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

Duo is a "project" whose subject matter was revised over decades—illustrating a processual approach to choreography, crucial in Forsythe's oeuvre.[1] Forsythe exposed relations and continuities between his works, similar to editions and multiples in visual art: the *Duo* project, the *Detail* series, and the *Scott* complex.[2] In my interviews with Forsythe and the dancers they described their repertoire as a reservoir of interconnected and evolving ideas, stage elements and movement practices. "There's always more to find out," explained Brown.[3] "There was always some part left over," said Forsythe: "I, obviously, don't understand everything that I do. So, it would reiterate itself. On some level."[4] Each choreography generated a world and preserved methods and materials for reflection. The *Scott* series illustrates this lucidly. I shall consider this rich example first, supporting subsequent discussion of *Duo.*

Forsythe's *Scott* complex shifted dramatically across eight iterations over 35 years—what Forsythe likened to changing from a "giant film" to a "haiku."[5] The first performance, *LDC* (1985), unfolded from Forsythe's interest in the British explorer Robert Scott's perilous *Terra Nova Expedition* to the South pole (1910–1913). The thematical material served, according to Gerald Siegmund, "as metaphor for the unknown continent of ballet." Returning to these components two seasons later, the Ballett Frankfurt produced the one-act ballet *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (*The Interrogation of Robert Scott †*, 1986), which remained in the repertoire of the ensemble throughout the 1990s. Elements of the stage setting from *LDC* were reused in this version, placed in the periphery of the space with the dancers at the center—their movements, according

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

2 The *Detail* series: *The Loss of Small Detail* (1987), *the second detail* (1991) and *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991). The *Scott* series: *LDC* (1985), *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (1986), *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (2000), *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000), *7 to 10 Passages* (2000), *Wear* (2004), *7 to 10 Passages* (2010), and *Whole in the Head* (2010). On the Scott complex see in particular Siegmund, "Of Monsters and Puppets," pp. 20–29; Cf. Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," pp. 48–50.

3 Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.

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

5 Ibid.

to Siegmund, reorganized through computer operations.[6] Over a decade later, this one-act piece was expanded into a new full-length version for the 1999–2000 season. While aspects of the prior performance were preserved, "such as the two tables behind which questioning took place or the man with the bucket over his head circling and crawling around the stage," Siegmund observed that overall: "the new version bore little resemblance to the earlier one."[7]

Working fluidly with his repertoire, Forsythe frequently expanded one-act ballets into longer works[8] and inserted existing one-act pieces within larger, new works.[9] Occasionally this process even went in reverse. From the full-length *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †* (2000), two acts were extracted and performed independently: *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000) and *7 to 10 Passages* (2000).[10] While both used the same tables, creating different landscapes on the stage, the music and movement material varied considerably. In *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, the industrial roar and virtuosic flurry of movements was organized within a hazardous grid of metal tables. In *7 to 10 Passages*, a line of performers was revealed between the tables at the periphery; glacially, they traversed at a snail's pace from the back to the front of the stage, precisely twisting and refracting their motion.

At the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe returned to the *Scott* series for his second to last production—which could be interpreted as a deliberate gesture of reflecting upon an era's process. The work *Wear* (2004) was a sparse piece for three dancers. Siegmund recalled: "If the clothes and the setting are to be trusted, they have ended up somewhere in the Polar region. But during the performance the dancers free themselves from their straitjacket-like clothes and muffled movements. Even the igloo is finally pulled down. […] A strange and curious new activity sets in that seems to produce movement playfully from the very constrictions of movement."[11]

The *Scott* history offered new potential to Forsythe's second ensemble, The Forsythe Company. After a new version of *7 to 10 Passages* (2010) was created, the dancers invested further in a movement phrase from the Ballett Frankfurt history of the *Scott* series, developing group scenes and solos that became the piece *Whole in the Head* (2010). Dramaturg Freya Vass-Rhee observed how the creation process forged collaboration between "veteran" and new company members, rekindling movement materials going back over twenty years in time and scaffolding different generational skills.[12] At the end

6 Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," p. 48.

7 See Siegmund, "Of Monsters and Puppets," p. 21.

8 Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," p. 24. Further examples include, *As a Garden in This Setting* (1992/1993) and *Woolf Phrase* (1995).

9 Examples include: *Self Meant to Govern* (1994) appearing within *Eidos:Telos* (1995), and the third act of *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005) being combined with *Clouds After Cranach* (2005). For further examples of such modified pieces, see Siegmund, "William Forsythe: Räume eröffnen, in denen das Denken sich ereignen kann," pp. 24–25.

10 For example: the short work *Double/Single* (2002) was extracted after making the full-length work *Kammer/Kammer* (2000).

11 See Siegmund, "Of Monsters and Puppets," pp. 20–21.

12 Vass-Rhee, "Schooling an Ensemble."

of The Forsythe Company, Forsythe drew upon movement and acoustic material taken from multiple existing works, including *Duo*, to make the piece *Study#3* (2012).

These examples help to make transparent Forsythe's process of creation as reiteration, expansion and recycling—as "*re-creation*."[13] *Re-creation* was the norm, rather than the exception in Forsythe's oeuvre and was a vital force shaping the practice of choreographic labor. Understanding how these series embody aesthetic knowledge, forms and methods has been one challenge for Forsythe scholars, which I aim to make clearer in this final chapter. I will demonstrate that Forsythe's choreographies are complexly marked and re-cycled objects—defined by a performative character of being singular and plural. While Forsythe was required in his contract to make a specific number of premieres per season for Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company fitting appropriate conventions (of duration, number of spectators, number of dancers and the practical limits of the theater space) this, however, did not stop Forsythe and the dancers from, in addition, re-creating older pieces. Forsythe reasoned that many pieces are not closed and finished entities. Rather they leave aspects that are unfinished.[14]

In this chapter, I sharpen my arguments about the processual nature of Forsythe's choreography, through a final and distinct review of the *Duo* project's chronology. Considering the dancers' testimony and existing documentation of their rehearsals, I examine how they enact choreography in practice: their activities of learning, passing on, rehearsing, adapting and performing the work. I thereby show how these activities constitute an occupational culture that valued the *re-creative* components of longstanding cooperation, defining choreographies that dynamically shift over time.

These considerations also point to changing ideas towards choreographic authorship. Generally, while the creating process was intensely relational, the procedure of editing and selling Forsythe's pieces was more object- and authorship-oriented. Public recognition of authorship of *Duo* shows these changing attitudes. In programs, the choreography, stage design, lighting and costumes of *Duo* and *DUO2015* were attributed to Forsythe. After 2018, Forsythe retained the title of choreographer but ascribed the authorship of the program *A Quiet Evening of Dance* to himself and the dancers jointly; he also shared credits for lighting and costume design.[15] The dancers divided financial profit equally with the choreographer.[16] Substantiating this further, in dialogue about her biography for this manuscript, *Duo* dancer Jill Johnson described her current relationship to Forsythe—touring as a performer in *A Quiet Evening of Dance*—as a "co-collaborator," a term designating co-decision making.[17] These titles mark changing times in which dancers' contributions are receiving greater recognition, both in dance studies and in the field of practice.

The stages of learning *Duo*—in which the dancers explore *how* to practice—are very insightful. They are insightful because they show conventions of rehearsal and performance that were transformed and adapted. This gives vision into the constitutive power

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

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

15 See credits in Appendix A.

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

17 Jill Johnson, email to the author, October 3, 2019.

of their choreographic practice—enmeshing practice, performativity and subject-constitution.

