Chapter 10: Creating *Duo* (1996)

Figure 35. Video still of the first rehearsal of Duo, *January 2, 1996. From left to right: Jill Johnson, William Forsythe and Regina van Berkel.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

The first archival video—grainy in quality and dated January 2, 1996—lurches directly into a rehearsal already in process. William Forsythe, wearing loose fitting grey sweatpants and sweatshirt, is developing a sequence of movement, repeating an action until it seems known or recognizable to him. The rehearsal setting is the theater foyer of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt*, indicating that this is a makeshift rehearsal taking place outside of Ballett Frankfurt's two studios. The room is quiet, Forsythe's voice is soft.

"Wait a sec," he says.[1] Near to the choreographer, two female dancers pause: Canadian dancer Jill Johnson and Dutch dancer Regina van Berkel; at that time, both in their mid-twenties. As Forsythe resumes his movement, the women continue to catch the movements coming out of him—mimicking and repeating. Forsythe directs his gaze to the camera and asks, "Are you going?" confirming that their movements are being recorded. Together, he and the dancers form a constellation of three, all facing the same direction. Forsythe is in the center and the women flank him, slightly behind on either side. The triangular formation gives the dancers equal proximity to the choreographer so they can both comfortably see and study his movement. After a couple of tries, he seems to understand something and begins to teach: "So you go here …," he begins.

This initial introduction to the process of making *Duo* helps to orient the ethnographic reconstruction that follows in Section 10.4. My purpose is to provide—primarily for dance scholarship—a rich, chronological account of making choreographic work, foregrounding reflection upon the process of the dancers.[2] Additionally, my intent is to define aspects contributing to our growing understanding of the choreography of *Duo*, through looking at how this choreography was initially produced via *creation* practices. The cluster of concepts emerging in this section link creation, choreography and dance, with the terms: *potentiality*, *emergence*, *becoming* and *process*—which I try to make understandable through example.

The tone of this scholarship is tender, reflecting "closeness." Close implies not only near in proximity but sensitively seeking understanding of what is meaningful within these interactions, as is fundamental in ethnographic study.[3] Interpreting the records of this process chronologically, my writing brings the reader intimately into the studio and near the stage—highlighting what I can perceive, based on my years of making

1 Citations from the Ballett Frankfurt archival video labeled: 1996 01 02 A. All citations in this paragraph from the first minute of the tape.

2 Notably, such accounts are still lacking. The public/private division of performance/rehearsal has left the *actual* process of choreographing an under studied field by dance scholars, though there are increasing formats enabling choreographers to share and document their own work: see Blades and Meehan, *Performing Process*. Some examples are provided in the Online Artistic Resources section of the bibliography. Scholarly studies analyzing the making of a specific choreography from start to finish include the following: The dancer and anthropologist team Robert Maiorano and Valerie Brooks followed George Balanchine making the piece *Mozartiana* (1981); see Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*. Rudi Laermans has studied choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker making the work *Verklärte Nacht* (1995); see Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 293–310. Using augmented video-recording apparatuses, in conjunction with ethnographic live observation, there are two pioneering studies. The first, by a team led by cognitive scientist David Kirsh, analyzed a creation by Wayne McGregor in 2009; see Kirsh et al., "Choreographic Methods for Creating Novel, High Quality Dance." The second, by a team of dance scholars and technologists, used the digital software Piecemaker to study the making of *Effect* (2019) by choreographer Taneli Törmä; see Rittershaus et al., "Recording *Effect*." A final example is Katarina Kleinschmidt's praxeological study of rehearsals—through multiple examples of contemporary dance—which focuses on knowledge production as opposed to the rehearsal/performance split, see Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*. The extreme diversity of these projects illustrates that making dance is interesting to scholars in many different fields, yet it remains a young area of study, without a common foundational discourse.

3 Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, pp. 1–4.

pieces in The Forsythe Company. Passing back and forth between ethnographic reflection and creative immersion, I allow my perception of the creative potential within this process to impact my writing. Points of analytic reflection expand into footnotes and overflow into my conclusion. The combination of these text types serves to reconstruct a complicated nexus of activity. My sources and process of analysis warrant further discussion for the critical reader to comprehend how this knowledge was produced, as defined below.

