant (p. 30). They preferred to disengage movement from feelings or desire so it could be apprehended as physical fact.

1.4.2 Richard Bull

I have chosen to focus on the work of Richard Bull, as opposed to other early dance improvisers, such as Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, etc., specifically because his ideas support my own in terms of structuring dance improvisation. It would not be accurate to suggest that he is the most influential figure in dance improvisation as we know it. His story, which is explained most

thoroughly in Susan Leigh Foster's (2002) *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*, is of a man and his improvisation students and performance groups investigating and advancing spontaneous structure of the dance improvisation form.

His first evening length improvisation, *War Games,* was tightly scored, as were many of Bull's "choreographies," as he called them, but within the score Bull—who was greatly influenced by jazz music as he was a jazz musician himself—began to see much potential for spontaneous structure. He soon saw a need for his dancers to develop spontaneous structuring skill. Inspired by Viola Spolin, the influential teacher of improvisational theater at Second City, Bull created skill building exercises for his dancers designed to "expand perceptual awareness and enhance performers' responsiveness to various situations" (p. 56). Bull spent about half of each of his rehearsals with his various performance groups over the years practicing various activities that would enhance the dancers' improvisational awareness abilities. He went so far as to suggest that dancers needed to "track and evaluate choreographic decisions while they were dancing" (p. 99). Foster explains how Bull encouraged the dancers in his performance groups to hone their acquired skills toward more solid structure.

> As dancers increased their competence in the more basic skills of organizing space and time, they could turn their attention to these kinds of decisions and expect that other dancers would interpret their decisions in relation to the piece as a whole. (p. 154)

By 1983 Bull—having spent much time working with his dancers to advance their abilities to spontaneously organize space, vary movement and remember—saw such powerful structuring ability in his dancers that he developed the completely open-ended *Interactions*. The score had no predetermined sections, movement sequences, or planned sense of narrative. The piece built on the opening moves of the dancers, whoever offered them up and whatever they were. Dancers were

encouraged to develop "whatever structures seemed relevant at the time" (p. 162). The various groups lead by Richard Bull each developed their own identities and practiced in slightly different ways, but the unifying fact remains that they were all investigating in-the-moment structuring in dance improvisation.

1.4.3 The emergent improvisation project

Another group that has specifically investigated spontaneous structure in dance improvisation—and then has been written about—is the Bennington College *Emergent Improvisation Ensemble* directed by Susan Sgorbati. Sgorbati (2007) wrote about the group's work in *The emergent improvisation project: Embodying complexity*. It is a group of college students who help Sgorbati conduct research into "the specific relationship between dance/music improvisation and the science of complex systems" (p. 41). She considers the type of improvisation that her group does to be "the ordering or structuring of forms in the present moment...as evidenced in many natural living systems" (p. 41). Here we can see an echo of Montuori (2003), discussed earlier, who saw the connection between jazz improvisation and the science of complexity and Blom and Tarin Chaplin (1982), also discussed earlier, who asserted that "forming is as basic to art as it is to life" (p. 5).

Sgorbati explains three key concepts of Emergent Improvisation that are linked to the science of complex systems. These are *self-organization*, *emergence* and *complexity*. As dance and music improvisers work together to compose ("order, structure, organize") the pieces themselves, since there is not a director, the order can be said to have come from within the system; it is a self-organization. Emergence is the process by which a new form or ability develops and moves toward another idea, which is different from and more than the sum of its parts. Complexity is evidenced when there is a structuring on the edge of chaos where there is both order and openness that can lead to emergence.

Sgorbati describes her rehearsal process as one that practices the dancers' *solo practice*, *duet practice*, and *ensemble practice*. In the dancers' solo practice they develop embodiment (through Body/Mind Centering, physical therapy, and Authentic movement); physical vocabulary (by discovering and enhancing one's vocabulary through improvisation); spatial environmental awareness (when one transfers focus and awareness into the external world and space); and focus on the particular (where they "structure" their gestures, rhythms, spatial configurations to define their composition selection process). The duet practice is that in which the group members in pairs (2 dancers, 2 musicians, or a musician and a dancer) investigate rhythmic relationships, parallels, synergies, narratives, etc. Finally the group applies ensemble practice when they "spontaneously create structures" together.

It follows that Sgorbati's concept of successful improvisers requires that each individual has a unique and copious vocabulary, practiced sense of attention, structural tracking and the ability to build on material. In addition her dancers and musicians should be able to signal to each other to "support global, collective, self-organizing behavior" (p. 46). It is a process of "selecting and pruning."

Sgorbati concludes her article by lingering on the question of whether there is a connection between complexity and aesthetic beauty. She suspects that through the rigor of improvisational practice and form development, "structural coherence" might emerge that resonates on an aesthetic level.

1.5 Processes of the solo improviser

We have seen a few examples that showed there is an interest in improvisational structuring (referring to preplanned scores as well as spontaneous skill development) and that some teachers and improvisers recognize a need to explore the activities that can advance the dancers' structuring capabilities in groups.

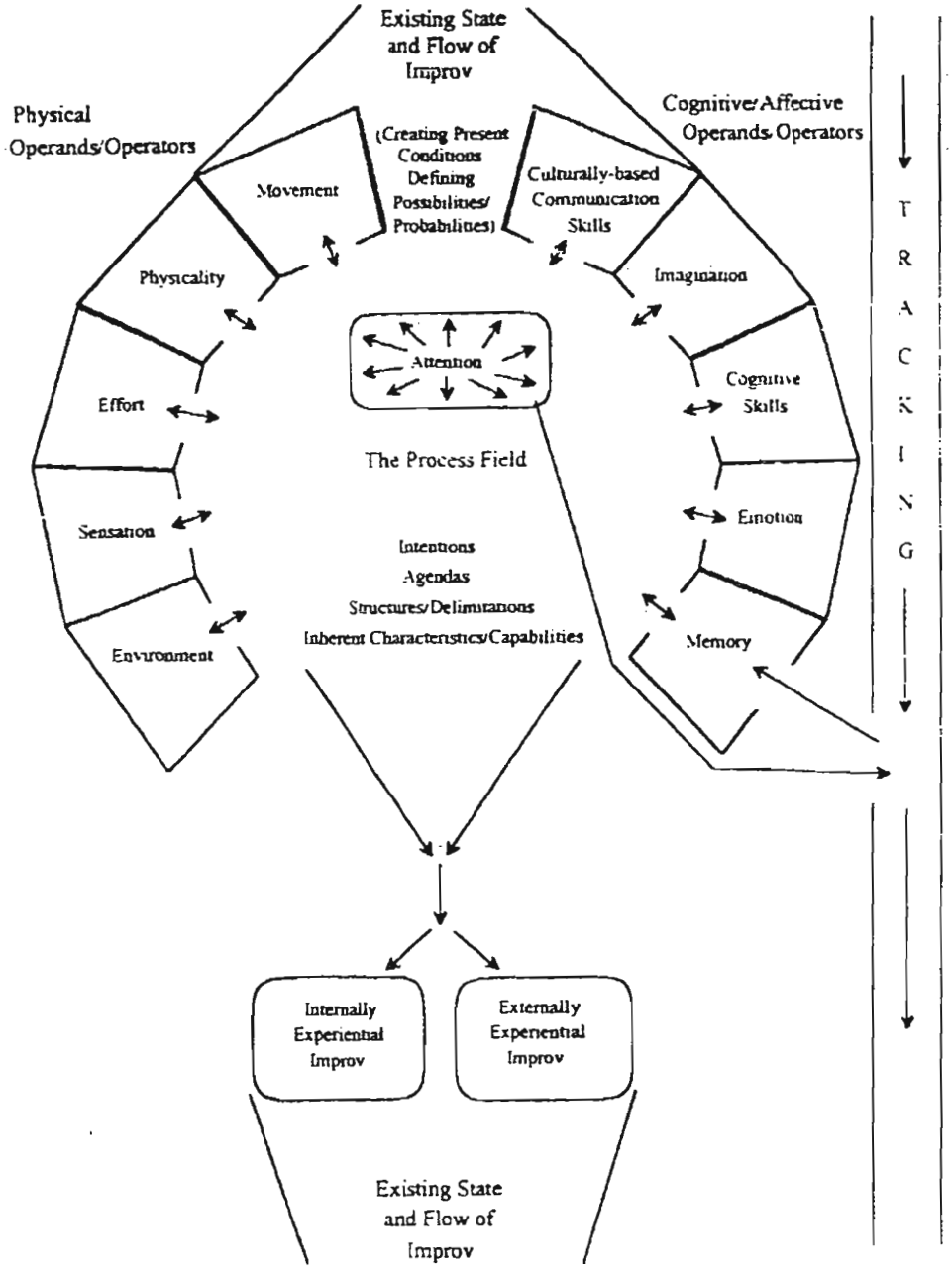
Though this *mémoire* addresses the process and change of improvised dance structuring as it is experienced in a group, it is important to include a brief description of Kent De Spain's research on the processes involved in solo dance improvisation. I speculate that many of De Spain's findings on the process of the individual dance improviser can be transferred to the individual who is dancing as part of a group.

For Kent De Spain's doctoral dissertation project, *Solo Movement Improvisation: Constructing Understanding through Lived Somatic Experience* (1997), he conducted a study into the processes involved in solo dance improvisation. He conducted interviews with prominent dance improvisers and also carried out an investigation that asked improvisers, including himself, to report their experiences periodically while they moved. While they moved he played a mostly blank cassette that included his pre-recorded voice asking from time to time, "record now." Then the dancer would say what he/she was experiencing. The dancer's comments would then be recorded onto another cassette tape.

From his data De Spain theorized that the process in "the existing state of flow" of the improvisation was one of attention relating to various physical and cognitive operators. A dancer's attention might be directed at just one or at multiple operators, which were identified as follows: environment, sensation, effort, physicality, movement, culturally-based communication skills, imagination, cognitive skills, emotion and memory. "As I am reacting to and processing one set of information, I am also seeking and retrieving, and perhaps reflecting on past information and planning for the future" (pp. 270-271). The process of giving attention to these operators while dancing the improvisation transports the dance into the creative act of "synchronic complexity" (p. 270). De Spain expressed the improvisation process in a graphic model which is here labeled Figure 1. The model is meant to represent a "frozen slice of space/time that is actually continuous" (p.

275). It can be read from top to bottom or in a roundabout way, because it is all happening at once.

Figure 1: Kent De Spain's diagram of the theoretical existing state and flow of improvisation



Not only can dancers pay attention to the various operators at any given moment, but they can "track" the progress of the dance as it is happening. I feel that the concept of the "tracking feedback loop" is perhaps the most pertinent concept to a study of structuring dance improvisation. De Spain explains how the tracking feedback loop is the process of active memory that feeds the process field. Improvisers remember, either consciously or unconsciously, what has occurred so far during the improvisation. The contents of this memory can influence and interact with what is happening presently. Also what we notice is happening now can be remembered for later use. It seems to me that a dance improviser's ability to "track" can greatly affect his/her ability to structure the piece cohesively.

In a later article, *The Cutting Edge of Awareness*, De Spain (2003) summarizes the two types of memory that are "crucial to improvising." These are *kinesthetic memory*, the "seemingly unconscious ability of the body/mind to remember and reproduce specific movements and/or qualities, complex coordinations, or habitual movement responses," and *associational memory*, which concerns "images, facts, and movement qualities that are stored in memory until triggered by existing conditions during an improvisation"(p. 32). *Kinesthetic memory* can be developed and enhanced through practicing the technique of improvisation. Nothing but practice can support this type of memory which is so important to improvisation. According to De Spain developing both kinds of memory will give the dance improviser a richer source of relationalities to notice and to form.

1.6 Wrapping-up this chapter

This chapter was intended to offer some literature and practices that are relevant to my study. Through researching and writing this chapter, I have clarified my understanding of dance improvisation as an act in which a dancer structures a dance (pieces the elements of dance together into a whole) spontaneously. Also I

have presented some works that address the question of how to prepare a group for the momentaneous act of improvising movement. None of the examples I gave in my review of literature and practice represented research projects addressing preparation and presentation of spontaneous dance structures in the same way as I will be doing in this project. At the same time, the examples I gave do give evidence that I am not alone in my desire to understand the non-random processes involved in improvised dance.

As I progressed from my review of literature, through my methodology and into my findings, it became clear to me that certain concepts presented in this review of literature supported some of my own findings. In fact I believe that the members of my dance improvisation workgroup, without knowing it, benefited from the work of people like Richard Bull. Through experience Bull discovered that dancers were in fact capable of engaging spontaneously in "whatever structures seemed relevant at the time" (Foster, 2002, p. 162) and that dancers could increase their competence for spontaneous structurig. These two ideas, shared and developed by Blom and Tarin Chaplin and Harwood among others as explained earlier in this chapter, were assumed by the workgroup members of this research study. This is reflected in the fact that we formed our rehearsals around improvisational skill building exercises and ended up performing a piece whose structure was left almost completely to the moment of performance. Another concept that was addressed in this chapter and emerged in my own findings was the importance of practicing improvisational skills in solo, duet and group form. Just as Susan Sgorbati did with her dance improvisation ensemble (see section 1.4.3), the workgroup of this study practiced spontaneous dancing in solo, duet and group form. We practiced our skills in these ways with the hopes of increasing our abilities to organize emerging dance material, a goal that evidenced our tendency to value structure in our improvised work.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

My desire to study structure in a dance improvisation workgroup was vague at first. I knew that I wanted to understand better how improvising dance involves making a dance, or crafting the pieces together. I felt that there was a process of choice making involved in the rehearsal buildup and in the performed moment of movement. I knew from experience that spontaneous choices did not necessarily lead to structurally weak dances. I had a felt understanding of how to structure dance improvisation, and I wanted to transfer this understanding—in terms specific to the case in question—into words. It is like what Natalie Bachand calls *nommer la pratique*. For Bachand (2004) it is necessary to articulate our practical experiences because "words, when they are good, are at the base of all discourse"[5] (p. 43). Also words can be "theoretical tools of reflection and knowledge."[6] Words can help us better understand what we are practicing and hopefully nourish the practice. Therefore I wanted to put my experience of making improvised dance, in a group context, into words.

I thought that the best way to do this would be through a case study of a dance improvisation group in which I would participate. I chose to limit my study to

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[5] Informal translation by author from "*les mots, en l'occurrence les bons, sont à la base de tout discours.*"

[6] Informal translation by author from "*outils théoriques de réflexion et de savoir.*"

just one workgroup because I wanted to conduct a holistic study into the intricacies of this group. I felt that this would lead me to a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the group. I chose the name "case study" rather than "field study" because, as Richard Stake (2005) suggested, "the name 'case study' draws attention to the question of what specially can be learned about the single case" (Stake, 2005, p. 443). It was never my intention to generalize my findings beyond the workgroup in question.

2.1 Coming together

My desire to study the processes involved in a dance improvisation group, through a case study, led me to the most logical next step—forming a dance improvisation workgroup. Full of excitement about my potential to advance as an improviser and full of curiosity about how an improvisation workgroup could prepare itself for performance, I set out to find some participants. I was looking for people who were at least a little experienced in dance improvisation and who would work well in a teamwork atmosphere. Almost all of the people who were asked to join my group were friends of mine who I trusted would be dedicated to the process should they agree to participate. Assuming that not everyone would be able to commit to the project, I asked eight people to join the group. I explained to each person that I was forming a dance improvisation workgroup that would work together democratically and would perform sometime in June 2007. Six dancers said yes and we began our rehearsal process on January 14th, 2007. Of the six dancers, one left the project after the fourth rehearsal. I will explain her situation further in the findings section of this thesis.