"There's always more to find out." Interview with *Duo* Dancer Allison Brown in Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.

Sitting together in front of a video monitor, watching a performance of Duo *from 1997, Allison Brown is dressed warmly in a bulky sweater, and I in a light blue one. Sometimes she stands to explain something to me, turning away from the computer screen to dance.*

LIZ: You mentioned before that the first performance that you saw of the Ballett Frankfurt, before you joined, I think you said that you saw people having fun, that it was sexy, that it was free, that the movements looked free, that you wanted that too. Did you feel that with *Duo*, that it gave you …

ALLISON: (*interjecting*) Later I could … Later I got there, but at the beginning I was just freaked out and just trying to get through it okay—in the sense of remembering choreography and trying to stay with [my partner] Regina [van Berkel]. Because she's very daring and demanding and, so, I was just trying to keep up with her. […] I mean basically the whole thing that I learned about working in Ballett Frankfurt is there's more: there are more questions, there are always more questions, there's always more to find out, you're never just satisfied, and kicking back with how you do things or how you are working or … You are always trying to look at things from another angle. I learnt that from Regina, from Jill [Johnson], although I didn't work so much with her, but Dana [Caspersen] … I'm watching her [Caspersen] work, approaching roles again a year later and re-taking it, re-looking at it. So, it was never like a sky opening, rainbow sunlight through "aha, I made it, I'm me, I'm free!" I never really got there … I mean, I *did* get there and there were moments, but it wasn't really like a clear path to get there and a clear staying of that in that. There were repeated moments of feeling that, but not all the time, because it's just so fucking hard work all the time. (*laughs*)

11.1 Learning *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt

For many companies, the process of "passing on" repertoire from dancer to dancer is a vital source of rejuvenation for a dance work. Dance scholar Gabriele Klein has examined how, as dancers question and bring their experiences to the piece, they also reflect on the work's "contemporaneity," between when it was made and the moment of rehearsal.[18] These factors enable a piece to adapt and change, while still preserving continuity of relational investment. To follow this chronology in relation to *Duo*, readers are recommended to refer to the visualization of the dancer pairs in Appendix C.

18 See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, on "passing on" in particular pp. 210–22; on "contemporaneity" in particular pp. 386–96.

"I learned [*Duo*] by doing," underlines dancer Allison Brown, reflecting upon her history of dancing *Duo* from 1996 until 2003. This was not a "clear path" but years of exploring her approach to the choreography, her way of being with her partners and her own identity, amidst a lot of challenges. *Duo* was one of the first works Brown learned after joining the company; she was also the first performer to learn *Duo*, chosen by Forsythe to take on the role of Jill Johnson after she left the company.[19]

Brown was taken under the wing of Regina van Berkel to learn the role of her partner, Jill Johnson. It was standard within the Ballett Frankfurt for dancers to teach one another their own parts. Not having seen the premiere of *Duo*, nor overlapping with Johnson in the company, left Brown with a gap to define her own expectations of dancing Johnson's role in the piece.[20] They rehearsed quickly, with the support of performance video documentation, having only a few weeks to prepare. The first performance, memorable for Brown, was a Gala for her Majesty the Queen of Denmark.

Fortunately, van Berkel knew both parts well enough to help Brown acquire expertise. Brown remembers van Berkel teaching her, focusing upon the movement first, in the customary way of the Ballett Frankfurt with its rich practice of movement analysis. Brown recalls moving, studying and repeating; moving, studying and repeating:

> Every detail possible, over and over again, everything. Phrases, I think we started with phrases, and just like the detail, how the arm and the hand and the shape of the wrist and the hand. I never worked, no I did, I had worked like that before, with Saburo [Teshigawara], but just somehow it was different. And just the two of us. I think there was someone else in the room, but Regina [van Berkel] was my teacher.[21]

Comparing her prior work as a dancer in other companies, Brown emphasized that in the process of learning *Duo* one's partner "really supported you," sharing the wish to make the process meaningful and interesting.[22] The artists also shared a strong desire to make the performance successful—an achievement marked by the response of the audience and, also, importantly, of Forsythe and one's partner. This way of working shows that *Duo*'s choreography is more than just an assembly of steps. It is a mutual project in which the dancers share stakes in a successful relationship.

Rather than rivalry, the dancers showed kindness to one another—not competing, but complementing. The prior togetherness of *Duo* was so special—between Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson—that van Berkel sympathized it could be uncomfortable for Brown to enter into this process. Van Berkel tried to be very "caring" to Brown and to give her a sense of freedom: reinforcing that they should not be bound to reproducing the previous version of *Duo*. Van Berkel insists that she did not simply "teach" *Duo*. In our interview, she explains herself by demonstrating holding Brown in an embrace and warmly encouraging: "Come on! We are going to find our way, together!" In this way,

19 Brown had worked previously in the New York City Ballet, and with choreographers Twyla Tharp, Amanda Miller and Saburo Teshigawara among others; see her biography in Appendix D.

20 Johnson was a member of the National Ballet of Canada for three seasons in the middle of her long tenure working with Forsythe in Ballett Frankfurt.

21 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

22 Ibid. See also Brown's biography in Appendix D.

van Berkel pushed Brown to take agency and situate "her desire" within the work.[23] Brown was adapting to the rehearsal practices of the Ballett Frankfurt— learning to go beyond repeating and perfecting steps, conventions she had learned in the occupational cultures of other companies that she had worked with. New to her was the focus on the social aspect of being a confident partner.

The relationship between *Duo* partners was one of *equal* counterparts ("We were both leaders, we were both conductors, we were both followers!").[24] It was inappropriate for a more experienced dancer to exhibit greater authority. At times, dancers reported difficulty in mutually agreeing to take turns leading or trying to refrain from settling into a hierarchical relationship. New dancers who came into partnerships with more experienced *Duo* dancers, as Brown's testimony shows, could be daunted by the seniority of their partner; others were confronted with the existence of a model to emulate; all recalled the formidable coordinative difficulty of the steps and remembering the sequences. In studying the archival performance videos, I see such coping in play: where the new dancer is slightly behind in tempo, or the experienced dancer makes more decisions—such as cueing, breathing or stepping first. Brown recalled it took years before she found her place with confidence in the equality of the shifting "leadingfollowing," acting and responding, surprising and being surprised by one's partner.[25] These later performances—in 2003 and 2004—resound with new musicality, a rhythm distinct to the musical way Brown found to be with her partners.

In my interviews with van Berkel and Johnson, they mention Forsythe frequently. This is less apparent with dancers later in the history of the *Duo* project. Johnson and van Berkel's sense of *Duo* appears to remain tied to the intimate practice of making the work with Forsythe in 1996. Forsythe generally stayed in the background of the early rehearsal process, waiting until the dancers had proficiency before coaching and making choreographic revisions. He trusted that dancers with prior experience dancing the work had the best competence to help someone new come into the choreography. Forsythe tells me, "I always say I am the *how* guy, not the *what* guy."[26]

The vital characteristic of Forsythe's choreographic practice at large is the processual aspect of choreography, the practice's openness as a generative and emergent phenomenon changing over time. The choreography is plastic, changing in an active process where all participants invest and explore *how* its materials can be rekindled. Forsythe engaged with what new dancers could bring out in *Duo*. This is what *Duo* dancer Francesca Harper regarded as his general strength—in letting the dancers "inspire his vision."[27] Brown remembered about learning *Duo*: "[*Duo*] It was still new for [Forsythe] too, because he had just made it a few months before, like half a year before, Jill [Johnson] had left and I took her place and so he was interested I think to get it back, and continue working on it."[28] In recollection of Forsythe's working process, Brown affirms that

23 Fieldwork notes, interview with Regina van Berkel, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

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

25 Drawing from Erin Manning, see Lepecki, "From Partaking to Initiating," p. 34.

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

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

28 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

Forsythe treated choreographic pieces as works in progress, taking interest in the continual revision of his pieces. This was also implicit in van Berkel's testimony: she knew that Brown must not imitate what came before—that they would find something new, through her care and Brown's investment. *Duo* was thus developed along the contingencies of each pair, with Forsythe exerting influence after the initial phase of careful transmission.