10.1 Sources and Methods for Studying the Creation of *Duo*

This analysis of the creation process involved in making *Duo* draws from interviews with *Duo* dancers Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel, choreographer William Forsythe, and the study of archival videos of the rehearsals while making *Duo*. These videos were made by archivist Nicholas Champion for use within the rehearsal process, as well as in anticipation of the value of this documentation to future dancers and scholars.[4] The window that they offer onto the team's process is exceptionally rich, though the single perspective it offers misses moments outside the camera's perspective of the studio (in dressing rooms, corridors, backstage, and so on). To emphasize the restorative nature of this fieldwork, I label it a *reconstructive ethnography*.

Accuracy and attention to detail were essential to this writing process, fashioned to reflect the *logic of practice* within Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company. All citations in this chapter are transcriptions from the archival videos, or when noted, a specific interview. Because of my interest in the relational components of creative process, especially how movement and ideas might be socially distributed, my analytic process honed in on these aspects. It focusses on tracing the relations between the dancers, Forsythe, the video, their notebooks, the spaces and my body, as an active observer watching the video tapes over two decades later. I used a form of "thick description" to write fieldwork notes that were then analyzed and edited.[5] Since my view was predisposed—knowing what

4 Nicholas Champion was a British dancer in the Ballett Frankfurt (1984–1992). From 1992–2005 he was responsible for archiving the team's rehearsals and performances. He is well known to audiences for his role as the 'man with the megaphone' in Forsythe's ballet *Artifact*. Champion also took meticulous handwritten notes as he was filming, which are in storage and will be included in Forsythe's official archive. Champion recalls, "I knew that Bill's work was very, very important not just for the next premiere we were working towards, but for the development of our art form, and I thought that sometime later this material might be needed, not just by Bill. I filmed everything […] at the time, I couldn't tell what would be especially important ten years later." Nicolas Champion, email to author, October 3, 2019. The contribution of film technology to Ballett Frankfurt's choreographic process was pioneering. According to dancer Regina van Berkel, in the 1990s the company was a "highly technological" environment. In addition to the way that video was customarily used in rehearsals, van Berkel would sometimes take home the "video viewing machines" to study the footage at night. Regina van Berkel, interview with author, Zürich, May 5, 2017. While Wulff notes the widespread usage of performance video in her study of ballet companies in the mid 1990s, to my knowledge, producing daily film archives of rehearsals was uncommon. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 155–57.

5 On "thick description," see Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3–30.

Duo would become—I practiced noticing what was occurring and trying to understand the logic of the unfolding practice, as opposed to purely looking back upon what was formative. This helped me to appreciate the plane of composition, to decipher forces in the making; I was looking not only for *what* was being done, but *why* and *how*.

The methodological approach that I have taken intermixes documentation, reconstructive ethnographic observation and analysis. My description in section 10.4 acts as a "literary evocation," drawing the reader into particular events chosen with regard to my research questions.[6] In this I draw strongly from two literary models: First, re-creating the experience of the rehearsals for the reader in the present tense *as if* I were in the room with dancers—I take this model from Maiorano and Brooks' approach to inscribing the creative process of choreographer George Balanchine.[7] Second, in fragmenting this narrative—intermixing the chronical with transcriptions from interviews with the dancers—I borrow from the style of writing developed by Loïc Wacquant in *Body & Soul* (2006). Sensuously, I evoke the activities and spaces of rehearsal, with attention to modes of sensation that the dancers have described in their memories. The documentation is, of course, selective, bringing out key episodes from each rehearsal. These highlighted instances help to illustrate the general flow or exceptions through which the work must be rethought. Drawing from the interviews, I prioritize inclusion of the dancers' memories, using the archival videos to contribute my own observations to the events they emphasize. This involves filling gaps about what the people in the rehearsals are doing, based on my knowledge of the actual spaces and prior work with Forsythe—for example, my practical knowledge of the scale of each room and location of elements such as the mirror and tech booth.

My method of video analysis involved an ethnographic practice that I named *rewind/shifting attention*. Shifting my attention toward the dancers in the video, I observed what they were doing. Rewinding and shifting my attention to Forsythe, I examined how he was engaging with the field around him, and how decisions were being taken. Rewinding and shifting my attention to the tools involved, I discerned how these objects and traces allowed *Duo* to be constructed. Pausing and reviewing my interview notes, I tried to piece together what the dancers remembered in relation to what I was observing. This iterative practice of shifting attention helped me to critically reflect upon how the participants initiated, molded, gazed upon and judged the piece taking form—deconstructing the "attention regime" with my own mobile focus.[8] In these shifts, which would be different in live fieldwork, I concurred that the creativity of *Duo* was happening within a complex social and material interplay; that the stakes were shifting within each new rehearsal with the impending deadline of the premiere.