The five remaining dancers, Speranza, Andréa, Rémi, Alex and I, came from slightly different dance backgrounds. Andréa and I had backgrounds mainly in modern dance and Contact Improvisation; Speranza was from a ballet, modern and

traditional Greek dance past; Alex had studied ballet, modern, social dancing and Contact Improvisation; and Rémi was from an Authentic Movement, mime and theatrical movement improvisation past. None of the dancers could be labeled as professional dancers because none of us earned the majority, if any, of our incomes through dance performance. We were three women and two men between the ages of 27 and 40. The woman who left the group (Sarah) was the only member from outside of North America; she was from Europe and was 19 years old. We were all of European decent.

It is worth mentioning as well that, though I knew Speranza, Andréa, Rémi and Alex before starting the process, only two of them knew each other. Sarah, the dancer who left the group, was not particularly familiar with anyone in the group, not even me. This became important in the design of the rehearsal activities because we needed to become familiar with each other and to become acquainted with each other's dance styles and tendencies. Also Sarah told me later that she felt the wide age range of the group made it harder for the individuals involved to understand each other.

After about a month of rehearsal we acquired a sixth member of the group. This was Matt, the musician. Though he attended only about half of the rehearsals, he was very much an equal participant in the process and performance of this study. In fact his presence often affected more than a sixth of the influence on the group direction and dance development. I will explain this further in the next chapter.

All of the participants understood and agreed that their real names would be used in this thesis. This was unavoidable because we conducted a public performance. The participants also knew that I might repeat anything that happened or was said during the entirety of the project. As I was writing the thesis, when I thought that my presentation might be disagreeable to any of the participants, I

double checked with them to be sure that they agreed with my interpretation of the events.

2.2 Democratic choice

I had the idea—and after a few rehearsals checked to be sure the other participants still agreed—to conduct the whole process in a democratic way. That is to say, I suggested to the group, before we even began, that we all participate actively in directing the group. We decided as a group how to organize rehearsals, how many to have, the rehearsal activities and exercises, and to what extent we would score the final piece, among other things. The idea was to do everything, to make all decisions, together whenever possible. Even when one of us took over an activity or another, there would be a sense that we were doing the work for ourselves and for the group, not as a favor for the leader, or because the leader said so, because theoretically there was no leader. Perhaps our understanding of what "democratic" meant was vague at first, but two things were clear about our definition of democracy: There would be no leader and each dancer would be concerned with all aspects of the process.

I knew that there would be advantages and disadvantages to working in a leaderless democratic way. One advantage would be that, as I understood it, this style of working parallels the nature of the group improvisation form. I assumed that our group dancing would be conducted in a way where each dancer was respected as an equal contributor to the dance—where the act of improvising a dance would be a democratic act without a leader. No one would tell anyone else what to do in any given dance moment. Therefore we would be collectively finding structure in our rehearsal process at the same time as we were advancing the structural integrity of our collective dancing. Having the two tasks, group process and group dancing, both in democratic improvisational form suggested to me a relationship between the two

in which discoveries about group process would nourish the dance process and vice-versa.

Another advantage would be that each member would bring his/her experience to the decisions of the group so that we would have a bigger, richer, group background of experience feeding the group development. We could all learn from each other. Also distributing responsibility to everyone in the group would give each individual a sense of ownership in the group advancement so that when we encountered any problems, we would be more likely to speak out. These democratic group aspirations were of course ideal, but just aiming for them promised the group, in my opinion, a rich atmosphere of collective creation and learning.

Imagining the potential disadvantages of collective creating in a leaderless group was a little scary. First it was not the typical way to work in the modern dance creation process. That is usually, from what I had seen or heard about, when a dance was created or an improvisation group was formed, there was a leader. I assumed that it was unlikely that any of the members of our workgroup had had much experience working without a leader to create collectively. (It turned out that Rémi actually did have extensive experience working collectively in groups because he had done an MFA in performance at Naropa University where collective group process and creation was encouraged and required.) I thought, without having had extensive experience creating collectively, the group members (myself included) would inevitably encounter moments of unforeseen road blocks. I felt like I was treading in unfamiliar territory. I thought that it would be difficult for us to establish our roles in this new way of working.

Not only is working collaboratively without clear roles and hierarchy rare in modern dance creation processes, working as a team in this way is not encouraged in Western society in general. Granted people talk about teamwork a lot, but it is often

suggested only within hierarchical structures, as in the business world, where it can only be done when it does not hinder efficiency. In my experience of this type of "teamwork," there is usually a leader, a manager for example, who distributes the work so that the team members are not actually working much together.

Another situation where one might work as a "team" in Western society is in school team projects. Here one often finds the objectives of the assignments are already defined by the teacher and the students hurry to divide the work load to avoid negotiating decisions together to save time. I remember school group presentation projects when student group members met briefly to distribute work. By distributing the work each student would be responsible for a defined part of the project. In these cases each person spent as little time as possible on the project because he/she did not have to concern him/herself with all of the parts. I am not suggesting that this way of working is not democratic, but it does not fit my definition of a democratic group where all members are concerned with all parts of a project.

I suppose it is not often that one finds oneself in a situation where one is working in a group and trying to collaborate on all of the decision-making of the group because this is not the most time efficient way to get things done. Concerning the workgroup of this study, without a leader, and with a group of dancers who did not know each other well, I thought everyone might be hesitant to make suggestions at first. Having no basic understanding of each other's personalities, we could not predict the group's reaction to a negative comment for example. We would need time to gain trust in each other. In addition we would need time to become familiar with each other's dance styles and the group tendencies before we could know what the group needed in our rehearsals and in our dancing.

To be honest though, we could not match our idea of democracy anyway because I had more to gain by the success of the group than the others. I needed this

project to go relatively smoothly for the benefit of my thesis project. Also I am the one who started the project, so no matter what I said there was an unconscious understanding that I would be coordinating the project. Naturally I would pour more of my time and effort into the project than the others. In fact I was the only member of the group who did not miss any rehearsals so we could never say that each member was equally concerned with each aspect of the work.

Though the goal of a pure "democracy"—a process in which there was no leader and all members were concerned with all parts of the process—was unattainable before we even began, in the beginning of the process we agreed to try our best to emulate a democracy as much as possible. The question was not fixed and we found ourselves revisiting our decision and redefining our terms from time to time during the process. I will discuss how the "democratic" question played out in actuality in the next chapter.

2.3 Data gathering

Being that my participation in the democratic workgroup was tightly connected to the goal of addressing my research question about process and performance in terms of structuring dance improvisation, I knew that I would need to collect research data. Data was taken from the collective creation and four performances of the dance improvisation piece *Everyday is a Fine Day*, which were presented in the *Theatre Passerelle 840* on June 14-15 (8:00 pm) and June 16 (6:00 pm and 8:00 pm). The types of data that I collected can be broken down into four categories: Participation, observation, videotaping and an interview.

2.3.1 Participation

Being part of the group myself, I participated in all the activities. I was a dancer in the group; I was always part of the conversations; and I contributed to the group dancing with my presence, dancing style and choices.

There were many advantages to active participation in this case study data gathering. The interactive nature of this type of data gathering provided a rich source of experiential knowledge. "The subject is a colossal resource"[7] to borrow the words of one of my thesis directors (Fortin, 2006, p.106). I tried to remain fully engaged in the process as an individual whose personal goals contributed to those of the group. Explicitly I, along with the other members of the group, wanted to advance the group improvisation as much as possible, and, though I was collecting experiential data for my research project, I tried as much as possible to respect the other group members as equal contributors to the group process. This led me to have a first-hand experience of the group process and progress. Another advantage was that, as I was conducting a research project on the group, I was spending extra time and energy on the project outside of the rehearsals. This meant that I often brought information I had read about (for my review of literature) or observed (from watching the videotapes, for example) to the group. I could give my extra work to the group to enhance the collective knowledge of the group. So the *Everyday is a Fine Day* project was nourishing my research project and visa versa.

2.3.2 Observation

Although I participated with complete dedication to the group as an integral member, the fact remains that I upheld a sort of ulterior motive of research "observation." At times, not when I was dancing, but when we were between dances

[7] Informal translation by author from "le sujet est d'une ampleur colossale".

discussing our work, I observed the group (as an entity in itself and as a collection of individuals) through my researcher lens in search of answers to my research question. I noted my observations whenever possible in a journal that will be discussed in further detail in the following pages.

As mentioned earlier the combination of participation and researcher observation clearly had an effect on the proceedings of the group. It was not simply an outside view on the proceedings of a group in which I participated. In fact my research question helped to form the process of the group. Sometimes I even directed our conversations toward my question. I asked the group members from time to time, for example, how they felt we were changing, which activities were helping us and how, and how did they view the process of structuring, or "dance-making" in case the word "structuring" did not sit well with them.

Though my research question was ever present in the way I viewed the group proceed, I decided from the beginning that my dedication was first to the group creation process and second to my research project. This priority led me to consider the interest of the group first whenever I let my ulterior motive guide my group contributions. For example I thought asking the group to discuss our change and activities would be beneficial to our creation process. If I had not, I would not have taken valuable rehearsal time to discuss the matter.

2.3.3 Videotaping

Though I could note down my quick observations and experiences during the rehearsal, I could not press pause in the rehearsals or during the performances to record observations and momentary experiences in depth. This was especially true concerning the momentary element of spontaneous dance structuring. I wrote what I remembered, but it was clearly not enough. To aid my memory and to gain an outside view of the dance structuring I videotaped the dancing parts of most

rehearsals and half of the performances. Due to various problems concerning the borrowed video cameras, I was able to capture onto videotape only 23 of the 27 rehearsals and 2 of the 4 performances. In the end this was not a problem because the disadvantage of having likely missed relevant data was compensated by the fact that I could spend more time on the smaller amount of footage. Spending more time on fewer video reactions allowed me the chance to delve deeper into the video contents and into my experiences. I watched the tapes within the week that followed the rehearsals to allow my impressions to affect the group process and to keep an eye on the change of the dance. I did not watch the videos of the shows until after the performance week was finished because I was too involved in the performance process to maintain my researcher viewpoint.

I also supplemented some of the discussion notes by videotaping a number of the group conversations. This helped me add detail to the field notes and to clarify certain memory deficiencies.

2.3.4 An interview

After one of the dancers, Sarah, left the project I decided to conduct an interview with her. The intention was to see if she might provide information about the group process that only she had experienced, possibly critical information, since she chose to leave the group. Also, since she had been with us in the beginning of the process and had just come to view our mid-process showing, the workgroup thought she might be able to comment on how she saw the dancing change from the beginning of the process up to that point. The interview was conducted with prepared questions (see appendix A) and left open for free conversation. I took notes while we talked and tried to give her a lot of time to reflect. We talked to each other in French and English, but I recorded my notes in English. After we were done, I asked Sarah to review my notes to verify that I had understood her correctly and to

give her the chance to clarify and/or elaborate on her statements. All of my interview notes can be found in appendix B.

2.3.5 A post-mortem meeting

When the shows were over, the group found itself in need of a gathering to discuss our experiences of the project and to give a sense of closure to the process. Rémi suggested that we meet for a post-mortem meeting to gather our thoughts. The meeting was held with only the five dancers present. Each dancer was asked by Rémi to prepare him or herself to talk about his or her experience. I took notes at this meeting that contributed to my body of research data about the workgroup's process.

2.4 Data recording: The journal

As often as possible, my participative experiences, observations, video responses and the interview notes were recorded in a journal. The journal provided the greatest source of concrete data to be later reviewed and analyzed. I used it to record the happenings of the group and to express my changing understanding of the group's progress and change. Also I wrote about my personal experience of the act of dance structuring and group process. For each rehearsal I divided the journal into sectional types as follows: plan and before thoughts, during, description, video reaction, feeling and analysis and outside activities. An excerpt of the field notes from rehearsal # 13, which presents an example of each section type, can be found in appendix C.

In the "plan and before thoughts" section I wrote down the rehearsal plan. Sometimes it was decided at the end of the previous rehearsal, sometimes decided during outside meetings, sometimes tentatively projected by me alone or with just

one or two other members. Here I also included my expectations, worries and hopes about the oncoming rehearsals and performances.

The "during and description" section contained field notes taken during the rehearsal. I jotted down comments, proceedings, thoughts, technical information and practical information. I also included feedback from invited guests here. Later I filled out the notes in this section with clarification and details. Sometimes I relied on the videotape to help me include as many details as I could about the activities and conversations that occurred during the rehearsals.

To supplement my memory about the act of dancing, which I noted sporadically in the "during and description" section, I had the "video reaction" section. In the video reaction part of my journal I added more detailed descriptive notes about the actual dancing. Some weeks I described certain dance runs in terms of basic structure (i.e. *Andréa begins a slow solo. Alex joins her and brings a sad quality, it becomes a duet about flying ...*). Some weeks I recorded perceived tendencies (i.e. *Speranza sticks to solo movement a lot...).* I responded to my videotapes for 22 of the 27 rehearsals and 2 of the 4 show performances.

Perhaps this is a good place to remind the reader that my research question is concerned with how *I perceive* the group proceed and change, so if I suggest that the duet is about flying or that Speranza prefers solo movement, I am not warping the data. I have meant to make it clear from the beginning that there would be a strong element of subjectivity in my collection and presentation of data.

The "video reaction" section of my journal recording also served as a place for me to investigate my own experience of dance structuring. I used the Stimulated Recall technique to help me remember what I was thinking or feeling in the moment of the dance making. Stimulated Recall is an introspective data gathering method that can be used to help people remember thoughts they had while performing a task.

According to Susan Gass and Alison Mackey (2000), the assumption is that "some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself" (p. 17). The method was a powerful tool for me that led to insights about how I made structural choices while improvising. By practicing my memory in this way, I was able to get closer to the momentary act, while maintaining an outside conscious eye. The Stimulated Recall method helped me catch, and then transfer into written words, some of those fleeting moments where the practical knowledge (that I hold so close to my heart) was being practiced in the moment.

I used the title "feelings and analysis" to refer to the area in my journal where I expressed my observations, concerns, and hypotheses about the group rehearsal process and performances. This section was also used as a space for me to write about my own experience and life connections to dance structuring. I treated this section like a diary and included anything that I thought might be relevant to my improvising. The content held anything from current dreams to notes about my personal relationships with the other group members to notes about my changing research question to philosophical notes about dance structure as it related to social structure.

The journal sections mentioned thus far were included in response to almost every rehearsal and performance. A sixth type of section was added sporadically that I called "outside activities." In this section I took notes on things that were discussed outside of the rehearsals. Since the group members and I were friends, we often spent time together in various social activities, sometimes in small groups, sometimes one on one, at parties, at dance shows, on lunch dates, etc. A couple of times the entire workgroup got together to go see other dance improvisation performances and discussed them over tea. During these tea discussions, we discussed the workgroup specifically and planned for the next rehearsals. Rémi and

I were even working together on another dance improvisation project, for which we rehearsed and performed an improvised duet. Whenever the workgroup, or dance improvisation in general, was discussed amongst two or more of us, I tried to note down the discussions as soon as I could. The notes from the interview with Sarah were recorded in this section as well.

Also, when gathering data from time spent with the other workgroup members outside of rehearsal, I came upon unexpected but pertinent information that would address my research question. For example, at one point, over coffee, Rémi and I engaged in a conversation about what is the essence of the word structure. He explained that for him it was like "a container that held the piece together." This statement helped me define my own understanding of the term so I wrote it in my journal.