New dancers were brought into *Duo* for pragmatic reasons, such as when a dancer was injured or had left the company. Given the possibility of injuries (typically from general overuse, such as one's back being out or knee strain), it was sensible to have others ready to step in. However, for more than these reasons, Forsythe generally took interest in the process of how a piece could grow and change through the introduction of new performers—reflecting his value of choreography as a processual medium, adapting to people, locations and times. This kept the work in creation, without needing to invent something new from scratch.

In cases like *Duo*—small pieces that only few dancers enacted—passing on the choreography enriched the ensemble, giving more people access to the embodied knowledge within the work, exemplified in *Duo*'s particular movement and relational qualities. Allison Brown was given knowledge through Regina van Berkel and indirectly from Jill Johnson. Comparably, when Regina van Berkel left the company, Brown passed on that information further. This passing down and sharing was central to the ensemble's knowledge and emotional ties, reflected by Brown's alliance to van Berkel, as the person who taught and cared for her. *Duo* was a contexture of learning that was beneficial to spread within the company—to extend experience into the folds of the other dancers' bodies and knowledges.

Most dancers wanted to be recognized as good—to receive affirmation from Forsythe, their peers and the audience. Yet some new *Duo* dancers reported struggling with finding the right way to be a good dancer. Their loyalty to repeat or reproduce the movement exactly as it had been demonstrated or performed before, a value taught in many other traditional institutions of western dance education and performance, could be a problem—blocking them to the relational and creative attunement.[29] The dancers' education and prior experiences brought different values to the enactment of choreography, shaping the styles, rights and freedoms of what a dancer should and should not do.[30] In *Duo* it was not always possible for the artists to feel free from the stakes or the history of the piece. They were exposed to the possibilities of success and failure. Would they be able to perform as well as their partner? Or as well as previous pairs?

Partners Watts and Gjoka reflect—from their position now as confident dancers performing the most recent version of *Duo*—that in the beginning they had not found

29 As one example supporting this from my fieldwork, a *Duo* dancer explained: "If Bill shows something, then I have to do what he's done. […] Some people would just do something like he did. I was trying to do *exactly* what he did." Source: anonymized citation. Cf. Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 103–4.

30 For a related consideration of talent, body type and mentality of work in classical ballet, see Wulff, "Experiencing the Ballet Body," p. 132.

their way, finding the movement material technical, even old, and just not right for their bodies. Unlike van Berkel and Johnson, who had created *Duo* and who felt a sense of innate belonging, new *Duo* dancers had much more varied experiences. Some new *Duo* dancers struggled with feelings of inadequacy in filling their predecessors' shoes; others took to *Duo* with ease, such as *Duo* dancer Cora Bos-Kroese. For her: "This [*Duo*] felt really like home."[31]

Many of my field notes could be cited for evidence: *Duo* dancers and the wider company culture of Forsythe dancers were resources for one another. *Duo* was vitalized through dancers reflecting upon their practice *together*. The dancers agreed that their interpretation should continually and curiously question the piece. To substantiate this claim, when Jill Johnson returned to the Ballett Frankfurt in 2000, she had the opportunity to dance *Duo* with a number of new partners. She stressed that each time this required development:

> There was an adjustment every time, 'cause you get so used to someone else's timing and just their being. And then, when your timings are based on that—you know, it's a partner—there was always a period of adjustment and I wanted to remain curious. And it was different for Allison [Brown] and I to get used to each other and create from what it was for us together. And then also with Natalie [Thomas], and Cora [Bos-Kroese]—it was fascinating every time. I learnt more every time.[32]

Like van Berkel, with whom she had created *Duo*, Johnson understood that *Duo* has to be created from what the two partners are *together*.[33]

Through these examples, defining aspects of the occupational culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company can be brought into focus. First, an experience and understanding of choreography as in-process, relational and plastic—not as an organization reproduced, without novelty entering into the process. Secondly, knowledge of *Duo* is understood by the dancers to be mobile; the dancers value the speculative aspect of imagining, experimenting and mobilizing one's point of view. Lastly, the professional environment invests in practicing as labor, inviting risk and uncertainty into this process. Processual, relational, speculative and risk-taking—the choreographic logic is creative at its core.

"Yes, I did switch roles." Interview with Allison Brown, Frankfurt am Main, September 23, 2016.

LIZ: You switched roles?

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31 Cora Bos-Kroese, phone interview with the author, September 20, 2018.

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

33 Interestingly, when one compares the first pair of *Duo* dancers to the subsequent generations, the relational and creative approach to interpretation is not automatically embraced by the new dancers—especially those espousing more traditional ballet values about replicating a movement exactly.

ALLISON: Yes, I did switch roles. 'Cause I did originally Jill [Johnson]'s role, after Jill left the company. And then when Regina [van Berkel] left the company and Jill came back, I switched to Regina's role. I felt like I had learned so much from Regina and we look a little bit alike and some people actually mistake us for each other, so I felt like more connected to Regina's role and just Regina in general. 'Cause Jill, I didn't really know her and I didn't think I tried to be Jill, when I first did it. So I was more like leaning towards Regina, the Regina way than the Jill way, and so when I actually got to do the Regina role it felt more like me, I guess.

LIZ: And can you describe the difference between the Jill way and the Regina way for you?

ALLISON: They are different people! There are differences in the movement quality and coordination.

LIZ: And musicality!

ALLISON: Yeah, for sure. I also experienced it in the alignment of the movement sometimes, whether the torso was more horizontal or vertical. Maybe it's 'cause Jill comes from a strong classical background, and Regina more contemporary.

LIZ: When you teach *Duo* do you try and teach these ways?

ALLISON: No.

LIZ: Why?

ALLISON: I think that's not really … I like to leave whoever I'm teaching it to … I like them to be their person, and find their way at that specific time or that teaching of it. But of course, at the same time, the original people, their individual physicality of course has influenced the material, so it's also embedded, integrated, ingrained in the material anyway, but I usually don't try to have them be like Jill or like Regina, no.

LIZ: I would say that I see these qualities also in Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka] [the dancers performing *Duo* since 2013].

ALLISON: Mm, wait, so Riley does Jill, and Brigel does Regina? Yeah? Okay. Right, yeah of course, all that is passed on.

LIZ: Riley even studied with Jill when she was teaching at Julliard!

11.1.1 Roles, Heritage and "Jill-i-ness"

In rehearsals of *Duo* that I observe in 2015, the rehearsal director sometimes refers to the "Jill-person" and the "Allison-person" to give instructions (that is, the names of the dancers in the archival video studied in this rehearsal).[34] This illustrated to me the fluid

34 Cyril Baldy, fieldwork observation of *Duo* rehearsals at CCN – Ballet de Lorraine, April 21–23, 2015.

way that persons could infiltrate into the bodies of the newest dancers, even when—in this case—the new *Duo* dancers had never made contact with Allison and Jill.