6 On "literary evocation," see Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, pp. 7–8.

7 See Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*.

8 Compare to Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 302–5.

10.2 Between Dancers and Choreographers

Writing with an 'insider' view, dancer Dana Caspersen's descriptions of creative process in Ballett Frankfurt provide lucid examples of these complicated journeys—showing this contingent interplay of people, ideas, materials, movement, media and traces. Caspersen speaks reflectively about the roles of the dancers and Forsythe, giving insight into a number of pieces.[9] From these accounts, a general outline of the ensembles' creative process can be made, which is a useful background for reflecting upon the case study of *Duo*; three levels can be assigned from her testimony, as follows:

The first—what Caspersen calls a "traditional fashion" of making choreography—is with "Bill creating all the movement and the structure."[10] In this modus, the dancers are respected and participatory interpreters of this movement, often building partnering and group works under Forsythe's supervision. By using the word "traditional," Caspersen acknowledges an approach that is widespread in European and American practices of making choreography in which the choreographer's body is understood to be the source of invention, and his or her knowledge and vision must be transferred to the group. Within this, the choreographer has considerable authority and is the indisputable author of the work.

Caspersen names the second modus as when Forsythe's movement serves as a basis for improvisation in performance. In this case, the dancers contribute richly through decision-making and the risk of real time improvisation on stage.

The third mode that Caspersen identifies is when "Bill developed the key parameters of an event"—that is, when Forsythe devised and distributed methods for creating movement and systems for structuring it.[11] In this enhanced democratic situation, the dancers created within frames and Forsythe took the final decisions to bring the work together. Given Forsythe's position as editor, it was rare that dancers achieved co-authorship with equal decision-making on the piece's content, form and philosophy. Caspersen and Forsythe's collaborations—for example on the film *From a Classical Position* (1997)—do exemplify this, and warrant particular analysis given the overlapping of personal and professional ties.[12]

Duo's process is an example of a "traditional" creation, to borrow Caspersen's designation, in which Forsythe manifests the movement on the first day of rehearsal. The dancers' cooperation molds and shifts the movement into co-movement. Recognizing the many modes of "devising" dance and various working relationships between choreographers and dancers, dance scholar Jo Butterworth has developed a spectrum for the analysis and teaching of choreographic practice. This model designates the range from when the choreographer is the "expert" and the dancer the "instrument" (mode 1) to the choreographer as "collaborator" and the dancer as "co-owner" (mode 5). The making of

9 See in particular Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point"; Caspersen, "Decreation."

10 Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," p. 27.

11 Ibid., p. 28.

12 On this project, see Spier, "Inside the Knot That Two Bodies Make." Caspersen is Forsythe's wife.

Duo tends to involve modes 2 and 3—with the choreographer as the "author" and "pilot" and the dancers as "interpreters" and "contributors."[13]

Forsythe and the dancers often switched modes in one creation—as Butterworth emphasized is common within devising practices. By naming these "traditional" methods, Caspersen recognizes that, although they are common within the ballet world, they are increasingly infrequent in a "post-control"[14] and "collaborative" process of contemporary dance, in which collaboration involves joint authorship and negotiation of shared decision-making in all stages of the process.[15] Forsythe himself recognizes this shifting within his lifespan as a choreographer. In 2006, he observes: "The next generation of choreographers don't see it as a top down practice. It's a horizontal practice."[16] With this shift, Forsythe also perceives a change in his own working methods. In scaling down the ensemble size from the Ballett Frankfurt to form The Forsythe Company, Forsythe states in 2005:

> That is why I wanted to set this company up as a workshop, literally, where we all make things. If everyone is responsible for creating material, then everyone is in charge and everyone is dependent on everyone else. It's my job still to organize the situation, to frame the material, but I'm like a gallerist. The company isn't a gang of competing dancers—it's a community of artists.[17]

This would suggest that *Duo* dancers from The Forsythe Company had different practices of devising from the Ballett Frankfurt dancers, as well as a distinctive understanding of their roles. Further consequences of this will become apparent in Chapter 11, when re-creating *Duo* is considered.