2.5 Theme recognition

In attempt to organize my findings into categories that would pinpoint the essence of this group process and performance in terms of structuring, I followed the qualitative research practice of *theme analysis*, as described by Pierre Paillé (1996). Periodically, I typed the journal notes and printed them with wide left margins. Then I read through the notes and noted theme types in the left margin. I began this activity half way through the rehearsal process by noting themes up to that point then continued as I went along for the rest of the time. I was trying to use the theme analysis method as a way to organize my findings in a way that would describe the actual proceedings of the group meetings, rehearsals and performances (e.g. activities, discussions, exercises, etc.) as clearly as I could. At the same time I was looking for hints into how the group had progressed.

In the post-positivist qualitative research paradigm, performing a thematic analysis of data can stop after the themes are identified. "The essential function of

thematic analysis is not to interpret...nor to theorize...nor to condense the essence of an experience... It is first and foremost a method that serves the revelation and synthesis of themes present in the corpus"[8] (Paillé, p. 186). After schematizing my data, I was left with an outline-style description that answered part of my research question, how did the group proceed and improve in terms of structuring *Everyday is a Fine Day*? I identified various workgroup concerns, such as how to establish a "group connection" in our dancing, and various group activities, such as "flocking," which is an improvisation score that has rules for dancers to practice following and leading each other through time and space. Conducting a thematic analysis on my data helped me identify how the group proceeded throughout the project.

But I could not stop there. To arrive at conclusions about the workgroup's improvement, I had to make connections between our goals and concerns, our rehearsal activities, and how our dancing changed. Also, as I reviewed the notes in the left margin of my journal, I began to notice aspects about the group and about our dance-making that led me to conclusions about our particular group process and about our dance structuring. Therefore if follows that the reader will find the next chapter, the Findings section of this thesis, is not simply a list of themes, but a web of themes, analysis, connection-making, and hypothesizes. I found myself entangled in a complex system of group process and spontaneous dance-making that could not be reduced to a thematic presentation. I will do my best to explain the information I acquired and deduced from my methodology in the next chapter.

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[8] Informal translation by author from "*L'analyse thématique n'a pour fonction essentielle ni d'interpréter...ni de théoriser...ni de dégager l'essence d'une expérience... Elle est d'abord et avant tout une méthode servant au relevé et la synthèse des thèmes présents dans un corpus.*"

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research project is to explain how a dance improvisation workgroup, in which I participated, proceeded and progressed, in terms of structuring, as it prepared for and presented the improvised presentation of *Everyday is a Fine Day*. Therefore, I looked at the data, mainly in my journal, with this in mind. I searched the data, collected during the duration of the project, for details of what happened in the rehearsals and performances that might help me answer the question of how the group proceeded. At the same time as I looked at the process, I was looking for connections between the process and our progress.

As I explained in the methodology section of this paper, I wanted to see the process of the group schematized in more general terms. This led me to seek out common themes that appeared as we proceeded. As I schematized my journal notes, I noticed that I could see the process of preparing for *Everyday is a Fine Day* as a series of different preoccupations (concerns and goals). I created a chart that showed the preoccupations of the group from each rehearsal, meeting, and performance. This chart can be found in appendix D. By separating out the preoccupations of the group and looking at them as they morphed throughout the process, I gained a bird's eye view of the whole process as it changed over time.

To help me understand the group's preoccupations, where they came from and why they changed, I created a list that named the group's problems and solutions. This list can be found in appendix E. Some of the information from the *problems and solutions* list will be used as explanation for our changing concerns and goals. I will also use the data collected during my interview with Sarah to explain some of the group concerns.

The reader may recall that I have intended, from the beginning, to pay attention to the "progress" of the workgroup's dance structuring as well as the "process." Though the group members agreed that we had progressed our dance making capabilities, it was not always clear how to assess this progress. In fact, the progress that we experienced seemed to happen in a circular way, which was not directly countable. It was not so simple that each of our activities came from an obvious goal or concern, or that each of our dances built on the structure of our previous dances. In fact, we often repeated activities and sometimes we did not even know what we were trying to achieve. In one sense, progress was evident in that our preoccupations, and consequently our activities and dancing, changed over time. In the end, our dance structuring habits had changed, and, in a way, *change* is *progress* because change is part of a cycle approach to progress. However, I was able to see linear progress as well when I looked at how the change sometimes built upon change. Also, I could detect linear progress when I saw how certain structural characteristics of our final performances could be connected back to the activities we had done while we were preparing ourselves. As I explain our changing preoccupations, I will attempt to show how the workgroup was progressing in its ability to structure improvised dance.

The unanticipated post-mortem meeting enhanced my understanding of how the workgroup progressed concerning the individual progress of each member. It

provided so much information about each dancers' experiences of the project that I will dedicate a section of this chapter to a discussion of this meeting.

Before proceeding, I would like to fast-forward for a moment to a final conclusion to explain why, when I am discussing the workgroup's spontaneous dance structuring, I think it is relevant to look at the group's preoccupations. As I was reviewing my data, I noticed a cause and effect linkage. I could see that the group's final dance structuring styles and habits were informed by the activities that were conducted during the rehearsal process. I could also see that the rehearsal activities were created, or chosen, based on the group's current preoccupations (meaning the group's concerns and goals). The progression was as follows.

Preoccupations → activities → structuring

Following this logic, understanding the workgroup's goals and concerns would lead to a better understanding of the workgroup's dance structuring. At times, I will be able to look even deeper at the group's "problems" that led to certain preoccupations. One could go even deeper, by examining the group's cultural attributes that influence value judgments determining what is a "problem" for example. Concerning this thesis, however, the type of data collected will not allow me to go into such a profound description. Instead, I will report on the workgroup's structuring style roots going back only to the group's preoccupations, and sometimes further. Since my schematizing methods led me to identify clearly the preoccupations of the group, the bulk of this chapter will be organized according to the workgroup's main preoccupations. I will discuss, when possible, all relevant information connected to each preoccupation and how our preoccupations progressed and determined certain final structuring patterns.

4.1 Changing preoccupations of the group

As the workgroup proceeded to prepare for the performance week, the members of the group made choices about what to focus on. A path in time was carved in which we shifted our focus, spontaneously structuring our rehearsal process. All the while we held the goal of spontaneously structuring our dance for an audience. It was a meandering pathway of changing priorities that reflected our concerns and goals. Sometimes our priorities were in response to inside or outside feedback about our dancing, from ourselves or invited rehearsal guests; sometimes we were trying to address reoccurring or felt problems, like being unable to dance risky; sometimes we were preoccupied with the concerns of our collaborators, i.e. we were responding to the musician's (and sometimes the lighting designer's) questions and requests; and sometimes our preoccupations came from unconscious desires or pleasures that we could not identify but seemed important.

At times we felt lost and without purpose or clear preoccupations, but the fact remained that we had rehearsals, we came to them, and we knew that we were going to present an improvised performance in the end. We created and performed various tasks in preparation. We were directing ourselves in ways that would form our dancing later. In that sense we were always structuring the dance.

It was difficult to know when the direction of the group was decided by one individual or by the whole group. If someone proposed an activity, I would not say that this person chose the direction of the group because the proposed activity was probably in response to a series of events or comments made by the other individuals of the group. The lines between individual and group were blurred as we worked together, sometimes floating, sometimes pushing and pulling, along the pathway to the dance. Therefore I am presenting the preoccupations of the group as if they were shared by all of its members when this was not always the case.

I was able to detect the changing priorities of the group by revisiting my schematized notes about our activities, discussions and my own thoughts. By sifting through the noticed themes and identifying the most significant, I was able to create the list of changing preoccupations. The most significant preoccupations of the workgroup fell into these general categories: group process, acquisition of general experience, compositional skill and awareness to compositional development, the score / plan of this piece, and connection with collaborators. In the following sections, I will describe these categories and present examples of each. In Figure 2, the reader will see a chart that outlines the big picture, showing how the main preoccupations, though many of them were ever-present, changed overtime. Time progression is shown from left to right in the figure.

Figure 2: Outlined changing preoccupations

Rehearsals / show #'s	1-4	5-9	10-16	17-27	Shows
Preoccupations	• acquisition of general experience • comp. skill -solos -duets • group process	• comp. skill -duets -group	• score / plan	• comp. skill -general -solos -duets with musician	• group process • connection with lighting designer

I have presented the outlined changing preoccupations for the reader to have a quick look at the changing preoccupations of the group in the big picture. The workgroup improvised this unit plan for our process. We had not laid out this structure for ourselves in advance but created it from our needs as they changed over time. At first we felt the need to acquire experience with each other, solo work, duet

work and discussion about our group process. We were getting to know each other, noticing our compositional dance tendencies in solos and duets, and planning out how we wanted to work together. Then we moved into a phase of our work in which we remained concerned with our duets and also became concerned with establishing a group connection in our dancing. Then we focused on scoring this particular piece for a while. After that, we felt the need to dig deeper into our dancing and concentrate on general compositional development and solo commitment as well as establishing a deeper connection with Matt, the musician. And finally, during the shows, we returned (in a different way) to concerns about our group process and we worked on our connection with the lighting designer. Without even realizing it, we had improvised an outline structure for our rehearsal process that acted as a container in which we could work on our dance.

3.1.1 Group process

Throughout the process, though mainly in the beginning and in the end, we were concerned with our own group process. In other words we concentrated on planning our rehearsals and organizing ourselves, while occasionally critiquing our own way of collaborating outside of the dancing. When I speak of group process, I am referring to the way we worked together outside of the dancing—while we were planning, discussing, critiquing ourselves, and interacting amongst ourselves. In a way the decisions (sometimes conscious and sometimes not) we made about how we worked together were at the forefront of everything we did; how we collaborated affected the structure of the performances because it was during our collective planning and discussion that we determined what to do during the whole process. In turn what we did during rehearsals (create activities, discussions, etc.) shaped our dancing in ways that manifested themselves in our performances. Essentially we were creating two structures all the while, the dance structure and the group

dynamic. Both were profoundly interrelated. In the next two sub-sections, I will present some of the dilemmas that arose concerning our group process.

3.1.1.1 Do we need a leader?

As I stated in the methodology section of this thesis (section 2.2), we began our journey with the goal of staying leaderless. We wanted to create a process where we were all contributing equally to the dance and where there was not one leader. The word "leader" contains the image of someone that is a little ahead of the others, someone who "leads" the others. We decided from the beginning, based on my original suggestion, that we would not need someone to "lead," that we could carry ourselves collectively along our path. As we carried ourselves along our path—that we improvised along the way—refusing to have a leader proved more difficult that I had thought it would be. This was mainly because, though we did not need a leader, we did need someone to facilitate the conversations and planning. We needed someone to keep the flow of the rehearsals in check. I took on this role, but I was not always clear about how to personify this role and remain a "non-leader."

After a few rehearsals, Andrea and Rémi suggested that we take turns planning activities and that I should be the one to say "okay, so-and-so, it is your turn to plan the next activity now." This suggestion helped me know how to facilitate in the beginning when we had many small skill building activities to prepare and when we needed to keep the flow of rehearsal moving without stopping too much for discussion. I took the suggestion to mean that I should ensure that all members of the group were participating actively and relatively equally. Towards the end of the process, when we were using the rehearsals to practice longer runs, it became less necessary to divide up the directional responsibilities because we had established a more consistent way of working from week to week that did not require

planning. Also as we got to know each other better we were able to collaborate more and decide together what needed to happen next.

Though we did not always need someone to decide whose turn it was, we did need someone who was concerned with keeping us focused. Often our conversations meandered off of the topic of our dance, and sometimes the individuals in the workgroup did not seem focused on the group in any way. It was as though there were always little butterflies in the room that represented each person's life outside of the group. These butterflies were always there, luring our attention away from the group process. Perhaps it was the particular dynamic of this group. I often acted as the person who pulled the group focus in toward the dance or the rehearsal planning, or opened conversations to the whole group when one person was pulling the conversation toward a subject that seemed less useful.

The whole time it was my intention to be a facilitator who was sensitive to the group needs, as expressed by all of the people in the group, and who kept us relatively close to the path, as determined by the whole group. It was difficult because I sometimes felt like a sourpuss who would not let the others, and myself, attend to our demanding butterflies. I tried to be careful not to impose my wishes onto the group. I often asked myself, "If they want to be distant and I pull their focus in toward the group, am I imposing my own wishes onto the group?" In the end I just had to remind myself that it was decided as a group that we wanted someone to facilitate. Therefore having a facilitator did not make our group undemocratic.

We found that the best way to keep our individual selves focused in towards the group, to shoo away the butterflies, was to start each rehearsal with a private meditation. This was easy for this workgroup because all of its members practiced meditation in their private lives. By meditating we created a bridge from our outside

lives into the rehearsals and we were all more present after the meditations. We did not do the meditations consistently until the twentieth rehearsal, but after that we conducted the meditations all the way through the performances.

Our established system of non-leadership was shaken up when Matt, the musician, joined the group. His first rehearsal with the group was rehearsal # 8 and he attended a little over half of the rehearsals after that. Though, in all, Matt was with the group for less than half of the rehearsals, his presence in the group process (and in the dance) was significant. I believe it was his intuitive nature and self-assurance—and perhaps the fact that he was the musician, which set him apart at the outset—that led him to contribute more than anyone else when he was present. He always had something to say and would say it with conviction every time. His comments were usually welcome, but when he tried to step in front of the group, to lead the group, and assume that his ideas were best, the dancers were sometimes offended, which proved damaging for the fluidity of the group process. Ironically the jolt to our group fluidity, though uncomfortable at times, might have provided a necessary spark of life in our process.

An example of how Matt offended a dancer, and when he tried to lead the group, occurred during show week when the group had a disagreement over our show preparation schedule. Some of the dancers wanted at least 15 minutes of silence during the build-up to the show, time for warming up the senses. We agreed to this constraint for our dress rehearsal but Matt and Rémi did not follow this constraint and were making noise, talking and playing with the instruments during the buildup to the performance. Andréa was especially irritated by this. We talked about it afterward and it became clear that Matt and Rémi did not like the idea of staying quiet. Rémi said that silence might make him "nervous" and Matt thought silence would make the whole thing "too precious." Matt tried to convince the group that his way would be best, but, when he realized that the rest of the dancers were not

in accord with him, he had to agree to the 15 minutes of silence. The problem was that Matt's conviction about being right meant that he thought the group (though his energy was directed mainly towards Andréa) was wrong. Matt had to leave the room for a few moments while we were all preparing, which caused an uncomfortable moment for the group, and he (jokingly) accused Andréa of being a "diva" while she was warming up for the second show. The comment hit a cord with Andréa so deeply that she spent much of that performance off to the side, not dancing.

The strange energy of that night, the second show, and the lack of presence in Andréa, made for an unusual performance for the group. After the show the performers, especially Matt and me, expressed a feeling of being stuck. Matt said the dance was "a ship going down" and he and I both felt like we were trying to save it. It was interesting to see how we all responded to our failing dance in the moment. Alex and, especially, Andréa needed to step out for much of the dance; Rémi seemed to be exercising patience in his dancing; and Matt and I felt a sense of urgency during the show. Matt and I became desperate and a little wild in the dance. Matt tried to dance with us, to pull the dance out of its "stuckness." At one point I performed a series of back handsprings across the stage in effort to create a spark in the dance. Matt and I talked about the experience after the show. We agreed that our wild reaction did not help the dance. We felt that we had made the failing dance more pathetic by trying urgently to save it. We can't know what would have been the best way to handle the "stuckness" of the dance, but one thing was sure: The disagreement that unfolded just before the performance affected the performance.