By the time of performance, however, the spectral nature of these forbearers should be subsumed in present dancers' embodied interaction. For Forsythe, the "history for me is *really* not the piece."[35] Forsythe notes that when the audience sees his choreographic work, years after it has been created, often it is no longer the original dancers performing; instead a new person is "giving his all." For Forsythe, the work is its present moment of performance. But in rehearsal, there are multiple realities in the room: sometimes calling up 'original' or earlier dancers, and sometimes focusing extensively on the presence of live enactment. As I studied *Duo*, I began to see these layers of history within the present—I saw how the past lingered.

The dancers learn through a lineage of passing down the dance. There is a twofold (and for them, not contradictory) obligation in this: to respect originality and value plasticity. Thus, taking on a role is a fascinating process of negotiating the choreography and exploring where it goes—how their interpretation can inflect the movement form, dynamic and timing. Reviewing archival performance videos with the dancers, I observe their extensive self-criticism as artists—always noting what did not go well and what could have been better—as well as their delight in watching each other, particularly their partners' movement. In a video elicitation with dancer Allison Brown, she laughs as she watches herself and partner Roberta Mosca, explaining to me that the manner in which they just performed a sequence is very "Jill." Brown describes Jill Johnson's movement quality as "finding all the possible movements in just that little bit. How you can break up, move the joints as much as possible—especially in *showerhead*." Brown suggests "I must have kept this 'Jill-i-ness.' Then Roberta learned it from me."[36]

Most dancers pause and search for words when asked to describe their partner's particular special qualities; most smile. Some point out that this is ineffable and that is why dance is their medium. Others react more affectively, telling of what they sense, and how they are inspired through them. I gather that their partners assisted them to stay present, to feel their bodies, to learn, to develop their coordination. Their partners helped them to find confidence, to feel comfort, to get out of their habits, to find inspiration, to feel the desire to play. Their partners supported them, confirming after a show that what they just created was not just ephemeral but was real and may endure. Their partners enabled them to dance *Duo*, to do something that they could not have done alone.

The significance of the body in choreographic practice has been explored by Leach and deLahunta, in an ethnographic study of dancers in Wayne McGregor's contemporary dance company in London. In this work, the authors articulate how movement is not just the shape-shifting of the body. Rather: "There is a quality to bodies that we feel, and in that feeling, a kinesthetic as much as an emotional response is central."[37]

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35 William Forsythe, team meeting discussing the project *Synchronous Object for One Flat Thing, reproduced* in Brooklyn, New York, May 5, 2006. Conversation between Forsythe, Rebecca Groves, Jill Johnson, Norah Zuniga Shaw and myself. Transcription by Norah Zuniga Shaw.

36 Allison Brown, video elicitation, Bern, January 23, 2016.

37 Leach and deLahunta, "Dance 'Becoming' Knowledge," p. 464.

Similarly, within *Duo*, each dancer offers his or her body movement, which elicits his or her partner socially—and if we listen to Leach and deLahunta, also morally and politically. The work of professional dancers involves feeling the dispositions of "desire, shame, imposition, power, politeness, domination or facilitation."[38] In the context of *Duo*, the dancers desire to experience the potential of intimate co-movement. At times, they feel shame about their bodies, or their performance. They question the sensitive signals they receive from their partner. Rather than dominate, they explore how to listen to one another and the audience, and to creatively respond through breathing-movement. They learn to facilitate the experience of *Duo* for one another and the audience. For Erin Manning, "Facilitation aligns to the field of relation, to its tastes, its feeling, its immanent shapings, and it carries this differential potential across the productive abyss of nonconscious and conscious experience."[39]

11.2 Reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company

In 2012, Allison Brown was invited by Forsythe to work with dancers in The Forsythe Company to help reconstruct *Duo*, which had not been performed since the end of Ballett Frankfurt in 2004—a gap of seven and a half years. These rehearsals included male dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka, both new to the piece, as well as female dancers Parvaneh Scharafali and Roberta Mosca, both of whom had performed *Duo* before but not with one another (Scharafali in Nederlands Dans Theater and Mosca in Ballett Frankfurt). The rehearsals ignited different perspectives and memories of the piece, making apparent some of the gaps in practice between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.

11.2.1 Riley Watts: Learning *Duo*

Duo dancer Riley Watts described his learning process as happening on many registers, in different phases.[40] Reflecting Allison Brown's own learning process, he was instructed to place attention on the movement first, to copy and memorize the sequence. In Watts' own words, he began a process of "translation"—transferring what he saw in seasoned *Duo* dancers' bodies into his body. He explains:

> It seems to me that the process of learning *Duo* went into different levels that overlapped with each other, but happened at slightly different times. Initially I think that we relied on visual input from the video and the *répétiteur* Allison [Brown]. It was necessary that I focus my attention onto observing and memorizing sequences of movement done by other bodies, either on video or in the studio with Allison. Very quickly after the initial observation of either the video or Allison, it was necessary to "translate"

38 Ibid.

39 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 164. On facilitation of communication and the poetics of autistic communication, see ibid., pp. 158–64.

40 *Duo* dancer Riley Watts provided me with my first impressions of learning *Duo*. See Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*."

> what I saw into my own body. Allison acted as an aid in translation, based on her own experience performing the piece.[41]

Watt's description of learning moving as an act of "translation" suggests the manner that movement becomes adapted, from one body to another. Like the linguistic passage from one language to another, each person dancing *Duo* has his or her body history and *habitus*, changing the manifestation of *Duo's* movement. Initially, there was an effort to replicate the movement and perform it as "identically" as possible.[42]

Watts explained how his approach then evolved: to focus purely on the form of movement was "incredibly boring" for him and, he also realized, incorrect. Watts emphasized that he and his colleagues discovered, "only copying the shapes of the movement would not be enough to do the piece well." *Duo* was not about a sort of unison that *appears* identical, but about sharing intentionality, focusing initially on "sensation of form."[43] Not only did sensual intentionality change how the movement appeared, but it merged the dancers into their shared project of simultaneously feeling breathing-movement. Watts described *Duo* not as a reproduction of movements, but as a "process of attention to sensations that the dancers are experiencing simultaneously."[44]

In The Forsythe Company studios where Watts was working there were no mirrors—Forsythe did not think they were necessary.[45] Without a mirror, it is difficult to correct outer appearance but easier to concentrate on the feeling of motion, the feeling of movement-moving. Watts remembered being directed to observe sensation by means of all available sensory modalities: tactile, acoustic, visual, kinesthetic, proprioceptive. The dancers attuned to their bodies—winding and unwinding, rebounding off the floor, moving through dynamic states of (dis)equilibrium. Watts felt the sensation of his skin and tissues stretching. His kinesthesia extended into his partner's movement: co-felt. Through rehearsing *Duo*, he became tied to his partner empathetically through learning a new sense of movement with him—through sharing "sensation of form" and feeling that his own sensations were tied to Gjoka's motion. For Watts, this was a change in his perception of what movement was: both his understanding of it, and how he enacted and performed motion.

