

Introduction to Part II: Movement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 See, in particular, Thomas, *The Body and Everyday Life*; Wacquant, *Body & Soul*; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*; Wulff, "Experiencing the Ballet Body"; Mol, *The Body Multiple*; Blackman, *The Body*.

7 Cf. Giersdorf, "Dance Studies in the International Academy."

My movement analysis strives to rigorously describe and distinguish *Duo's* movement. There are many approaches to movement analysis in dance.⁸ One commonly used theory within dance studies, Laban Movement Analysis, has been shown to be fruitful for movement analysis bridging first-person and third-person perspectives, and informs my work here.⁹ I will demonstrate a novel manner of interpreting Laban's motion factors relationally. Forsythe's own movement research projects, the CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* (1999) and the website *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2009), will also be reviewed in the chapters that follow.¹⁰ These present techniques of the individual body improvising and principles of composing multiple bodies moving together, leaving a gap for further study of the pair—as I explore here.

Existing studies of Forsythe's choreographic movement by dance scholars have concentrated both on the innovative properties of the dancers' movements and their aesthetic significance in performance. Notably, Wibke Hartewig's examination of the Ballet Frankfurt period has worked with Claudia Jeschke's procedure of *Inventarisierung von Bewegung* (Inventory of Movement, IVB); this has given us richly detailed movement profiles of performance excerpts. In concurrence with the work undertaken here, Hartewig demonstrates choreographic movements to be multilayered in meaning: across semiotic and sensory registers, interpreted through the rules of convention, and read within the sequence of composition and the theatrical frame.¹¹ Both Melanie Bales and Wibke Hartewig have examined the ways that Forsythe transforms the classical ballet genre of the *pas de deux*, creating duets that go beyond narrative tropes into the physics and process of partnering.¹²

In her dissertation, dance scholar Tamara Tomic-Vajagic has analyzed the interpretation of solos in Forsythe's "leotard ballets," using a blended approach that mixes ethnography, dance studies analysis and Laban analysis (motif writing and effort analysis). She finds that the dancer's contribution is influenced by training and the company culture in which they work, which she explores from the perspective of Bourdieu's principle of *habitus*. She also studies the concept of *agency* in interpretation—reminding us that Forsythe has fostered the performers to take liberties beyond their ballet *habitus*, creating an ensemble that, as Roslyn Sulcas observes, "is fundamentally inimical to the usual power relations between dancer and choreographer, and at odds with conventional ballet training."¹³ Overall, Tomic-Vajagic argues that studying variation in dif-

8 For an excellent review of movement analysis process, see Hartewig, "Observation Techniques."

9 Laban Movement Analysis is an analytic framework based upon the work of Austro-Hungarian dancer and dance theorist Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). This approach is explained further in section 9.1.

10 See Forsythe and ZKM, *Improvisation Technologies*; Forsythe and The Ohio State University, *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*.

11 See Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, pp. 19–32.

12 Bales, "Touchstones of Tradition and Innovation"; see also Hartewig, *Kinästhetische Konfrontation*, in particular pp. 176–85.

13 Sulcas, "William Forsythe: Channels for the Desire to Dance," p. 55. On the performer's labor, see also Sulcas, "William Forsythe. The Poetry of Disappearance and the Great Tradition"; Siegmund,

ferent artists' interpretations of the same piece illuminates the attributes of the dance texts and the cultural contexts in which the dancers work.¹⁴

Building upon the aforementioned studies, the following chapters will examine different scales and registers of *Duo's* movement: from the single movement of *showerhead* to the attributes of the choreographic sequence of *Duo*. I will compare movements across perspectives and times. Showing the complicated manner that dancing with a partner and for an audience defines movement, I aim to shift the conception of movement—as defined predominantly by expression, individualism and ephemerality—showing instead how movement is a quasi-malleable part of the dancers' worlds and bodily corporeality. By caring and attending to movement together, they build a choreographic field with unusual potential.

By the close of this section, the reader should have a richer understanding of the features of *Duo's* movement, and the changes that occur through longstanding practice of this motion cooperatively in rehearsal and performance. Taking the thesis that the extension from two to many dancers (that is, from one, to a couple, to a group) is not a simple matter of addition, the aspiration here is to use *Duo* as a provisional starting point to question the choreography of individuals in movement. When is a movement mine? When is it ours? How does practice lead to dancing together, and produce a choreography, itself in process?

"William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann"; see also Spier, "Engendering and Composing Movement," pp. 140–42.

14 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, in particular pp. 285–89.