This was an example of how Matt's sense of conviction, and leadership inclination, was perhaps damaging to the group process and the dance. But most of the time, Matt's sense of conviction and ability to lead were some of the workgroup's greatest assets concerning the dance. I would even say that his commitment to his spontaneous propositions sometimes saved the dance. Being

clear and confident in his ideas led him to make clear propositions through his music while we were performing. In doing so he was able to provide clear direction in the piece that helped establish mutual understanding among the performers and understandable stories for the audience members to identify.

After all is said and done, I can answer my question about whether or not we needed a leader in this way. Concerning our group process, we needed a facilitator, someone to hold the string that kept us from deviating too far from the path that we were creating. We did not need a leader in the sense that someone would impose their direction onto the group without consensus. There was enough time to come to group agreements without someone single-handedly making decisions for the group. But it was often useful in the dance, when someone proposed ideas in a way that suggested conviction, without hesitation for consensus. I will discuss the topic of conviction in dancing in more detail when I explain the group's dance compositional development in section 3.1.3.4.

3.1.1.2 What are we doing?

In rehearsal #22, Andréa asked with a nervous laugh, "what are we doing?" When I look back at my notes I realize that this question popped up throughout the project in different ways. When Andréa asked the question during the twentieth rehearsal, so near the end of the rehearsal process, I was a little bothered. The answer was so obvious to me the whole time: We were working together to prepare ourselves for an improvised performance. That was enough for me; it was always enough for me. But it was not enough for everyone. Andréa wanted more clarity; Sarah, the person who left the group, wanted more clarity; and I suspect others wanted more clarity as well.

I did not know how to answer Andréa's question; no one seemed to be able to answer this question. I suggested we each explain why we were there and here is what each person said:

> *Andréa- I'm observing. When there's a space, I go. I do tasks or I'm committed to an inner state and develop it until I run out of fuel or I come to an obstacle (person or object) then either I continue or I change. And I'm trying to be individual and with the group. But I have no idea why I'm here in this project. Maybe that's not bad.*
>
> *Matt- I think that's what we're all dealing with.*
>
> *Alex- Maybe we should try to find something to say in the moment.*
>
> *Speranza- I'm into what you're saying [Andréa], but not knowing is very pertinent. It doesn't matter. I'm having relationships with you and with myself. It seems to set the stage for other things in life. I'm knowing myself through other people and myself. It feels good. Sometimes, I'm tired and exploring that. I'm solving bodily dilemma. More and more I can visualize the public. We've worked a lot toward being ourselves. We're treating the public like they're with us.*
>
> *Alex- For me it's about the process of making improv. I'm trying to get used to it with a compositional eye. I'm exploring contact. We're getting closer and closer to being ourselves. Maybe we need to get away from that. I want to come out of myself.*
>
> *Me- I'm trying to let something bigger than me speak through me. I want to get beyond my ego and be true to the energies of the moment and the dance. I think I am trying to find something to say in the moment.*

Rémi was not at this rehearsal but he answered a similar question earlier, between the eighth and ninth rehearsals, when he and I were having tea. I asked him why he joined the group and he answered in this way:

> *Rémi- To find new truths about the way I move. I am doing research into my body. Also I want to be seen, to get over being self-conscious.*

The fact is we all had individual goals and feelings about why we were in the group or what we were trying to do with our dancing, but we never clearly stated any group purpose beyond preparing for four performances. We often stated our goals about dancing in indirect ways, as I will discuss in the following sections of this chapter, but we did not pull together a clearly stated mission. This did not bother me because I felt that the 6 month project, with 6 people who did not know each other before, did not provide enough time for the members to come so closely together that they could gel together a mission statement. Also I felt that our purpose was to enhance our group improvisation skill in various ways that would feed the structure of the coming performances. I tried several times to explain my concept of structuring dance improvisation to the group but I never expected that this must be the group's purpose. However I know that if the project had continued I would have felt the same desire as Andréa, to understand better, more consciously and directly, what we, as a group, were trying to achieve and why.

As I write this thesis, I see that the group did in fact have goals about our dancing which gave us a sense of purpose, but they were not always directly stated or gathered in a way that clarified our intention. We would have benefited from more group discussion, which was a touchy subject. Some of the group members wanted more discussion and some wanted less. A solution would have been to hold meetings outside of our rehearsals, to set aside time specifically for discussion. I believe this would have provided the space necessary in our group process to reflect on our practices and to examine our purpose.

In this section I have focused on group process because it was a significant group preoccupation during the process of creating and performing *Everyday is a Fine Day*. I believe that our group process was a concern for us because it underlined how we structured ourselves and our rehearsals. We were structuring our group process, more or less successfully, so that we could work together in a

coherent way. We were also preoccupied with different activities that were meant to enhance our dancing and our piece, *Everyday is a Fine Day*, in various ways. In the coming sections, I will explain goals and concerns, that I found when I examined our preoccupations, that illustrate our interest in structuring our dance.

3.1.2 The acquisition of general experience

One of the goals of the group, that contributed to the final structure of the performed dances, was to gain dance improvisation practice together without any goal beyond experience in mind. This is why I call it "general" experience. At first glance it might have seemed aimless during the first few rehearsals, for example, when we took turns creating five-minute scores and danced them one after the other without discussing their purposes. In fact these first seemingly aimless scores helped to convince Sarah that the group was lacking focus.[9] In the short run, Sarah's observations were certainly true. Now that the process is finished however, I can see that our initially "aimless" activities did have intention. Mainly we were getting to know each others' dance styles while we were practicing improvisation. When we started to understand our dancing better, we could chose our direction from a more knowledgeable base, responding to our noticed lacks and habits for example.

Also, on an unconscious level, we were improving our structuring capabilities through "aimless" dance improvisation practice. We were acquiring a type of knowledge that experience, even without clear goals, gave us. Dancing together helped us understand tacitly our dancing and each others'; this helped us recognize tacitly dance content as it arose from ourselves and each other; then, we were able to use our unconscious knowledge to help us make structural choices in the moment. For example I remember an instance during show # 2 when I saw Rémi dancing a solo across the stage. In the middle of his solo, I darted across the stage in

[9] Appendix B, the notes from an interview with Sarah, presents a more detailed account of Sarah's initial feeling that the group lacked focus.

a series of back handsprings. When I watched the video, and practiced *stimulated recall* (refer to section 2.3.2), I remembered thinking, "I want to make a spark in the picture." I didn't think about it at the time, but when I think back, I know that, on some level, not a conscious one, the following knowledge was being processed inside me:

> *I see Rémi dancing a solo. It is the inner experience solo. I've seen it before. It is fluid, consistent, slow, steady movement. He will continue with dedication to his processes across the stage. He needs the attention of the audience to remain with him until he reaches the other side. I can send a quick crazy dart across the stage that will only distract briefly from Rémi's solo. I can trust that Rémi will stay dedicated to his workings. After I cross, the audience can return to Rémi, refreshed, and they can notice the contrasting slow steadiness of Rémi. My movement will enhance his solo.*

My movement was influenced by a deeper understanding of Rémi's dancing that can be attributed to the months of dancing with him that I'd done. As Andrew Harwood once said, "you learn the most about dancing from dancing."[10] It seemed that the workgroup knew this because we did not always need explanations for the activities that we did in rehearsal. Alex even seemed to be annoyed sometimes when the group spent too much time discussing our activities: He said it a few times, "Let's just dance."

3.1.3 Compositional skill / awareness of compositional development

To advance the structuring capability of our collective dancing we dedicated much of our rehearsal time towards advancing the compositional skill of the group. We conducted activities and held discussions that centered around various elements of dance content (time, space, energy, bodies, relationships, themes, stories and images)[11] and how they fit together in our dancing. Essentially our concern for improving our compositional capabilities amounted to the goal of increased

[10] Mar. 2, Intensive Contact Improvisation Workshop, Feb. 20-Mar.3 2006
[11] For a more thorough explanation of my understanding of "dance content" please revisit section 1.2.

awareness of dance content as it was being produced and awareness of how the content developed and changed in time. Sometimes we used our awareness abilities to generate observations that would lead to suggestions for future activities or would lead to the realization of a "problem." Mainly, however, we remained focused on awareness alone, without judgment. From the fact that many of our activities were dedicated towards practicing and identifying our awareness to compositional elements and how they fit together, I can deduce that there was a general understanding that the way to compositional integrity was, first and foremost, through a basic awareness of the elements that compose the dance. We were concerned with fine tuning our compositional awareness in solos, duets, and groups as well as in general ways.

3.1.3.1 Solo work

From the beginning and especially toward the end of the preparation process, the workgroup practiced working on solos. We would present solos to each other during our rehearsals. Sometimes we assigned ourselves scores such as "this solo must build on the one that you just did; must contain a clear beginning, middle, and end, which one of the spectators will call out; and must connect with the music." Other times, we would leave the solos to the present whims of the dancer. We always suggested time limits for each other—sometimes actually calling out the end and sometimes (more toward the end of the process) leaving the dancer to feel the end out.

As time progressed the reasons for practicing solos changed. Towards the beginning of the process we performed short solos in attempt to familiarize each other and ourselves with our styles. We discussed each others' styles and our own in terms of content tendencies. For example, during rehearsal # 4, the group described Alex's dancing in this way: *bony, taking his time, task-like, likes to dance with*

objects, clear lines and shapes. This description helped the group begin to understand how Alex liked to work with certain dance elements: Some underlying suggestions were that, in that dance at least, Alex had a steady sense of time, a clear sense of shape in space, and a tendency toward task-like story making. In my journal I wrote that "Alex explained that he was 'looking for sensation' because he knows that he thinks more about his bones moving." Knowing Alex's intentions and giving feedback based on the group's observations helped the group familiarize itself with Alex's dancing styles and helped Alex know his own dancing (or reaffirmed what Alex already knew about his dancing).

Towards the middle and end of the preparation process the group wanted to improve its impulse commitment and awareness of personal experience (due to our own observations and those of the people who were invited into the rehearsals to give us feedback) so we brought in solo exercises to address these concerns. One of the exercises was Andréa's "line game" which encouraged impulse commitment. Andréa learned it from a choreographer she had worked with in the past. It was essentially the same thing as Barbara Dilley's "corridors" (Stark Smith, 2005). Here is the basic score of the "line game":

> *The whole group stands at one end of the space facing the other end of the space. The dancers imagine that they have straight corridors in front of them that extended to the other end of the space. They can move forward and backward in the space. They can run, walk, be still, squat down, or stand up.*

As Andréa explained the rules she exclaimed, "no hesitation!" We were encouraged to remain dedicated to our own impulses and not to respond to each others' movements or to conscious compositional ideas. As we practiced the line game, we practiced responding to our inner impulses before they became conscious thoughts. Then we practiced being committed to our "decisions." Though we were all dancing, we were remaining committed to our solo selves within the group. I personally felt the effects of this activity very deeply; as I performed *Everyday is a*

Fine Day, I was taking more risks than I'd ever taken before in performed improvisation. Also I remained dedicated to my actions and my impulses so much that I sometimes felt like I was possessed by my impulses. The feeling of being taken away helped me take risks. It was as though it was not I who was taking the risks, like I was not there.

3.1.3.2 Duet work

Finding ways to practice duets was important to this group in the first half of the rehearsal duration. At the same time as we were discovering each other and ourselves through solo performance and observation, we were discovering our unique duet relationships. Also we were enhancing our partnering skill through duet activities. We practiced duets through Contact Improvisation mini-classes, "revolving duets" and "imitation dances."

At the end of the first rehearsal, Alex explained that it was important for him to gain experience with Contact Improvisation. At the same time, everyone agreed that it would be beneficial to the whole group to practice Contact Improvisation. Alex agreed to lead the group through C.I. mini-classes at every rehearsal and, though this portion of rehearsal became less important toward the end of the process, and was sometimes dropped, we usually set aside a portion of every rehearsal for C.I. mini-classes. Alex led the group through various activities, such as "back to back lifting and being lifted." Sometimes, it was not only Alex who led the C.I. classes, but others in the group began to suggest C.I. activities. A closer look at how we worked with one of Alex's activities shows how the group took the activity farther and built upon it. The C.I. activity first showed up in rehearsal #3 as the following activity presented by Alex:

> *Choose a partner. One partner holds a pose and the other takes all or some of the weight of the posed dancer.*

This simple activity was suggested again later during other rehearsals by the other dancers. We felt that the activity would help to get us "warmed up to each other," to use Rémi's words. During rehearsal #18 Alex presented an extended version of this activity. He called it the "sculpture garden." The "sculpture garden" score proceeds like this:

> *Half of the group spreads out into the space and each dancer in that half creates a pose and holds it. These dancers are the statues. The other half of the room dances in the sculpture garden and the members of the second half choose to take the weight of any statue at anytime.*

Then we took it farther still and suggested that when someone picked up a statue they could transport it to another place in the room. Speranza was so excited about this score that she suggested we take it into one of our runs. She felt that having the sculpture garden option would give us something to do when we did not know what to do—i.e. when one was not feeling inspired, he or she could go to another person pick them up, and transport them. In response to Speranza's idea, we added the sculpture garden as a score option, while we practiced our dance that week. During that particular run, two of the dancers picked up other dancers and transported them to other spaces. The dancers who were picked up, were able to respond to the action knowledgably, because they could recognize the action from the "sculpture garden" score. I will discuss more about how the group worked with scoring in section 3.1.4.

Another way in which the group practiced duet work was through imitation. A few times toward the beginning of the process, we created little study scores (just for rehearsals) in which we imitated each other. We always performed our imitation scores in small groups, but I am including these scores in the duet work section of this chapter because I feel that the activity served predominantly the purpose of helping us connect with each other one on one. The imitation scores also helped us address and overcome our own habits, but primarily these dances helped us

understand each others' movement styles. By imitating each others' styles, we were able to become each other, in a sense, and to gain first hand insight into how each other moved. The resulting knowledge helped us connect with each other when we practiced, and ultimately performed our piece.

Also toward the beginning of the process, rehearsals #3 to #6, we were interested in working with a score we called "revolving duets." During the "revolving duets:"

> *Two dancers begin a duet. At some point a third dancer, could be anyone of the waiting dancers, comes in. One of the original dancers leaves and we have a different duet. Again a third dancer comes in and one of the current dancers leaves. This continues until the pre-determined time limit is up.*

We usually did this score for 15-20 minutes at the end of the rehearsals. As I perceive it, this score served a few purposes. As we practiced revolving duets, we continued to gain understanding about how we could dance with each other; we practiced our C.I. skills; and we began to cultivate the ability to sense structural timing. We each had to choose when to join the group. To do this we needed to sense when the existing duet had run its course.

3.1.3.3 Group work

Another compositional aspect of our dancing that held a lot of importance was our group composition. This became especially important during a meeting between four of us who went for tea one evening, between rehearsals #4 and #5. Around this time we developed the goal of creating, as a whole group, in a way that was "structurally sound and coherent and internally connected" (quoted from my own reflections in my journal). From rehearsals #5 to #9, group composition was our biggest concern.