Their breathing congealed this. Watts described the use of breath in *Duo* as a "song-like" description of the motion that helped him to remember the complex sequences of choreography. This "breath-song" was co-sung with his partner, and was also influenced by Forsythe, vocalizing in rehearsal.[46] It helped to recall the movement, which, without counts or music to follow, could be tricky to remember. On stage and in the studio, their audible breath helped the dancers to keep track of each other in space and time, like echo-location. The breath-song provided a sonic envelope, within which the two dancers could nest themselves intimately and engage "in conversation" with each other,

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41 Riley Watts, email to the author, March 3, 2014.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 9.

45 Van Berkel also remembered not needing a mirror for making *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt studios. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

46 Riley Watts, interview with the author and Bettina Bläsing on January 14, 2014.

aligning their motion.[47] They took this envelope from the studio to the stage, learning a mode of listening and feeling one another.

Already in these initial rehearsals, the dancers are acquiring a specific *Duo* practice. They are not just repeating and perfecting movement, though repetition is involved. They are finding out *how* doing and understanding *Duo*'s movement has to shift with their entry into this choreography.[48] They question, with their partners, what it means to share. In doing this, the dancers learn that there are multiple perspectives in *Duo*: their own, the choreographer's, the rehearsal director, other *Duo* dancers and, in time, the audience. Through the project of having—and communicating about—movement and sensations, the pairs bond and develop their *Duo* microcosm.

11.2.2 Archival Rehearsal Videos: January 19-21, 2012

The archival video documentation of *Duo* rehearsals is unfortunately very limited—with only videos of The Forsythe Company rehearsals in the period of January 2012 in existence.[49] During the three days actually documented, the pairs learning *Duo* worked on the stage of the Bockenheimer Depot. As is common in Forsythe's busy rehearsals, they work amidst other activities: other dancers rehearsing different pieces in the back of the space, warming-up happening on the sides, all accompanied by the technicians preparing for the afternoon rehearsals ahead. The dancers have memorized the Ballett Frankfurt sequence of *Duo* and are working to acquire fluency to perform it in unison. What seems to be at issue in these rehearsals is achieving movement mastery—the right timings and confidence, and of course doing this synchronously.

Talking to one pair intermittently as they dance, Forsythe stands up to demonstrate detail of the hands, an essential focus for him. He also encourages nuances in the timing through prosodic coaching—singing along with the artists as they move. He uses rhythm, intonation, tempo, stress and lulls in his voice to co-phrase the dancers' movement. His enthusiasm appears to help:

> When you turn around, watch your right hand. Right! The hand looks too ornate. (*He demonstrates the hand like a claw*.) Too ornate. (*The dancer repeats*.) Yeah, much better. Longer longer longer. (*He demonstrates a longer hand*.) Longer hand line. Longer. It's a little bit like this. (*He demonstrates incorrectly again*.) So longer. Right. Better. Better. (*The two dancers continue in unison. Forsythe synchronizes with them, speaking*:) Eeeeee—go!

47 Citation of Levinson and Holler in Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 10.

48 I understood Watts to be speaking out against other forms of movement transmission, as can be the case in the field of ballet, when movement learning involves the reproduction of a standard set of forms. In such a method, each individual is responsible for his or her actions. Wrong appearances are corrected by the rehearsal director or choreographer. Discussing intentionality is less a part of rehearsal. This relates to other examples I found in my fieldwork, of dancers wishing to reproduce movement perfectly or exactly, until there are no more corrections. Cf. Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 102–5.

49 Documentation exists for rehearsals held on January 19–21, 2012. In these, the audio is often ambient, making voices on stage difficult to hear. This reflects that Forsythe often did not document rehearsals reviving repertoire; instead, documentation focused on archiving performances and creation rehearsals.

> Bah ee. Yeah! Right. This is where the body wants to hang behind. So have a game with your body! Go annnnd. (*One dancer says audibly, "Yeah!" They continue. Forsythe multitasks, doing some work with the technicians. Then he turns back to them*.) Right and. Da da. Whoo! That's good. That's right. Eee ah! Ya dum, baaaa! That's right, good. Ha ha. Perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect. Wee (*rising in pitch*)!!! Ya da da da kum. Ka. And we are getting to the end—de da da da da da (*rising in pitch and slowing down*) dhhh (*lowering in pitch, releasing air*) ha ha (*laughter*). Ahhh right! That was good. Yeah! You can have a little longer pause. You can go. (*He sings a short melody*.) That was much nicer today.[50]

In the sunny rehearsal, the dancers perform well and confidently. Praise is ample.

On the next day, the rehearsal appears tense—with the dancers expressing doubts and making gestures that suggest stress. Working without Forsythe, the rehearsal director gives constructive feedback to the dancers, focusing on dynamics. She demonstrates "a balletic placed position that then gets *full*," corrects movements that were too long or too short, and emphasizes with her breath and gestures how the dancers can proceed now to "be more in the flow."[51] The eldest and most experienced dancer, who has already performed *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt, is the most vocally engaged in the rehearsal, articulating her questions about the movement and rehearsal approach. She asks the rehearsal director about the dynamics of one motion, and then uses that example to bridge to a larger issue. For her the *creativity* of the rehearsal process seems to be at issue, as well as finding out how to best approach the practice more generally. She asks:

> I don't know how to make the choice about of what is flexible and what is fixed. Because many things have to be one way. You see what I am saying? But I think it is important to ask this question: When are these things fixed? And when is there the possibility (*pause*) of changing actually or finding these things? And I understand certain things don't have to have the same specificity of this dynamic. […] It is a system also of rehearsing, and of fixing things, and trying to fix those points. And then, those things that are fixed, you try to accomplish them, and you create more tension [*indecipherable*] I am just wondering of ways to approach this. That's all.[52]

While the artists do not resolve this matter in the rehearsal, the question of the correct "system of rehearsal" is one that they continue to think about. The rehearsal director emphasizes that it is not a matter of dancing individually, but dancing *together*.

In this phase of rehearsals, the stakes of what it means to be together surface. At issue is the power of who can decide and communicate what is "right" in *Duo*, whether from the inside or outside the event of dancing. The dancers are vulnerable to this assessment. Watts testifies that, together with Gjoka, the rehearsal process became about

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50 William Forsythe speaking as Roberta Mosca and Parvaneh Scharafali rehearse *Duo*. The Forsythe Company archival rehearsal video, January 20, 2012. Forsythe is wearing a microphone, enabling accurate transcription.

51 Allison Brown speaking as the rehearsal director; archival video documentation of The Forsythe Company rehearsal, January 21, 2012.

52 Roberta Mosca, The Forsythe Company archival video, January 21, 2012.

finding "consensus."[53] That consensus was predominantly an embodied philosophy, enacted in doing *Duo*—one forged between phases of critical reflection and discussion. The cooperation in rehearsal shows that choreography is negotiated, both implicitly and explicitly, and that perspectives within these intercessions are multiple. What was troubled and at stake, given the plasticity of the choreography, was the authority of who decides what is correct and incorrect about the practice. Choreography provides organization that changes with the artists' negotiation. *Duo* becomes an event of collaboration, achieved through rehearsal, via the medium of choreographic work.

11.2.3 Canceled *Duo* Performances, 2012

Forsythe's decisions to cancel the performances of *Duo* in 2012 are a challenging phase in the project history for the dancers. In place of *Duo*, Forsythe chose to assemble a different program interweaving new works and pieces of existing repertoire in which the dancers were already fluent.[54] These precarious moments illustrate how the ensemble might halt or suspend performing troubling pieces, resuming them later under different conditions. The ensemble was committed to open-ended rehearsal, and compliant to Forsythe's authority to make difficult decisions that would keep change alive in the process. There was no public apology or significant energy spent transitioning when *Duo* was cut; not only must the show go on, but it was not part of the occupational culture to view change as failure.

Throughout the rehearsal process, and particularly during the difficult phase of 2012, the dancers' "symbolic capital" is at stake.[55] Yet 'failure' in Forsythe's ensembles is understood and accepted as part of the choreographic process; it is deemed constructive, not negative. One member of the team notes: "It's needed. If you avoid failure, you will never get anywhere."[56] Although Forsythe canceling performances is an emotional

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53 "When learning this piece, we had to synchronize and agree on how we thought we wanted to do it based on what we had learned from Allison [Brown]. We were given the information and then we would come up with a consensus between the two of us as to how we felt the best way to do it was." Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, September 2, 2014.

54 The Forsythe Company forecast a production featuring new and existing repertoire for a run of eight performances in the Bockenheimer Depot, February 3–12, 2012. They rehearsed *The The* (1995) and *Duo* (1996), while preparing two new works (*Stellenstellen* and a piece under the provisional title *Trio*). One week before the premiere in Frankfurt, Forsythe chose to change the program to *Whole In The Head* (2010) and the new piece *Stellenstellen*. The *Duo* dancers had however another performance opportunity. For the tour to Brescia on April 20–21, 2012, what was proposed and prepared prior to travel was a new work, titled *Study#1*, followed by *The The*, *Duo*, and *N.N.N.N.* During the two days of rehearsals before the performance, Forsythe chose to again change the program: omitting *Duo*. The performance involved *N.N.N.N.* followed by *Study#1*.

55 Cf. Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 79. Here Wacquant draws upon Bourdieu's concept of "social capital" to analyze the practice of novice boxers.

56 Forsythe's production assistant Julian Richter, cited by Glentzer, "'William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects' Tricks Bodies and Minds." See also discussion of failure by Heidi Gilpin, in Gilpin, "Aberrations of Gravity," in particular pp. 114–15; linking this to the *Robert Scott Complex*, see Siegmund, "Of Monsters and Puppets," pp. 27–28. In particular Forsythe's works *Die Befragung des Robert Scott †*, *Decreation*, *Human Writes* and *Yes We Can't* explore varieties, aesthetics and the ethics of failure.

letdown for the dancers—specifically disappointing, embarrassing and stressful—their status as dancers is not injured. There is no need for the *Duo* dancers to 'save face.'[57] Onlookers (including myself) showed empathy in support of the dancers and assured them of their continued value to the team and the process of choreographic re-evaluation.

The challenging rehearsals in 2012 are a telling and significant phase in *Duo*'s project. Changing partners and contexts, Mosca (who had danced *Duo* in Ballett Frankfurt) and Scharafali (who had danced *Duo* in Nederlands Dans Theater) are in a complex knot of obligations: commitments to one's history and former partners, to one's current partner, to the novices learning with them (Watts/Gjoka), to the rehearsal director and to Forsythe. The multiplicity of these views proved to be confusing for the dancers, as well as challenging to their idea of rehearsal. Discussions questioned who has the authority to decide what is flexible within the choreography and what is not. It becomes clear—through tough rehearsals—that choreographic interpretation is not a matter of the *individual* choices of one dancer but choices made *together*. Successful *Duo* dancers find a "consensus" in their dyad and affirmation from Forsythe.[58] In hindsight, Watts/Gjoka stressed they did not take agency in the initial rehearsals. For these reasons, Watts/Gjoka understand *DUO2015* to be based more on their partnership, not the original qualities of the *Duo* movement material.

In summary, there was excitement but also friction in reconstructing *Duo* in 2012. Given the shift in repertoire and practices between Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, it is not surprising that rehearsal and performance practice changed, and therefore *Duo* had also to change. Brown observed that during the subsequent rehearsals with Forsythe, the piece became something new. Not only did the choreography appear and sound different from what she had performed but, compared to her memory of rehearsals in Ballett Frankfurt, the dancers were also more active—voicing their thoughts, asking difficult questions, framing goals within the parameters of the choreography. The dancers' understanding of rehearsal shifts with this process, as well as what it means to be a "good" dancer. What gives *Duo* its unusual presence in performance is sociality shaped in rehearsal, helping partners attune together.

11.3 Becoming *DUO2015*

In 2015 a new opportunity arose for the *Duo* project. Forsythe was asked by French ballerina Sylvie Guillem to include the piece on her farewell tour, *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*. The dancers chosen, Watts and Gjoka, were excited when the work became revised and retitled, to honor the contemporaneity of the context. Gjoka explained: "*Duo* was created in 1996. And he [Forsythe] is also in a different position today. […] What it is, is a work in progress. It's today, *Duo* today. It is the relationship of *doing Duo* today. *DUO2015*."[59]

57 Cf. Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 79. Drawing from Goffman's concept of "corrective face-work."

58 Riley Watts, email correspondence with the author, September 2, 2014.

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

Retitling the work underlines the artists' transformation of their own conception of *their* project—signaling a new iteration. This is substantiated in the artists' own words, in separate interviews with the dancers and Forsythe, reproduced below. These clarify how *DUO2015* afforded Watts and Gjoka extended reflection and prolonged discovery of the appropriate strategies of rehearsal and performance. Forsythe also considers the particular problem of how to adapt choreography to the expertise of performers who had worked with the medium for *years*. These artists take the occasions presented to enable *Duo*'s becoming—through burgeoning relational expertise and revisions.

"Because *Duo* had also to do with us." Interview with *DUO2015* pair Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka, Bologna, October 25, 2017.

This interview takes place in a dance studio, with the dancers sitting together on a couch, opposite myself and the video camera. Having taught DUO2015 *all afternoon to dance students, now at the end of their workday, the dancers have changed into their street clothes. Gjoka, who directs this dance school in Italy, is wearing designer sunglasses, a black down jacket and dark jeans. Watts, who has flown in from Maine, USA, is outfitted in a rust-color flannel shirt, a black Forsythe Company T-shirt, burgundy pants and a camouflage baseball cap. They appear to enjoy reflecting together, while often looking to one another to finish sentences or supplement the thoughts they have.*

LIZ: What made *Duo*, *Duo*? And when you think back upon your experience, from the beginning until now, with *Duo*, can you narrate a bit—five, ten minutes—how the phases of the process went, perhaps some high points and some low points?

RILEY: In the beginning we learned it from Allison [Brown], so really her version. And we were trying to do it as good dancers—so do just the material as it was taught to us, as well as we could, with the information that was given to us. We didn't really have time or the opportunity, or we didn't *take* maybe the agency to let the material and let the dance transform through our own personal experience between the two of us. […] And then we got to stage, and Bill didn't want to do [*Duo*] in the program that we had intended to do it for, which was good, I think. There's the video of that one rehearsal that we did on stage and it was like … it just didn't look good. It really wasn't good.

BRIGEL: It really didn't go well.

RILEY: Yeah totally. It was very disappointing at first. And then we thought that we would never dance it again and then, only because of the tour with Sylvie Guillem, the *Life in Progress* tour, was there an opportunity to re-develop it. Though before that, we did have the opportunity to try our own version of it in Darmstadt, and then Weimar.

LIZ: The two gala performances in 2013.