Right away Rémi introduced the group to the Viewpoints technique that he'd often practiced while he was a student in the MFA in Performance program at Naropa University. The technique, developed first by Mary Overly[12] for theater acting, involved acting with awareness to one or more of the following "viewpoints:" Space, time, shape, movement, emotion and story. We took some elements from the technique and applied them to our rehearsal study-scores. First we danced a short score with just *space* in our awareness; we moved through the space together and noticed the way we changed our positions through the space. Then we danced with our *timing* at the front of our awareness, noticing how we changed tempo and rhythm. After that we practiced being aware of how we changed shape while we danced; we noticed our individual shapes as well as the group shapes we'd made together. By concentrating on just one bit of dance content at a time, we could develop that part of our awareness capacity more acutely. As stated earlier it was the group's tendency to focus on giving attention to our dancing, in this case, to certain emerging dance content while dancing in groups. This again is evidence that the group saw awareness as the primary tool toward structural integrity.

We did not practice dancing with awareness to emotion, movement or story when we were applying the Viewpoints technique. Later there was a time when we practiced paying attention to our movement (I'll discuss this in the next chapter) but at first, we assumed movement was obvious in dancing and did not need attention. The other two viewpoints, emotion and story did not seem important to us at the time either, but, if we were to continue working together, I suspect we would have practiced giving more attention to these two elements of dance content. I say this because we were just beginning to get in touch with our emotional involvement and story-making abilities towards the end of the rehearsal duration and during the performances of *Everyday is a Fine Day*.

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[12] For a complete explanation of Viewpoints, refer to Anne Bogart's book (2005), *The viewpoints book: A practical guide to viewpoints and composition.*

During rehearsal #6, as we continued to focus on group connection, I introduced the group to the Everybody Warm-up. The Everybody Warm-up was the "classic warm-up of the sixties and seventies" that I learned from Daniel Nagrin's book, *Dance and the Specific Image* (1994, p. 71). During this warm-up dancers stand in a circle and take turns leading the group through whatever he or she feels would be useful in a warm-up. I brought the warm-up to the group becausc I thought it would help us get connected with each other in the beginning of the rehearsal, which would, as a result, lead to more cohesive group dancing. When I re-watched the video cassettes from these rehearsals, I could not decipher whether or not the Everybody Warm-up worked in creating more cohesive group dancing. In any case we did not continue the activity for many rehearsals. For us it was too abrupt to jump into unison when we first arrived at the rehearsals, and, as I explained in the group process section of this chapter, we later found a more appropriate first activity for us, which was individual meditation.

In general it can be said that all of our work dedicated to creating a sense of group connection and awareness did just that. This was a major theme that emerged during our mid-process showing (rehearsal #16). We received comments, from the audience of our mid-process showing and from rehearsal guests of rehearsals around that time, that our dancing exhibited a clear sense of group connection. For example, when asked if our propositions were clear, a member of the mid-process showing stated, "one clear proposition was that you were working together." Also when I asked Sarah, the only audience member who had seen the group dance at the beginning of the process, if our dancing had changed since she left the group, she answered:

> ...There were lots of group moments that were interesting. That was different than before. It kept coming back to the group. It was a more homogenous way to move. Qualities came together and you took from each other.

As mentioned earlier, and surely connected to the fact that we'd gained a clearer sense of group in our dancing, it was also around this time (mid-process) that we realized the need for more work on individual presence. An audience member of the mid-process showing said "I would have liked to see more solos." Fairly soon after the mid-process showing, we began to focus on solo work again, as described in section 3.1.3.1.

As we became more committed and developed as solo dancers, we were faced with the question of "how can we integrate our solo work into our group work?" In response to this question, we developed and practiced a few scores that required at least one solo from each dancer. Speranza commented that it felt restricting to hold herself back while other dancers developed and worked through their solos. I agreed as did some other dancers. At the same time, we all agreed that it was important to hold ourselves back sometimes and that we had carried out some good dancing through the restriction of giving each other space for solos. I said "maybe allowing time for solos feels inhibiting to the individual but it seems to free up the dance." Andréa nodded enthusiastically and it seemed we had reached a consensus. I believe that we were realizing—through our bodies, internal discussion and outside feedback up to this point—that, for our structure to work, we needed to do the following: to give each other space, to take space when it was ours, and to maintain enough distance from our impulses to know the difference.

Though we did not keep the restriction of allowing each person at least one solo in our final score, we incorporated the concept of giving each other space into our dancing in general. The fruits of our labor showed up in the structure of our final show when each performance contained one or more solos. In contrast our mid-process showing had contained none.

3.1.3.4 Other compositional concerns

In the last section, I explained, among other things, how the goal of individual presence came about halfway through the process of making *Everyday is a Fine Day*. This goal came to us through the realization that our spontaneous structuring habits lacked this aspect. The lack was especially clear in the feedback we received from our mid-process showing.

This was not the only lack that became evident around the mid-process showing. Around this time we were noticing many lacks in our dancing, which were difficult to deal with. Our concerns of this time related to compositional concerns that went beyond concerns of our abilities to relate to ourselves and each other in solo, duet and group dancing. It felt a little like starting over, as though we had only created problems for ourselves up to this point. It is not true that we had only created problems for ourselves—we had developed a trusting connected group dynamic in our group process and in our dancing, for example—but we had come to a point where some of our lacks, or problems, seemed obvious. It was a stimulating as well as worrying time for us. Essentially we became concerned about our abilities: *to be clear with our propositions*, *to relate to the audience*, and *to stop feeling judged and self-conscious*. These concerns lead to being preoccupied with developing these skills for a while.

First there was the problem of not being clear in our choices. The problem was highlighted by an audience member of the mid-process showing who stated "I felt that you were leaving propositions before they were fully developed," but we had already begun to discuss this problem. For example, during the rehearsal before the mid-process showing, the dilemma of not being clear surfaced in the form of an awkward discussion in which Matt seemed angry with the dancers for not being clear. He was visibly upset when he declared "Who are these people? I'm getting

no feeling from anyone. I have no idea what you're doing... I don't see the story...When I propose something, you need to go with it." As I explained earlier, I believe that Matt tended to have a lot of faith in his own propositions, which in the case of improvised performance, is a great asset. When he did not see that kind of conviction in the workgroup's dancing he became irritated. The dancers' responses to Matt's critique were mostly defensive, that Matt needed to "listen" to the dancers and to "be present even when things were vague." I believe that the dancers' responses were valid (in fact, when I watched the video of this run, I observed that Matt's music propositions where not always appropriate to the dance, seemed a little abrupt in comparison with the dancers' dancing) but, at the same time, it is true that we were not being clear in our dancing. We had gotten stuck in a comfortable dancing style in which we were dancing safely on the surface of something profound and saying little.

I was not aware of it at the time, but I now think that the reason we lacked clarity is that we were not committed to our propositions as we danced. We, the dancers, would propose a certain type of relationship, or "story," and then gently slip away from it without seeing it through. For example a dancer might have slipped into a dance that could be identified as being about either a character (like a fiery witch) or a quality (like a slimy crawler) and then drop it as soon as it had come to them. This readiness to drop our propositions led to dancing that was kind of blah, in which the audience could not sense a purpose. We were not creating identifiable characters or qualities, which is so important for the dance spectator. It is like Louise Bédard, one of the co-directors of this thesis, said to the workgroup during our eighteenth rehearsal: "Cohesion is something to grab." I interpreted this to mean that we needed to give the audience something to identify, so they could relate to something, anything, on a conscious or an unconscious level, in what we were doing.

The question of how to be clear in our propositions led to another question: What was our intended relationship with the audience? Our feedback from the mid-process showing suggested that we were coming across as closed into our group and distant from the audience. More concretely Sylvie Fortin, the other co-director of this thesis, pointed out that the group (including the musician) remained mainly in the upstage space. We wanted to engage the audience so we moved the music station to a place further downstage and decided to make a conscious effort to dance more downstage.

Occupying the space closer to the spectators brought the dance physically closer to the audience but it was not obvious to know how we could bring ourselves connected with the audience members on a deeper level. Again the answer seemed to be that we needed to be clear with our propositions so the audience could follow us. Also, in the days leading up to the show, we decided to ask the audience to give their own sub-titles to each show. We felt that this would help the audience members feel a part of the dances. A full list of the spectator sub-titles can be found in appendix G.

The feedback from the performances proved that we were successful in creating a closer connection with the audience. After the first show, I asked those who stayed for the question and answer session "Did you feel like the audience was included in the performance?" Most of the audience members nodded their heads. After the show, an audience member told me that she did not feel a part of the performance but that "this was a good thing." I suppose that, if it was a good thing, she did not feel distant, which was what we were trying to avoid.

Intermingled with our questions about how to be clear and how to relate to the audience, there was a problem that some of us, mainly Rémi and myself, were dealing with. Namely, after the mid-process showing, Rémi and I were feeling hyper

self-consciousness and judged. During the couple of weeks immediately following the showing, Rémi and I were lucky to be working on another project together, *Pas de danse, pas de vie*, for which we improvised a duet together in a city square, downtown Montréal. Together Rémi and I practiced dancing in a public city square so we would have an audience. Our audience proved to be the perfect test for us to dance without feeling judged. People stared at us with disgusted looks on their faces and some people even make fun of us.

As we practiced we developed different ways to cope with self-consciousness and feeling judged. I made a mantra for myself that I would repeat in my mind while I was dancing: "I'm not me. I'm what I'm doing." By repeating this mantra to myself over and over whenever I felt distracted by my self-consciousness, I was able to distance myself from the dance that I was creating. I could inhabit the qualities and characters of the emerging dance when I stopped being so self-absorbed. It felt liberating when I embodied the meaning of this mantra because, while I was dancing with it in mind, I wasn't me; I was the dance. I was liberated from judgments because I didn't care if people judged the dance—in my mind, the dance had nothing to do with me. The me that I normally deal with, who cared about what others thought, took a break as I inhabited the dance.

During a rehearsal that took place soon after the mid-process showing, a score was proposed that also helped me overcome my self-consciousness. Andréa, Rémi and I were the only people present at this rehearsal when Andréa presented the "Curiosity Dance" as I am now calling it. During the Curiosity Dance score, we were not allowed to make statements, even observations, in our minds. We could only ask questions. The idea was to remain in a state of curiosity and questioning without answers. As we danced we asked ourselves "what is this?" and tried to follow the emerging movement out of curiosity rather that searching. The three of us slid in and out of relationships with each other while we stayed engaged in a "yin

energy," to use Andréa's words. Though we were aware of ourselves and each other, we did not allow ourselves to take conscious note of the dance that was emerging. It was the perfect way to give attention to the movement without naming the compositional relationships or sensations that resulted from the movement. Interestingly, when we watched the video of this dance together, we noticed that the three of us were very much connected with each other—even when we could not see each other.

All three of us appreciated this rehearsal, especially me. It was a turning point for me. During this rehearsal I finally felt comfortable enough to let go of my self-consciousness and rational mind. My self-consciousness and rational mind (that wanted to name the dance content as it was arising so I could make conscious compositional choices) were crowding my capacity for basic awareness. I felt as though, during the Curiosity Dance, I was getting to the root of the dance and being in touch with the root of the dance made me closer to the dance. I could trust in my ability to make consistent structural choices, due to the activities we'd done up to this point, without obsessing over the composition of the emerging dance. I don't believe that I could have had this realization earlier in the process because all of the work we had done related to this moment (yet another sign that there was some linear progress happening).

3.1.4 Scoring / planning / practicing this piece

So far in this chapter I have presented how the workgroup was preoccupied with our group process, the acquisition of general experience, and compositional awareness. Another significant consideration that captivated much of our energy and attention was that of, scoring, planning, and practicing *Everyday is a Fine Day*. We were especially concerned with our potential scoring of the piece in the weeks leading up to the mid-process showing. After the showing, as our energy was

redirected toward the goals discovered from the mid-process showing, less emphasis was placed on the planned structural aspects of the piece and more emphasis was placed on the spontaneous structuring capabilities discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter.

In the weeks just before the mid-process showing, the workgroup began to score the end performance. We had been practicing many smaller study-scores up to this point. The difference was that, beginning around rehearsal # 7, and especially from rehearsal #10 to #16, we began to practice longer scores with the intention of planning and practicing the prepared part of our final performance structure. We called these longer scores, "scores for our runs." Whenever we practiced a "run" it meant that we were practicing a longer segment of dance as though it were our final performance.

Up to this point, our scores served various purposes, such as providing little structures for the group to practice dancing or challenging our dancing to overcome "problems" like "we are not connecting to each other enough." Our little scores up to this point were always created quickly and meant for short studies. Sometimes we brought ideas for study-scores into the rehearsal. For example Rémi once suggested we practice Flocking, the well-known score that proceeds as follows:

> The group moves together following whoever is in front of the group and any given moment. As the group continues "flocking," the leader changes and the group morphs to face various directions. Eventually the group might fragment into smaller groups.

We practiced flocking in attempt to create a strong group connection and to develop leading and following skills. At other times, in the first third of our rehearsal duration, we took turns creating 5-minute scores for each other. Speranza created the following score for example:

> There are four dancers. They must choose a partner and remain back to back with their partner. They must dance with these props: a hat and a scarf. One set of partners will have the hat and the other will have the scarf and the dancers must exchange the props while they are dancing. Also they will dance to flamenco music.

When we allowed ourselves to create quick 5-minute scores, we did not spend much time, if any discussing the purpose of each score. We allowed ourselves to create without explanation, to create from intuition what we thought would be interesting.

Some of our 5-minute scores seemed quite interesting to us and they reemerged when we began to score longer runs. In fact this is how we first began to score our final performance. Our first attempt at a longer run was in rehearsal #6. During rehearsal #6 we decided to include a "string of scores" for a longer run. We chose to begin the run by paying attention to the viewpoints space, time and shape. Then we agreed to find our way into the Mid-level score (in which we all kept dance at a medium level). After that we planned to find our way into the All Facing Back score (in which all dancers face up-stage). We had chosen these three scores because they had worked well previously, but when we strung them together, we found that things did not seem to be going well.

Since the "string of scores" run did not go particularly well, the workgroup chose to score only our beginnings for a while after that. During rehearsal # 7 we decided to give ourselves the sole constraint (besides the time constraint of approximately 20 minutes) of beginning in a circle. For rehearsal #9 the beginning constraint became slightly more complex when we began our run in a straight line, repeating a learned phrase over and over until we felt compelled to move on. During rehearsal #10 we built on the beginning constraint by starting in a line with the intention of creating a phrase together, with each dancer contributing one movement that we repeated until we felt compelled to move on. Then in rehearsal #11 we shifted the beginning line to a diagonal and decided to create the phrase together

without the rule that each dancer would contribute one movement. In rehearsal #12 we decided to begin with a different score all together. Alex suggested we begin with the "non-symmetrical symmetry" score, in which we entered the space one by one and took a pose that was in a non-symmetrical (but aesthetically pleasing) relationship to the people who were already in the space.

In rehearsal #13 we decided to try go back to a more elaborate score. We had been dancing without many constraints up to this point and that had been going well, but we felt that we were having difficulty with our transitions. Also we were looking for a way to encourage us to dance faster. We decided to score the whole run tightly again and to include scored transitions. I went to the whiteboard with a marker and began to lay it out. There was some hesitation from some of the dancers: Alex said "let's just dance"; Rémi teased me for being very "Virgo" (Virgos are known for being very organized); and Andréa was afraid the piece was becoming "too choreographed." (Matt was not there and Speranza seemed interested in the idea of blocking out a score.) After much discussion we decided upon the score that is represented in figure 3. This figure can be read from top to bottom.

Figure 3: Score from rehearsal #13

Opening	open
1st score	*Phrase*- build phrase together and let the phrase disperse
transition	running
2nd score	*Backs to the audience*- all facing upstage
transition	running
3rd score	*Group noise*- dancers connect as a group and create sound
transition	running
4th score	*Balls to the wall*- very energetic dancing
Closing	*Flocking* until we feel it is over

Though we had laid out a clear score, we did not follow it completely when we danced. We did not always include running for our transitions and there were moments when we were not dancing to any particular score but feeling our ways through new structures. After we finished the run, we decided that we liked having the scores at our disposal but that it would not be appropriate for us to plan the order of the scores or to set the limits too strictly.

At the next rehearsal we decided to try using what we called "ingredients. The idea was that we would name some ingredients that we could choose to use at any time. For our run of rehearsal #14, we set the ingredients as follows: Dynamic transitions- running, jumping, or laying flat; and score ingredients- *sculpture garden*, *sand post* (in which we would mold our bodies to each other and melt to the floor like sand) and *catch* (in which we could jump towards another dancer who would be expected to catch us). All three of the "ingredient" scores were taken from Alex's Contact Improvisation mini-class of this rehearsal.

As we came closer to show week, we went back and forth between naming our ingredients before practicing runs and leaving our runs open. No matter how we scored our runs, all of the study-scores that we had practiced throughout the rehearsal process became parts of our dancing. Even when we did not include any study-scores into our plans (as was the case for all of our final performances), we had incorporated the possibilities into our group dance dynamic, into our structuring possibilities. Some of the study-scores did in fact appear in our final performances. For example, when I watched the video from our first show, I noticed three dancers doing the *phrase* study-score. Also, from the video of our last show, I could identify the *backs to the audience* study-score and a moment that seemed like an *imitation* study-score. This was evidence that the study-scores we practiced in rehearsals affects the structures of our final four performances in clearly identifiable ways.

3.1.5 Connecting with collaborators

I explained earlier in this thesis how Matt was more than a collaborator. He became part of the group. He even set down his instruments and joined the dancers in movement at times. He came to many of our rehearsals, contributed a great deal to the way the group structured, and studied the dancers' styles and tendencies. By working with the dancers for such a long time, and perceptively, he was able to mold his music with the dancers and to become connected to the dancers. At the same time, the dancers were able to gel our dancing with Matt's style.

Music/dance connection progress could be seen by comparing feedback from outside visitors who attended Matt's first rehearsals with feedback from the audience members who attended our performances. When Matt first joined the project, he spent a few rehearsals off to the side working through his own improvisational practice. Early rehearsal visitors said things like "the dancers are not very connected with the music" and "the music overpowers the dance" and "the musician needs to follow the dancers more." We practiced working with the musician in duets with him and also in groups. We all tried to pay attention to our relationships with Matt. By the time our performances rolled around, we were receiving completely different feedback concerning the relationship between the music and the dance. For example an audience member of the second show night said "I couldn't believe the way the music connected with the dance. I could see that you had been practicing a lot." Matt was listening more and the dancers were leading more. It is my opinion that Matt was still leading the dancers on most of the propositions during the show performances, but it is certain that the relationship was more balanced than earlier, which was a good thing according to the feedback we received from others.

The situation with the lighting designer was not such a success story. Amélie, the lighting designer, joined the group just a few weeks before the show.

We had a different lighting designer who quit unexpectedly and Amélie was kind enough to join our project at the last minute. We asked Amélie to improvise her lighting and she agreed to the challenge, even though she had not tried this before and even though there was little time to prepare. She decided to go the safe route and design a lighting plan that was simple but improvisable. We were only able to practice all together with the musician, dancers and lighting designer three times before the show. During those three times, the dancers and Matt could only get accustomed to the lights minimally. Most importantly, during the three rehearsals just before the show, Amélie needed the time to practice improvising and being connected to the dancers. In the end the relationship between the dance and the lights was simple. Mostly Amélie followed the mood of the dancers and remained relatively safe with her propositions. Perhaps to say that it was not a success is not fair. Given the circumstances Amélie did exactly what she should have in my mind: She supported those who had established clearer ideas about who was leading and who was following. However, if we could have had more time to work together, the dancers and Amélie might have had more mutual understanding and she could have taken more risks with her lighting.

3.2 Wrap-up session

A few days after the last performance, Rémi sent around an e-mail suggesting that we all come together to discuss our experiences of the performances. He thought that a post-mortem meeting would be a nice way to "put a lid on the process." The suggestion was a welcome to me; I was anxious to resolve some of the tension that was surrounding the performances. Rémi suggested that we spend some time thinking about our experiences before the meeting in order to avoid being too influenced by the others and to prepare ourselves. Coincidentally, and somewhat appropriately, Amélie and Matt were the only people who could not come to the meeting, despite my efforts to include them (especially Matt), so we were left with

only the dancers to "put the lid on" our process. This seemed appropriate because only the five dancers were involved for the duration of the project; it was the dancers who knew the process structure from the beginning to the end.

We began our meeting by each stating our "experiences" concerning the performances. Then we ended by responded to my question: "how has your dancing changed since you began this process?" After that we slid into a conversation about our habits. I will begin a report of the meeting by stating, in my words, each of our "experiences" in the order that they were presented in the meeting.

I was proud. I learned that questions of good and bad in the dance moment can stifle my creativity. I began to follow my impulses and counter impulses. I was feeling more confident in the dance moment, but I was still questioning myself about the group process. I experienced how working collectively requires time and patience. I was confused by the cloud of doubt and insecurity (or some negative energy) that was hovering over the performance weekend.

Rémi was sad after the performances. He felt that the eye contact on stage was scary; the not knowing in eye contact was scary. He experienced a lot of attraction and sexual tension on stage. He experienced this through physical contact and eye contact. His self-judgment came after. He also felt that the act of improvising together was about negotiating barriers.

For *Speranza* the show was anti-climactic. She started the process by herself and she slowly got more connected with the group. She was dealing a lot with issues about her small size and "lack of experience." She felt that the public was "voiristic," like they were peeping in. She had many physically satisfying moments. She felt that movement, in general, is sensual. Also she was still feeling uncertain about how to make choreographic choices.

Andréa felt vulnerable during the performances. She was still in a transition point with dance. She was questioning her identity concerning whether or not she was a dancer. Her ego said "I'm a dancer and now I'm not" and this was still very sensitive for her. She was having a major personality conflict with Matt and couldn't shake it. She was sorry to the other dancers for letting the conflict with Matt affect her dancing. She also felt the sexual tension and was trying to play with it.

Alex was relieved after the performances. He was happy to be finished with a stressful time for him. (It is important to note that Alex was performing in another show the Sunday after our show so he was rehearsing during the day and coming to our shows at night—it was an eventful week for him.) He felt that some of the best moments for him were actually in the beginning of the process, when we were feeling things out. Also his girlfriend was extremely jealous: She felt that the dancing was very sexual including the eye contact.

We all had personal experiences of the performances but most of us agreed: After the shows we felt left hanging. I was confused; Rémi was sad; Andréa was vulnerable; and Speranza felt that the shows were anti-climactic. The structure of our group process was incomplete at that point. I had tried to organize a cast party, but it did not work out and as a result we had no chance to talk about our experiences. Fortunately Rémi brought us together for the most-mortem meeting. As we told our experiences to each other, I could feel the tension in the room deflating. The tension that had been built during show week, due probably to performance nerves among other things, was finally being relaxed and we were bringing the group process to an end.

We did not spend much time analyzing our experiences. That did not seem necessary. Instead we just shared them with each other and sat with them for a little while. Just stating our experiences and listening to each other's experiences

provided a calming effect on the group. By calming ourselves down, the end was more manageable and we could hold it easier. It reminds me of what Louise Bédard said about dance structure, "cohesion is something to grab." We could grab our experiences, hold them, understand them better, and the whole structure of our group process was more cohesive. At this point in the meeting, as we explained our experiences, we were holding the "lid" to our process getting ready to end it without holes or unfinished business.

We were already feeling better when I asked the group, "how has your dancing changed since the beginning of this process?" I asked the question because I thought it would be interesting for us all to share our answers with each other and because I thought it would help me understand how the workgroup had progressed throughout the process. I used the word "changed" instead of "progressed" because I wanted to avoid a conversation about the meaning of progress. Though my idea of "cyclical progress" allows for various ways of being, without necessarily trying to be better, I thought I would avoid potential misunderstandings by using the "change" instead of "progress." Without misunderstanding we proceeded in sharing our thoughts about how we had changed.

Alex began by mentioning that it was the first time he had danced in a piece this long. That changed the dynamic of performing for him. In the end he felt like he could see a story through from the beginning to the end.

Speranza was happy that she could sustain herself in such a long piece. For her, that was a change. Also she realized that she enjoyed this kind of work.

Andréa felt that her movement did not change much. However how she dealt with the energy changed. By the end of the process, she was waiting more for spurts of energy and then letting the energy go when it seemed done.

For *Rémi* it was all about his dedication to movement. He learned how to stay "in it" longer and to maintain a longer journey with sequence. Since he doesn't have a long background in dance, he felt that he needed to go straight to the emotion of the movement. He could not rely on his training to send him into a pirouette for example. Instead he needed to be fully dedicated to the movement on an emotional level.

The conversation shifted and I did not actually answer this question then. I can answer it now though. For me my dancing was much different at the end of the process compared with the beginning. My movement was bolder and my intuitions were stronger. I had fewer moments of hesitation and uncertainty about impulses and I almost completely abolished my overwhelming problem of self-consciousness on stage. I could propose stories with the other dancers and I could see the stories that the other dancers were proposing. In my opinion I got better.

At this point in the meeting I mentioned that, during the performances, I was really noticing my habits. This spun us into a conversation about our habits. Andréa chimed in that she noticed how we had habits concerning how we related with each other. She remembered having "the same kinds of duets with Speranza" for example. At that moment I looked at Rémi and had an embodied memory of our typical duet; the Rémi/Amy duet consisted of me falling with a lot of weight and him lifting me up in various ways. I scanned the room and had quick memories of my duet dynamic with each person in the room. Alex thought that the group had developed habits too. He stated that "we always had the same vibe for the shows." When asked what the "vibe" was, he said "serious, quirky, and abstract spacey."

The post-mortem meeting was the last time the five of us were together for *Everyday is a Fine Day*. It was the meeting that brought our experiences out into words and gave us all the chance to share observations about the workgroup dynamic

and dancing. By sharing our experiences and observations, we prepared ourselves for the end—we were creating the "lid"—until we were ready. It seemed to me that we sensed that we were ready to end the process when the mood was happy, relieved and cohesive. We all said thank you to each other and gave each other hugs. In this way we put the lid on our process and each member of the group moved on to other things in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Structuring the now

In the end it can be said that this particular dance improvisation workgroup, in attempt to prepare itself for a dance improvisation performance, focused on its *structuring*, rather than *the structure*, of *Everyday is a Fine Day*. Though some time was spent practicing certain *scores*, prepared improvisation structures, for the piece, the workgroup ultimately relied on its structuring capabilities to perform *Everyday is a Fine Day*.

As I see it, throughout the project, the workgroup designed its rehearsals in ways that would enhance the group's structuring capabilities. In response to our problems or intuited needs, we became preoccupied with various concerns and goals. As mentioned earlier our *preoccupations* led to *activities* which led to our particular group style of *structuring*. Some of the main preoccupations, as discussed in the previous chapter, were group process, the acquisition of general experience, compositional skill and awareness, scoring *Everyday is a Fine Day* and connecting with collaborators. By addressing our preoccupations, through new and borrowed activities, we were able to improve our dancing (or change our dancing, if you prefer) in ways that affected our structuring capabilities. The end products, the performances of *Everyday is a Fine Day*, could not have happened without the work that the workgroup did in preparation.

Essentially we were not the same individual dancers in the final performances as we were at the first rehearsal, and our group dancing dynamic had changed. In the previous chapter, I explained various examples of how our individual and group dancing had changed. I attribute these changes to the particular process of this particular group. Without the exact dynamic of these five dancers, plus Matt, plus Amélie, the process and progress would not have been the same. We brought about the various preoccupations of the group, which led to our chosen activities, which led to the way that we structured *Everyday is a Fine Day* in the moment. Together we built a piece. It was not a piece in the sense that a choreography is a piece, because it was not planned. All of the details were left to the spontaneous moments of the "now."

It was an unpredictable "now" that we had prepared for, but not completely. During the process we established habits of moving with each other, knowledge about each others' styles and enhanced compositional skills that gave the group members a sense of security and trust in each other. With knowledge and trust, there came a more cohesive structuring style in each dancer. This is because knowing and trusting each other allowed us to support whatever happened in the moment with an unconscious understanding about where the occurrences came from and where they might go. As we were observing the dance we were creating, we could also use our dance composition skills to help us shape the dance. We had prepared for the moment by preparing ourselves and our group dynamic. In the end, though the moment was unpredictable, it was not random.

Ironically—at the same time as we were establishing and relying on our habits and acquired knowledge about ourselves, each other and the group—we were challenging our habits and trying not to be "stuck" in the way we moved. We did not want our movement to become stagnant and one dimensional. When we realized that we had established a strong group connection, around the mid-session showing,

for example, we hurried to find ways of allowing our individual dancing selves to shine through. I believe that we were striving for a complex relationship between the known and the unknown in our dancing. Underlying everything we did was this dichotomy. We wanted to encourage this dichotomy and play with it. During much of our rehearsal duration we were trying to be more familiar with each others' dancing. Yet, after our performances, there was much talk about our habits. It is clear that we were deeply concerned with establishing a well balanced relationship between our known dancing structures and our unknown dancing structures, while valuing both equally.

Advice for other workgroups

After all is said and done, I walk away from the experience of this dance improvisation workgroup with ideas about how best to facilitate a dance improvisation workgroup. I think it is appropriate to share my ideas in the form of advice. I am imaging that a group of people wants to start a dance improvisation performance workgroup for the first time and does not know how to organize the group process. Assuming the workgroup has decided to try a non-leader approach in which all of the group members will try to be relatively involved in collaborating on the direction of all (or most) of the workgroup activities, here are my six suggestions.

1. *Establish a group facilitator.* Since the hypothetical dance improvisation workgroup has decided to conduct itself in a way that requires no leader and aspires to keep all members involved in all workgroup activities, it will be faced with questions about group process. There are no ready-made organization patterns for a workgroup that wants to create its organizational patterns in response to its own needs. I will discuss two of the questions that we faced in the workgroup of this study that were resolved by having a group facilitator. The questions were how to insure democracy and how to keep the rehearsal flow going.

First one of our questions was how to insure that the workgroup continued working democratically. It is my opinion that, for a democracy to work, the individuals involved must all participate and be heard. Each individual of the democracy must feel that his or her opinion counts, that he or she is helping to choose the direction of the group. Insuring that all of the workgroup members were contributing and being heard was difficult when individual personalities caused some group members to be more or less opinionated than others. As the group's facilitator, I carried the role of prodding quiet members of the group, when it seemed appropriate, to encourage them to share their opinions. This is one of the reasons that it is important to have a designated facilitator. The facilitator can facilitate the conversations in ways that help group members all participate.

Also a facilitator can keep the rehearsal flow going. Often during our rehearsals, I noticed that we needed someone to say when the group was getting off track or to say that it was time to continue to the next activity. As the group facilitator, I tried to be the one to say these things. I kept track of time during the rehearsals and tried to encourage flow. In this way I helped to keep the rehearsal flow moving forward.