RILEY: Yeah. But in those we didn't feel so free. I watched the video recently and it looks very chopped to me. We just looked nervous—it's like we're dancing in relationship to the material only and not really to each other. It's not musical at all. And then because

of the Sylvie tour [*Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*]—that Sylvie [Guillem] asked Bill for this specific piece *Duo*, and we were the only people in the company who did it at that point and who had really been working on it. […] It came at a good time because we had been using the material from *Duo* as part of *Study#3* to improvise bits. It was very legible to Bill, so he could see the material transforming itself […].

So, then we made a *Life in Progress* version of *Duo* in the studio, which had still the beginning that was more similar to the original version, but excluding the laying on the floor parts that we don't do anymore. The dress rehearsal did not go well. We were nervous. It didn't feel good. […] And we went back to the studio, up in the theater in Modena and Bill said: "Let's just mark it. Just show me what it's like in a marked version." So, we did it, and you know, it felt so much better, somehow, […] I liked it. We felt good about it. We felt like it was the right, at least the right place, to start. And then we just kept going with it. With every show I think that it gradually grew. So, in the beginning as it was more upper body—the legs didn't do a whole lot. But gradually motion started to come. We didn't consciously decide to say, like: choreographically, let's do this. It just kinda came out of, not even really necessity, but just it came out of the repetition of having, of doing it in that specific context so many times, I guess […].

It really transformed from almost only the performances—not from preparing, ahead of time in rehearsal in the studio, but only from the work that was done on stage, which I think is interesting. It's a very strong and specific circumstance to be on stage, performing for thousands of people. And not knowing exactly what's going to happen, which is different from what most dance companies do—where you have your ideas and you have the choreography and you try to perfect it in the studio and then bring it on stage as best as you can, as close to the perfect version that you think it should be from rehearsal. Instead of [that], we found a different idea of what a rehearsal was.

BRIGEL: I think we flipped the process. For years we did the normal process, what Riley said now: that you would rehearse, you'd try what would be the best and then bring it out on stage. […] Then we started to do the opposite and to actually *understand* that the opposite was maybe what was needed. Because *Duo* had also to do with *us*. We were incorporating, or I'd say incarnating the material in a way that was not about the material actually, it was about *finding*. We had the material, but we didn't find each other. […] There is no need to rehearse steps, because this is not the way we wanna do it. And also, if we wanna keep it fresh for fifty-three shows, then how do we do this? What is the process? […] You have to find a way to develop your own way of being creative every day—to not get bored, not get annoyed. I never felt one moment with him, even when we were rehearsing, that we got annoyed.

RILEY: It was never boring.

BRIGEL: No, never boring, yeah. What should we do? Anything!

RILEY: It was never boring! 'Cause like every moment is different. It's a much bigger idea of movement that I think comes, came, from The Forsythe Company—being able to think about dance as every moment. It's so Buddhist, you know? Every moment is different from the last. And why would that not be true on stage? Like it seems ridicu-

lous to try to pretend like we're in a studio in rehearsal, or in front of more than 5000 people at the Herodeon in Athens. It's a very specific circumstance and the only way that you could practice this is just to be on stage: it happens because we happen to have this material, and also five-plus years of working together in the Company, and also dancing with everybody else in the company, and working with Bill and stuff that all collected as part of who I am, and who he is, and then together we're on stage, wearing sweatpants. (*laughs*) That's so, that's just, the material is like secondary, almost.

"A nice balance between my ideas and their skill and structure." Phone interview with William Forsythe, January 30, 2019.

LIZ: One thing I wondered about … You've been working with dancers for so long. Could you tell me about *how* working with *Duo* dancers has changed? From maybe the Ballett Frankfurt version to how you work with Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka]? And on what do you work, also?

BILL: Well the difference with Riley and Brigel is that basically they rehearsed it for five years. That's the big difference. They rehearsed it for a very long time. They only did fragments. And every time they did fragments, I asked them to spontaneously grasp a point of reference. So they developed this very entrained, very accurately … There is acute perception of each other and it became a way of being, with someone else and a work at the same time. So they held each other and the work in their minds and bodies, and constructed the piece themselves—according to what their opinion or their analysis of what was happening in the moment. And having watched them do that for several years, knowing what they were capable of doing with material, I tried to find a structure that would adapt to that particular skill set. […] A nice balance between my ideas and their skill and structure. And that was the interesting difference. I could have done the same with Regina [van Berkel]—or easily done the same with Regina and Jill [Johnson], because they were so immersed into the material. For example, Jill [Johnson] could jump in and replace Brigel or Riley without a blink. She knows the material so well. There would be a few little structural differences, but there would be absolutely nothing in her capacities that would not allow her to enter that structure with ease.

11.3.1 Rehearsing *DUO2015*

Gjoka remembers that in The Forsythe Company there was not enough time to rehearse, he was always stressed by performance. With *DUO2015* there was the possibility to go deep into something and to relax, to "just be."[60]

Watts and Gjoka incubated their own rehearsal process, working on tour, without Forsythe there to direct them. The dancers watched with awe how Guillem warmed up and rehearsed dutifully before every performance—rehearsal as performance, showing consistency of achievement. For Watts and Gjoka, emulation of Guillem's mode of

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

rehearsing did not make sense for *DUO2015*—a choreography which required experiencing every "minor gesture" as being ripe with potential to vary. Manning's concept of the minor gesture captures the "living variation" of nuanced events such as *DUO2015*: a choreography with the potential of improvisation, tucked into the folds of the structure.[61]

Watts and Gjoka discovered that rehearsal needed to support a mode of performance, linked with spontaneity and creativity. This required cognitively having a strong memory of what the sequence was so that they could adapt it, riffing playfully in the show. Watts and Gjoka explained: when they rehearsed "as performance" right before the show, it was counterproductive.[62] Watts describes: "If we were comparing it to what happened two hours ago or whatever, the other day or whatever, it wouldn't feel so authentic as if we had just really jumped in without any kind of recent precedence of what it might be."[63] In Gjoka's words, in *DUO2015*: you cannot "force the outcome" on a perspective or expectations that you previously rehearsed. "If you rehearse, and expect to reproduce what you have rehearsed, the choreography of *Duo* is dead."[64] To be "authentic" meant to negotiate the choreography in real time with one another, not to repeat what had previously happened. It meant not to be habitual—rather, to feel the "minor tendencies" possible in performance.[65] To feel alive. To feel "free."[66]

The dancers did not stop preparing. Instead, they shifted how to do so. What the dancers describe is a change in their concepts of rehearsal and performance, even use of a new word suturing these—what Gjoka calls *entrainment* ("a form of progressive work").[67] What did this entrainment entail? When the dancers were provided time to rehearse on the stage, they would "mark" quickly through the order of the sequence to refresh their memory.[68] The dancers deliberately moved more swiftly than what they

61 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 72.

62 Watts specified that if there had been a long time since the last show (that is, more than a few weeks), they might perform in rehearsal, but otherwise it was not needed. Riley Watts, interview with the author, Bern, January 11, 2017.

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

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

65 Manning writes, "The challenge is to make these minor tendencies operational, thereby opening habit to its subtle multiplicity and exposing the fact that habit was never quite as stable as it seemed." See Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p. 89.

66 Riley Watts, interview with the author and Brigel Gjoka, Bologna, October 25, 2017. Allison Brown, interview with the author, Frankfurt, November 11, 2016.