I do not believe that it is inherently necessary to have one person in the role of facilitator for a dance improvisation workgroup. Hypothetically speaking the role could be passed around in a planned way or a spontaneous way. However, as I explained in chapter 4, it seems to me that people do not have much practice improvising group structures with leadership ambiguity in Western society. Therefore I have compromised my stance on the issue: Instead of reverting to the most familiar way to carry out a group process, with a designated leader, a dance improvisation workgroup can proceed without a leader, but a facilitator is necessary (or at least helpful) to keep the group members involved and to keep the process flow going.

The facilitator should be someone who is sure to be dedicated to the whole workgroup process. In the indeterminate act of creating an improvised dance, it is easy to loose faith in the process. Without a concrete dance that can be repeated, there will probably be times, as there were with the workgroup of this study, when it is difficult to understand the purpose of the process. At times like this, it is important that the facilitator, even if he or she is also entertaining doubts, be dedicated to the process of the group. Ideally all of the group members will be dedicated to the process of the group. In fact I would suggest having a discussion about the group members' expectations concerning the individuals' dedication levels in the beginning of the process.

2. *Conduct meetings*. Holding meetings throughout the process will help your workgroup stay connected and conscious of the changing group process. For our first rehearsal, we came together to dance without knowing each other and without discussing our group organization together. I told everyone that I would prepare something for the first rehearsal. I prepared an activity I had read about in Anna Halprin's *Moving Toward Life* (1995), for which dancers review their resources, create a score together, perform it, and discuss the dance afterwards. We did this, without knowing why exactly, and at the end of the rehearsal, the group decided that we would need to meet outside of the rehearsals to discuss our activities. We thought it would be good to meet every week to plan and discuss our activities. Unfortunately, our weekly meetings only lasted for two weeks. We had intuited the need for outside discussion, but we did not follow through on our intuition. If I had it to do over again, I would suggest a meeting before we even begin and I would try harder to ensure more meetings throughout the process.

We tried to hold discussions during rehearsals, but we often found that there was not enough time or that the discussions distracted from the dancing. In the rehearsal moments, dancing always seemed more important than discussion, which

meant that the group did not discuss our activities as much as we should have. Without having time and space allotted for discussion and planning, we were forced to rush our planning. Because our activities were often quickly planned, I suspect they were not always as appropriate as possible to our needs and goals. Also, to make our planning more time efficient, I sometimes took on a leader role and made decisions for the group without consensus. I believe it would be more beneficial for a dance improvisation workgroup who wants to keep all members involved to set aside time for discussion and planning that is separate from rehearsal time.

3. *Be patient.* It would be helpful for a new workgroup to recognize that its process will have up-moments and down-moments. Being patient and trusting the process will help a group keep its process in perspective and be satisfied with whatever happens. When I began the *Everyday is a Fine Day* project I had a romantic idea about how we, the workgroup, could tap into some unknown energy that would inspire us to dance and drive our dancing to be the best it could be. In actuality there were many moments when we did not feel inspired at all or we felt stuck in our established dancing patterns. At those times it was most beneficial to take a step back, to be patient and to trust the process. As long as all of the members have agreed to the project and still want to be in the workgroup, things will work out well enough. Creating a dance improvisation performance workgroup takes a lot of time and one cannot expect everything to fall into place with out ups and downs. Being patient will help the group members work through their rough patches.

4. *Practice having an audience.* If a workgroup practices having an audience, it will work through issues that come about with the presence of an audience. As we navigated our way into and through the process of making *Everyday is a Fine Day*, we found it difficult to know how our dances would be perceived by others. Since we were all intimately involved in our own dancing and the dancing of the group, we could not react objectively when giving each other

inside feedback. For this reason we invited friends, colleagues, and the directors of this thesis into our rehearsals and to our mid-session showing to give us feedback. We also danced in public where we could be seen by passersby. If I were participating in a new dance improvisation workgroup, I would suggest finding ways to have audience members even more often than we did because it was beneficial.

Acquiring outside feedback will help a workgroup understand its dancing at any given time. In our workgroup, as we heard our feedback change over time, we came to understand our advancing achievements and lacks. With the knowledge of our achievements and lacks in our minds, we became preoccupied with certain concerns and goals and developed activities to address our concerns and goals. Essentially our outside feedback helped us know how our dancing had changed and what we needed to do to change our dancing some more.

Also inviting others to watch a workgroup dance will help the group get accustomed to having an audience. As I am sure many dance performance improvisers know, dancing together in rehearsal is one thing, and dancing together in front of an audience is another. By creating situations for a workgroup to practice being seen, the group will give themselves the chance to practice dealing with certain issues that come about, or are highlighted, when the group is dancing in front of an audience. To illustrate from our example, we noticed that dancing in front of other people brought about feelings of being judged and self-consciousness in some of us. In response we organized a mid-session showing and practiced in public parks to practice being seen. Through the practice we each discovered ways to deal with the pressure of having an audience.

5. *Create a bridge into each rehearsal.* When a group of individuals comes together to work on a common goal, in this case to prepare for improvised dance performance, they need to create a space for the group. Too often in our rehearsals,

we came together with lingering personal issues that inhibited our group process. To address this problem we began to meditate at the beginning of each rehearsal. The meditation process provided a bridge for us between our outside lives and the group process. As we meditated we let go of our outside concerns and focused on the present moment. The activity helped us be present in the rehearsals and focus on the group activities with greater attention.

I do not suppose meditation is the right bridge for every workgroup. Any kind of activity in which the people are tuning into their present experience might work. A couple of times, dancers led our workgroup through somatic exercises at the beginning of rehearsal, which encouraged embodied awareness. These exercises were also useful, but meditation seemed to suit the dynamic of our workgroup a little better. I would suggest to any new dance improvisation workgroup to try a few approaches to see what suits them best.

6. *Create a lid for your group process.* Whether or not a workgroup has experienced an unsettling mood surrounding its performances, as was the case with our workgroup, it would be useful to conduct some kind of activity to close out a workgroup process. I imagine a group could do this by having a cast party or with a post-mortem meeting. In my view, for a group process to have a sense of closure, it is important for the group participants come together to discuss their experiences of the process. If a workgroup does not allow time for its members to discuss the process, the group members might be left feeling unsatisfied and confused. I found that our post-mortem meeting had a calming effect on the group members and gave us a chance to digest our experiences together. For this reason I would recommend creating time for reflective togetherness after the process of any dance improvisation performance workgroup.

Idea for a future study

I am satisfied that I answered my thesis question rather thoroughly. I was able to show how the democratic dance improvisation workgroup, in which I participated, proceeded and progressed toward an improvised dance performance. The process and progress that I observed began with preoccupations, which led to activities, which led to our particular group structuring style. I see my research as an examination of the root system that led to the final structures of *Everyday is a Fine Day*. Also I believe that I showed evidence that our final dance structures, though improvised, were not random. They were informed by a process of determining and conducting activities designed to enhance the group's structuring abilities. I traced the system from our preoccupations to our final structuring, while highlighting the group's process along the way. In the end I have satisfied my initial curiosity.

As I satisfied my initial curiosity I developed a new curiosity. I now find myself wondering more about where the group's preoccupations came from. More explicitly why did we see our "problems" as problems and our "goals" as goals? Would a dance improvisation workgroup working in different culture, or a different dance genre, identify the same problems or would there be different problems? My gut tells me that the aesthetic that our workgroup was seeking was influenced by many unconscious factors that were not addressed in this thesis. I imagine that we were influenced by our own backgrounds, by our personal psychic processes, by the contemporary dance aesthetic of Montréal, by Western culture in general, by the politics of our day... I imagine a study could be done to address these factors of a dance improvisation workgroup and to trace these factors to eventual improvised dance structures. Perhaps it is an idea for a future study.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS FOR SARAH

1. Why did you decide to leave the project?

2. What did you like about the way the group was organized, the rehearsal process?

3. What did you dislike about the way the group was organized, the rehearsal process?

4. How was this project different from other ways you had worked in the past?

5. What would you have done differently if you were me?

6. What would you do differently if we were just beginning the project?

7. Did you see any difference in the way we danced from the first 4 rehearsals (in which you participated) to last Sunday's work-in-progress showing?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW WITH SARAH PLUS NOTES

----------Conversation with Sarah----------Apr. 25, 2007

1. Why did you decide to leave the project?
   I had a lot going on at the time and needed to focus on getting my life in order.

2. What did you like about the way the group was organized, the rehearsal process?
   -liked the idea of democratic. It was clear, but not in practice.
   -didn't understand her role. What she needed to bring to the group.
   - liked idea of democratic process. doesn't like typical chor/dancer relationship.
   - but expected a guide.

3. What did you dislike about the way the group was organized, the rehearsal process?
   - a bit out of focus.
   - If everyone is to propose things, it's too big. Too many possibilities.

4. How was this project different from other ways you had worked in the past?
   - She'd always been guided by someone in the past.
   - The members of EDFD were not able to lead collectively. "we didn't dare." That's what we missed. We were a little lost.
   - When I said it was her turn to decide a constraint, she didn't know what to do.
   - She only has one similar experience. She was with a group of friends and they were given themes to respect. They knew each other well. They were same age, same period, same tastes.

5. What would you have done differently if you were me?
   - I wouldn't do an improv group like this. I'd have some direction.
   - We'd have to have the same desires
   - I'd find activities to help with that. Lots of discussion.
   - If I decided the subject, I'd lead.
   - If I didn't want to be the leader, I'd talk more or dance more.
   - I would have been less hesitant, or work with hesitation.
   - It would be difficult to direct without a leader when the people were so different (age, personality, life moment)
   - Maybe you shouldn't have spoken about the mémoire. I wasn't clear about what you wanted. I knew you were looking for structure, but I didn't understand what that meant.

6. What would you do differently if we were just beginning the project?

- It was an *flou* period for me too. It was too much lack of focus.
- If I were just beginning this project again, I would say it more often when I was confused or when I thought it was lacking focus. I'd say I don't understand.
- With the Speranza example, I'd say that I wanted to read her paper.

7. Did you see any difference in the way we danced from the first 4 rehearsals (in which you participated) to last Sunday's work-in-progress showing?

- You weren't very present. I felt hesitation except with Matt. I didn't see much risk taking.

Me- "I wasn't feeling good. And I took less place than usual."

- Alex seemed more present. I could follow him.
- There were lots of group moments that were interesting. That was different than before. It kept coming back to the group. It was a more homogenic way to move. Qualities came together and you took from each other.
- The hats seemed random.
- Starting in black was interesting.

APPENDIX C: JOURNAL NOTES EXAMPLE

13 April 14, 2007

Plan

-Review last week
-Somatics warm-up, Feldenkrias/Alexander arm circles
-Talk about scheduling
    Lighting Designer problem
-Ingredients/Blocking

Sp will be 15 min late, Alex, 1 hour

During (with description filled in)

It's 4:15 and no one is here yet. I'm feeling dissed. Should I say something or not? This reiterates the fact that this project is more important to me than to anyone else in the group.
Well, I guess I should.

AnD recommended asking Amelie to do lighting design.

Wrote on board as reminder and place to work from.

Last Time

Suggestions for this time
-block it off for run
-add flocking or running as ingredient
-find ways to encourage speed

Score ingredients
-work into phrase diagonal
-Include all facing back at some point

This Time

New ingredients
-Alex "full out dancing"
    Balls to the wall
    Tits to the sky
-Sp. All get into a group at some point.
    AnD scared it will become too choreographed. When she imagines us getting into a group she sees it from an outside eye and thinks it might not be interesting for the audience.

So, someone suggests we add some other ingredients to make it more specific. Someone suggests we specify that we're all standing up or lying down. Someone suggests we're making noise. Someone else agrees with the noise idea. Remi is worried about making sound because he thinks that is a whole different level and maybe we're not able. We decide to try it anyway.
-Amy remembers R mentioned flocking last week.

We decide to try blocking it out. I draw a long rectangle on the board. We come to this. We'll have running to do transitions.

Open	Phrase building	running	Backs to audience	running	Get into a group and sound	running	Full on dancing	flocking

People are getting impatient with all of the talking. Alex, says "let's just dance." I am annoyed by his impatience. It is the first time we are really trying to block it out. Rémi says I'm "virgo."

Amy "well, let's try it anyway."

Matt is not here today. Colby is here and he does the music. I give him a pile of cd's that he knows and he agrees to chose the music as we dance. We decide to do 30 minutes.

We actually did 45 minutes. It felt like the best run we had done so far.
Colby loved it. He claps ecstatically.

We never actually all ran for the transitions and the best transitions seemed to just happen organically.

Actual time was 50 minutes. Colby didn't stop us because it was going well and he thought we'd want to continue.

Colby said it was fun, good transitions, well balanced between being kind of pedestrian and dancy.

Alex "more organic than usual."

I liked having the ingredients.

We need to find ways to have Matt/and or lighting designer give signs that we are finished.

We all agreed that we didn't need to block the time off and decide when to do the ingredients.

R said to me afterwards "We had a good duet together because we were doing our own thing but together too."

Colby said afterwards "It demands a lot from the spectator because it is hard to get a bird's eye view of the whole. It is very much about what is happening right now."

Feelings/Spontaneous Analysis

There was a lack of patience when we talked about blocking it off. Though we only spent 15 minutes doing it, which was super quick in my opinion, some wanted it to hurry up. Alex kept saying "let's dance. I just want to dance." He didn't want to take the time to clarify the parameters. I think we learn the most by "just dancing" but we were trying something new here and needed a little time talking.

Note to audience: Pretend we're your friends. You know us and you're curious about what we are doing right now.

If it is about what happens right now, does that mean that the whole organization is not important?

It's not taking something and placing it in time. It's taking place in time.

Video Reaction

<u>Run</u>

Sparce opening. Walking around. We're all separated and lonely. Sarah Vaughan Motherless Child.

Sp. solo
Amy walking in circles
Alex small, pedestrian gestures

We slowly come together through gesture
Then into phrase diagonal

Alex breaks off and runs around
The rest continue some unison
Amy joins Alex ragtime music

Stimulated Recall- Be dedicated while Alex and I do duet. I'm inspired by the music to do Charleston movement

Suddenly we all stop bouncing around and the mood becomes somber. We are sick of the music and contrast it.

Sp sneaks up behind me. I can't see anyone. I don't know she is there but trust the other dancers. I know they will include me.

We're walking in circles and it's like we're stirring the space.
Sp is keeping a center point.

Letting ourselves be influenced by each other brings consistency to the whole.

SR- I jump into the space to balance the sides. I notice Alex is facing back and it triggers my memory of the score. It is time to do "all face back."

Sp and AnD are doing a slow gentle duet down stage. It goes with the music.
R and Amy begin a quick conversation duet up stage which goes with new music.
Sp and AnD slowly incorporate the quality of Amy and R. They weren't ready at first but they come around.
Suddenly we all revert back to AnD and Sp's first quality.
R and Amy begin to circle AnD and Sp and that invites them into the circle.
We're all running in a circle. We recognized the transition.
We break off into new duets AnD and Amy, Sp and R.

Lots of drumming in the music. We all feel the drive.

SR- I come really close to AnD. I'm working on a relationship issue we were dealing with earlier that day. She and I were feeling uncomfortable with each other and had some tension between us about her missing some rehearsals. Now I want to show her that I am over it. And I want to be closer to her. She invites it. Is she feeling the same?

SR- People are piled on me and I wonder how many.

SR- R and I are doing a duet. I'm trying to incorporate AnD and Alex's movement into our duet.

I see that Sp is into the male/female section. Interesting because she has told me before that she hates dances that play on gender roles.

Flocking is an interesting way to end.

SR- I didn't want to look at AnD during flocking, so I took the chance that my mov't would be different.

APPENDIX D: CHANGING PREOCCUPATIONS

Compositional skill / awareness to experience

Solo
Duet
Group
General

Scoring / planning / practicing this piece
General practice
Dealing with rehearsal organization and group process
Connecting with collaborators

1	Discovering each other one at a time Setting some group boundaries Openness Scores / activities (general improv practice)
2	Duet work Impulse work Scores / activities (general improv practice)
Group meeting	Getting to know each other (imitation) Working democratically Developing a theme
3	Solos Imitation Small Scores / activities (general improv practice) Expanding vocab / challenging habits Discovering ourselves through inside feedback
Group meeting	Duet work Awareness to group time, space, energy, shape, story
4	Discovering ourselves through inside feedback Solos Small scores / activities (general improve practice) Expanding vocab / challenging our habits Duets Group cohesion
5	Group awareness Audience awareness Duets Awareness to group time, space, energy
6	Group connection Scoring a whole run

	-Progression of small scores General awareness Group awareness to time, space, shape
7	Group connection Group awareness Outside feedback Open run -Nothing preset
8	Group connection Small scores (general practice) Outside feedback What to do when we can't identify what others are doing Longer runs
Amy & Ron meeting	Going through self to see outside
9	Group connection and awareness Duet work Trusting each other Commitment to choices Scoring final run
10	Personal experience and being in touch with roots of movement Breath Self-observation and awareness Duets
11	Clarity of choices Personal awareness and experience Impulse commitment Getting used to Matt Small scores Scoring final performance -Set beginning
12	Group awareness to time, space, shape Scoring final performance -Ingredients Musician experimenting
13	Reviewing / building on last week's score -Blocking previous small scores -Transitions Longer discussion
14	Self awareness Duets Impulse / commitment

	Scoring final performance -Blocking previous small scores -Transitions
15	Understanding each other (imitation) Breaking habits (personal) What to do when we can't identify what others are doing Musician experimenting
16 Showing	Obtaining outside feedback Scoring -Unblocked ingredients Feeling judged
17	Yin energy Letting go of judgment Questions without answers
18	Impulse / commitment Connecting with musician Relationship to audience in question
19	Beginning-middle-end (structural development) Inside feedback Noticing and identifying form
20	Beginning-middle-end Inside feedback Noticing form Solo development Connecting with musician in solo
21	Pep-talk to review learned lessons Spatial awareness Commitment Long discussions
22	Solo development /story Clarity Connecting with musician in solo Longer discussion Understanding group's purpose Lighting possibilities
Amy & Amélie Meeting	Audience focus Openness
23	Solo development Themes emerging Getting into deeper state Story development

Amy & Matt meeting	Risk taking
24	Bridging into rehearsal space from outside life Clarity Solo development Incorporating solos into group run Giving each other space to develop solos
25	Photos for posters and fliers
26	Solos Connecting with music Incorporating solos into run Lighting (connection and influence) Boundaries for show schedule Deciding on show score
27	Lighting (connection and influence) Show schedule boundaries Getting out of one's self / letting go of ego
Show 1	Group cohesion Incorporating solos Audience feedback Answering audience questions - e.g. How did we incorporate Matt?
Show 2	Changing the beginning Dealing with feeling stuck together with sense of urgency
Show 3	Working through personal conflict / stress Respecting schedule boundaries
Show 4	Emerging theme development and character
Post-mortem meeting	Achievements Ideas for future scores for compositional solidity Personal experiences Group experiences Noticing group and duet habits

APPENDIX E: LIST OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Rehearsal 1----Don't know each other.
- Solos in early rehearsals
- Dancing together, duets with each person
- Social outings

1, 16----Self-conscious
- Invited friends to watch for experience having audience
- Meditated and danced in public space (Amy and Ron)
- Developed my mantra-"I'm not me; I'm what I'm doing."

1, 15----Just moving around, no purpose
- No searching; something or nothing (Amy and Scott)
- Wait (Andy's suggestion)

2----No time for discussion
- Outside meetings

3, 12, 23----Questioning whether or not we need one clear leader
- Take turns leading activities
- Reexamined whether or not that was what we wanted
- Never quite resolved

3, 7, 19----Lacking group focus / purpose
- Sarah left the group
- Discussed "why are we here?"
- I never quite understood this problem

4, 17----Always moving
- Solo work
- Give each other space
- Score: include a solo for each person

3----Too much going on in rehearsal, scattered rehearsal structure
- Building from one rehearsal to the next
- Pep-talk to include lessons learned
- Meditation to focus attention

4----Falling into personal habits
- Score: while practicing duets, choose unfamiliar movement to practice (as the theme)

Score: imitate someone else in group who dances differently

5----Needs more group connection
Score: Goldfish bowl
Score: Flocking
Score element: Ritual beginning

7----Can't agree on scores
Leave it open
Ingredient concept
Keep trying

7, 12----Personal relationship conflicts
Not resolved

7, 10, 18, 21----Personal life situation coming into group process and affecting commitment
Meditation for bridge

8----Can't identify what others are doing
Open Spaces--Going deep into experience and root of movement
Letting go of trying to identify. Introducing curiosity into dance style

1, 10, 20----Lacking risk / feeling hesitant
Score: Goldfish bowl to encourage trust
Score: Line game to encourage impulse commitment
Score: Charge each other and dodge to encourage risk and commitment

10, 15, 16----Lacking clarity
Score: Drama score
Something or nothing mindset

11, 16----Needs more individual presence
Solo work

11, 12, 16----Difficult to connect to Scott
Solos with Matt to foster mutual understanding and character development

12, 14, 20, 22, 23, 25----Not dedicated to rules / breaking boundaries, people being late.
Requested that people not be late
Not resolved

12, 16, 17----Lacking development. Leaving propositions too soon
Score element: Beginning diagonal phrase development
Score: Curiosity dance

13----Some in group want to discuss more. Others impatient with talking
Tried to balance
Not resolved

13, 19, 21----Don't know how to end
Score element: end with flocking
Score: Jo-Ha-Kyu
Score element: Trust your end and stay still until others have finished
Practiced allowing lighting designer to choose ending

13----Difficult for spectators
Lighting to help focus
Worked on being clear

15, 21----Feeling stuck, uninspired
Wait
Work from where you are and don't try to be somewhere more "interesting"
Score: curiosity dance

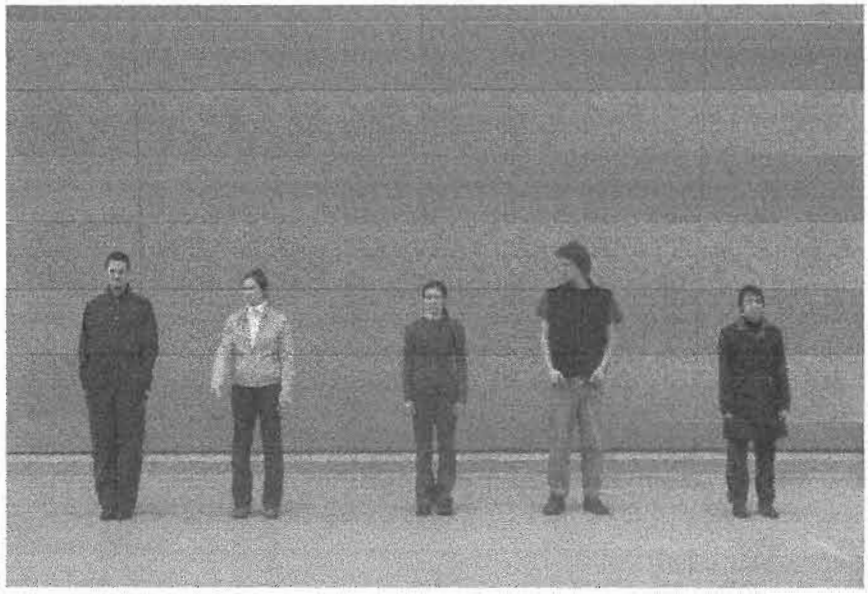
16, 18----Audience feeling left out, or lost
More down stage dancing

11, 23, 24----Conflict between feeling and feedback
Take a break from feedback

APPENDIX F: SHOW PROGRAM

[Program page 1]

Le Département de danse présente
Everyday is a Fine Day



Un mémoire de création de maîtrise en danse
de **Amy Helmstetter**

14, 15, 16 juin 2007 / 20h
16 juin 2007 / 18h

Piscine-théâtre
Pavillon de danse
840, rue Cherrier
Métro Sherbrooke
Entrée libre

Département de
DANSE
UQÀM

[Program page 2]

Everyday is a Fine Day

Sous-titres :

Jeudi 20h-

Vendredi 20h-

Samedi 18h-

20h-

Collaborateurs : Amélie Bourbonnais, Andréa Dugas-Hawkes, Amy Helmstetter, Rémi Lahaussois, Alexander Richardson, Speranza S., Matthew Tomlinson

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Les improvisateurs de ce groupe, comme plusieurs artistes dans le monde de la danse, recherchent à situer une variété de composantes de danse (temps, espace, énergie, relations, corps, thèmes, etc.), de musique et d'éclairage dans un tout cohérent. Dans *Everyday is a Fine Day*, nous partageons avec le public nos efforts de structuration et de direction dans nos impulsions vers une performance qui se développe de façon cohérente et où des relations s'établissent. La façon dont nous y arrivons est secondaire. Ce qui nous importe, c'est surtout la recherche de ce développement; le processus avant le produit. L'importance revient plutôt à notre qualité de présence et au fait que nous soyons entièrement dédiés au processus qui fera surgir cette danse. Joignez-vous à nous alors que nous explorons de nouveaux territoires dans cette danse, révélant le processus instantané de la collaboration dans la création.

Pour son mémoire de création, Amy Helmstetter dirige une étude portant sur la façon dont ce nouveau groupe d'improvisation en danse, auquel elle participe, procède et progresse vers la structure finale d'une performance improvisée. Sa recherche tourne autour d'un questionnement sur le procédé de répétition, ainsi que la performance finale, en improvisation.

Directrices du mémoire : Sylvie Fortin et Louise Bédard
Membres du jury : Sylvie Fortin, Louise Bédard, Hélène Duval et Dena Davida

[Program page 3]

Biographies

Andréa Dugas-Hawkes s'implique à titre d'interprète, de chorégraphe, d'enseignante en danse et en yoga, ainsi que d'entraîneure personnelle. Andréa termine sont DEC en danse au CEGEP de Saint-Laurent en 2000, entreprend par la suite ses études à l'École du Toronto Dance Theatre et termine sa formation académique au Conservatoire de danse de Rotterdam. Depuis l'obtention de son diplôme, Andréa danse à titre d'interprète pour les chorégraphes ou metteurs en scènes Sandrine Pitarque, Véronique Dupuis, Dominique Bouchard, Ariane Philomène, Jessica Serli, Rebecca Ostwald, Martin Dewez et Édith Depaule.

Rémi Lahaussois interprète et dirige des spectacles où la danse, le chant et le jeu sont à parts égales, où l'intérêt repose tant sur le processus que sur le résultat final. Il a travaillé avec Meredith Monk, Tectonic theatre, SITI company, W. Beavers, NaCl, Waxfactory. Dans chacun de ses projets, il cherche à approfondir la signification d'être humain et explore comment intégrer le ressenti à des formes concrètes.

Chanteur, compositeur, interprète, **Matthew Tomlinson** vit a Montréal depuis une dizaine d'années. Depuis ce temps il a collaboré avec plusieurs artistes en théâtre, danse, et cinéma (The Journey, Love Blood and Rhetoric, Student Politics, Expiration et, récemment, Waltown le film). En temps qu'interprète, Matt adore l'improvisation et il est inspiré par ce projet ambitieux. Visitez son site www.myspace.com/tomlinsino.

Amy Helmstetter a complété son BFA à l'Université de Ohio en Danse - chorégraphie et performance. Elle a été interprète pour plusieurs compagnies, dont le Peck Peck Dance Ensemble à San Francisco, ainsi que le Yuria Dance Ensemble au Japon. Elle consacre la plupart de son énergie à la chorégraphie et, surtout, depuis quelques temps, à l'improvisation. Son travail a été présenté aux États-Unis, au Japon, en France et à Montréal.

Après avoir complété ses études en musique à l'Université Concordia, **Alex Richardson** a décidé d'approfondir sa passion pour la danse. Il s'est inscrit au programme d'entraînement professionnel de Ballet Divertimento. Depuis ce temps, Alex poursuit sa carrière en ballet, danse contemporaine et danse sociale. Il a toujours démontré un intérêt marqué pour l'improvisation, et il est très motivé par l'idée de vivre le projet *Everyday is a Fine Day*.

Après avoir longtemps étudié les arts visuels, **Amélie Bourbonnais** a orienté ses études vers la scénographie. Elle a ainsi découvert la conception d'éclairage de scène et, depuis, se passionne pour ce médium de création visuelle qu'est la lumière. Elle a participé à différents projets, d'abord en théâtre, puis en danse. La participation au projet *Everyday is a Fine Day* lui permet d'approfondir un questionnement sur sa façon de créer à travers un processus particulier et différent de ce à quoi elle est habituée.

Speranza S., *lingophile*, poete pondérée et performante visionnaire, apercoit la conscience du corps en mouvement dans l'espace comme sa langue maternelle. Elle obtient son Bacc. en Études Litteraires Hispaniques et Lingustique de McGill en 1990. Le langage du corps la fascine autant. C'est alors qu'elle se lance dans son decodage à travers la danse contemporaine et le Butoh. L'usage des technologies visuelles et les pratiques somatiques (surtout la Gymnastique Holistique) comme outils de création chorégraphique et d'observation l'amène aux études en production vidéographique à l'Université Concordia (diplomé en 2002) et au DESS en Éducation Somatique dans le Département de danse à l'UQAM depuis 2003.

[Program page 4]

S'il vous plaît, nous vous prions de nous remettre ce programme de soirée après le spectacle afin que l'on puisse le réutiliser. Sauvons les arbres!

Cette présentation publique constitue l'aboutissement d'une démarche de recherche et de création visant à rencontrer les exigences partielles de la maîtrise en danse de l'UQAM.

Ce programme a pour objectif de former des professionnels aptes à renouveler leur pratique et à assurer un rôle de leadership dans le développement de la danse au Québec.

APPENDIX G: AUDIENCE SUB-TITLES

Thursday, June 14

8:00 pm-

Frolicking in the sunshine
Écoute tactile
La danse des zombies
Finnegan's Awake
Replicant's Dance (from Blade Runner, the movie)
Neckties vs. collectivity
Weave
A dance at the asylum

Friday, June 15

8:00 pm-

Togetherness
Les inamitiés
We are all conflicted and we affect all who surround us. We must find our way and our individual harmony.
« Mais qu'est-ce que tu fais ? »
A weak completeness

Saturday, June 16

6:00 pm-

"Don't go there." But if you do, dance it!
Vague à l'âme
Des lizards au soleil jusqu'au ridicule des relations
Éte 2000
Folie
Les indigènes forestiers
Bravo musique

8:00 pm-

Love and Discord
Risqué, humain, belle vulnérabilité
Relation entre humains
La beauté de la vie !
Green apple group grouping diligently rhythmically and with risk and style!
High school love awakens
Repetition is mantra, mantra is consciousness, consciousness is togetherness...
Finding yourself through each other
Wild! Unusual! And very very odd!
One flew over the coo-coo's nest
Boom cha
Made me smile