67 Gjoka, "*DUO2015* Workshop Description."

68 By "mark" or "marking," the dancers mean intentionally practicing the movement without using full effort, to improve one's cognitive grasp of the sequence and movement details. Marking is an under studied phenomenon in dance studies. Typically, marking is a rehearsal practice not exhibited in performance. But in the case of *DUO2015* the dancers also perform marking on stage. My previous remarks in section 7.1 on the movement material of *Duo* also describe the practice of movement to include various levels of abstraction, in accordance with David Kirsh's study of marking. Kirsh writes: "When marking, dancers use their body-in-motion to represent some aspect of the full-out phrase they are thinking about. Their stated reason for marking is that it saves energy, avoids strenuous movement such as jumps, and sometimes it facilitates review of specific aspects of a phrase, such as tempo, movement sequence, or intention, all without the mental and physical complexity involved in creating a phrase full-out. It facilitates real time reflection." See Kirsh, "How

would in performance, to challenge their minds to work fast—also, to have fun and turn the rehearsal into a game. Watts found that thinking-together and getting his thoughts to become fluid was better than sensing his body or taking note of how it happened. Social connection was important, in an unscripted manner. Watts explains: "Now in terms of the things that we did privately on our own, we would work out together. Or we would just spend time together. Or warm-up. Or fool around, actually that was a really important thing that we would do." In lightening up, Watts and Gjoka were able to access their fluid creativity and relational connection, bringing "magic" into the process of dancing *Duo* once more![69]

11.3.2 Performing *DUO2015*

"The state of mind was just totally different for me." Interview with Riley Watts in Bern, January 11, 2017.

> RILEY: I remember a few moments [when I was in The Forsythe Company] when I realized, wow, this is really something: I don't know how to be focused on stage when I'm improvising, in the same way that I'm finding myself focused in rehearsals or in creation process. The state of mind was just totally different for me. I actually think I never really figured that out in the [Forsythe] Company. I really don't think I did my best dancing on stage. I think I was better in certain moments in rehearsal. […]
>
> I like being on stage. It's just a different set of mind; it's a different thing. You know, because [in The Forsythe Company repertoire] you come on stage you have your scene, and then go off stage. Also, the way I was often used [by Forsythe] in pieces [was this]: I was very fast, so I'd have to come in very very quickly and like get things going. Very often I just couldn't keep up with myself! Like my body would be going, but my mind would be like trying to … I ended up relying on adrenalin instead of like—really, really in depth, in the body, in concentration. […] So I remember that was a real key for me: [I realized] I don't know what kind of focus I need to use here [on stage]. I don't know how to harness my way of thinking, my way of focusing during this type of improvisation—the type of work that we're doing and the questions that we're asking as a company really requires me to have … you know, that's why I teach now. I try to figure out what that is, through teaching. That's the kind of environment I try to make when teaching, where it is that kind of concentration.

Performing *Duo* on stage, in front of a large audience, involves dealing with stage fright: sensing nerves, stress, risks, challenges and excitement. *Duo* dancers learned how to perform in this high intensity environment. As one dancer described it: "Bill [Forsythe]'s work cannot be performed at 100 percent, but it has to be 160 percent."[70] Further fieldwork with the dancers helped me to understand how this is acquired and even mod-

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Marking Dance Constitutes Thinking with the Body," p. 183. See also Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 131–38.

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

70 Cyril Baldy, conversation with the author, Nancy, May 12, 2015.

ulated by longstanding performers, who seek to evolve their performance beyond the adrenalin of movement mastery, to achieve a deep state of concentration. The pace and frequency of performance take a role in this. On the *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress* tour of *DUO2015*, the dancers are seasoned professionals. Through their years of experience in The Forsythe Company, they have cultivated the capacity to perform intensely. In fact, they seek a respite from the high intensity of pressure described by Baldy and Watts in the citations above: a state of positive eustress rather than negative distress.

Gjoka described this in his own terminology as shifting to be "living" the choreography as opposed to performing it.[71] The distinction he perceives as a holistic investment in his project and partnership—one affording the thrill that comes through relational attunement. It was also a practice of being present, and not trying to reproduce the past. He explains:

> So, when we rehearsed it so many times and we would feel like, damn … we rehearsed it too much. I was like, how can you rehearse it too much?! Because we, in dance, we practice to rehearse. We practice to be perfect. But sometimes, we are totally going around it. It is not about practicing, how to say, a certain technique. Of course, you absolutely need to have the knowledge of it, but if you want to go beyond, then you do not allow yourself (*pause*) to build this trust, that you can give (*he dances*). Take it and go: let's go! And in the moment when you do it, (*he dances and vocalizes whhoaa!*) you are living it. But you are not thinking: "I'm performing." I'm living it.[72]

Watts uses different terminology to describe the fluidity between living on and off the stage:

> On the tour we had done so many shows of it [*DUO2015*], that the work became really what you saw on stage, and it didn't make sense for us to rehearse it ahead of time. Now … Just check in, make sure that it's in peak-performance, or whatever. The work that we did was really the work that everybody saw.[73]

Watts observes that because of new frequency of repetition of performance on the world tour of *Sylvie Guillem – Life in Progress*, it became even more necessary to allow performance to be a sort of "work" without rehearsal; meaning the choreography had to stay alive by changing, in work that the audience could see.

Practice, performance, work and life—all intermix for Watts and Gjoka. Western dance education foregrounds practicing—in the sense of repeating to be perfect—as a value in itself. What occurs in Watts and Gjoka's approach to *DUO2015* is a thriving enactment that carries the rigor of the project's history of practice, coupled with creative speculation on what the project might become. With each performance, this is mediated by singular conditions.

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

72 Brigel Gjoka, interview with the author and Riley Watts, Bologna, October 25, 2016.

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

Drawing extensively from interviews with the dancers and Forsythe, as well as review of archival videos of The Forsythe Company's *Duo* rehearsals in 2012, this chapter has examined the dancers' phases of learning, rehearsing and performing *Duo*. My aim was to comprehend how notions of practice, rehearsal and performance were understood and enacted by the dancers, as well as how and why these changed over the piece's history. Individual sections have focused on the dancers' process of learning *Duo* in Ballett Frankfurt (11.1), reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company (11.2), revising the project for *DUO2015* and the specific practices of rehearsing (11.3.1) and performing (11.3.2) involved in this. Through this examination, I have illustrated that the force of creativity is central to *Duo*'s practice. Rehearsal and performance were generative processes in which the team explored what *Duo* may become today. I have also shown that the regime of practice was influenced by what the dancers believed was relevant to being a "good" dancer and finding the "right" mode of rehearsal. Consequently, the aesthetic of *Duo* reflected the dancers' achievement of a common framework for these values, furthering my claims that choreography is more than a formal organization of movement, but a complex nexus with the social plane and moral sphere.

This investigation showed various modes and purposes of rehearsal across the project's history, which changed together with the aesthetic of the piece. The Ballett Frankfurt version of *Duo* demanded balletic virtuosity and endurance. *DUO2015* required greater facility in joint improvisation; not over-rehearsing was important, to stay spontaneous. Throughout the history of *Duo*, developing rapport, connection, musicality and trust with one's partner was essential. The dancers stressed "learning by doing." Their testimony underscored the ongoing journey of the piece, in continuing to expand the enabling constraints, always questioning what more and what else the work could be.

The choreographic process thus continued to be *re-creative*. Instead of rote repetition, or nostalgic reproduction of the past, the dancers' testimonies have delved into the processes of creative reenactment, situated within the specific materiality and context of the theater space. This re-creative process was close to their constitution as persons, which they described as a sort of "living" on stage. Continually finding rather than repeating, negotiating rather than complying—dancing together was a journey that afforded personal growth and fulfillment.