Generally, Forsythe's creative process was impacted by the context and divided into two phases: in the studio and on stage. During the studio process, the ensemble was highly explorative and distributed—generating excessively more (movement, scenes, texts, musical atmospheres, costumes, and so on) than was shown in the final performance—and generating emergently, without a blueprint for what would be made. On stage, in the second phase of formatting a performance for the conventions of theater, the decisions of what to include and exclude shifted the model more toward *cooperation*, as opposed to *collaboration*. This reduction of "the possible scope of action" was dependent on Forsythe's authority.[18] Noting this, and labeling it as "editing," Caspersen re-

13 Butterworth, "Too Many Cooks?," p. 187.

14 Kloppenberg defines *post-control* as "a process in which choreographers work collaboratively with dancers to generate fixed choreography out of improvisational explorations." She adds: "By 'post-control' I mean that the defining moments in this kind of choreography happen just after control is exercised (by a choreographer defining parameters or dancers agreeing to participate in the explorations) and then relinquished to a collective unknown." See Kloppenberg, "Improvisation in Process," p. 189.

15 See Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 310–32; Ruhsam, *Kollaborative Praxis*.

16 William Forsythe, team meeting to discuss *Synchronous Objects* in Brooklyn, New York, May 5, 2006. Transcription by Norah Zuniga Shaw. Conversation between Forsythe, Rebecca Groves, Jill Johnson, Norah Zuniga Shaw and myself.

17 Forsythe, cited in Mackrell, "A New Dynamic."

18 Here, Laermans draws from Niklas Luhmann. See Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 350.

counts: "The process of editing is difficult for everyone, and becomes increasingly so as the company members take on more and more artistic responsibility." But Caspersen acknowledges that by 2000: "Bill [Forsythe] has altered the structure of things to reflect the increasing creative input from the dancers. Dancers are now paid an extra sum for their input, and receive program credit; or when appropriate, pieces are credited simply to the Frankfurt Ballet."[19]

10.3 *Marion/Marion* (1991)

When did the process of making *Duo* begin? Were there any important antecedents or starting points? *Duo* premiered on January 20, 1996, in Ballett Frankfurt's performance *Six Counter Points*—an evening of mixed repertoire, old and new works. During the Christmas holiday, dancers were chosen and called to rehearsals for three new pieces: later titled *Trio*, *Approximate Sonata*, and *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*. In addition, two recently made pieces of existing repertoire were planned—namely *The The* (1995) and *Four Point Counter* (1995)—as well as the piece *Marion/Marion* (1991).[20] Initially, *Duo* dancers van Berkel and Johnson were cast (that is, chosen by Forsythe) to perform a new version of *Marion/Marion*—a duet that Forsythe had created for Nederlands Dans Theater III in 1991, with music from Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960).[21] The title referenced the protagonist of Hitchcock's film, Marion Crane; the duet echoed the plot element of having look-alike sisters. *Marion/Marion* had not yet been performed by the Ballett Frankfurt, so it was a question exactly how the piece would transfer to new dancers.

The archival rehearsal tapes of *Duo*, as well as the technical cue sheet for lighting and piano, and even a heading in van Berkel's notebook, all use the provisional title *Marion/Marion*. Despite this, the artists I interviewed all agreed that *Duo* and *Marion/Marion* were separate, i.e., distinct works. From review of the archival videos of a performance of *Marion/Marion* and one rehearsal of Forsythe and the dancers, I did not find evidence of shared movement material in common between the two pieces.[22] Links to *Marion/Marion* made by Forsythe during the first rehearsal were important starting points, but then opened up new avenues of investigation. This demonstrates how in Forsythe's process, creation could involve seeds from previous works, while still taking off rapidly in new directions.

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19 See Caspersen, "It Starts From Any Point," p. 35.

20 *The The* (premiere on October 8, 1995, The Hague, Netherlands, choreography by Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe), *Four Point Counter* (premiere on November 16, 1995, Nederlands Dans Theater, The Hague, Netherlands), *Marion/Marion* (November 8, 1991, Nederlands Dans Theater III, The Hague, Netherlands). Source: Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 367, p. 370.

21 Music by Bernard Herrmann, *Temptation*. *Marion/Marion* was performed by female dancers Alida Chase and Sabine Kupferberg.

22 The rehearsal video was undated. The performance video studied was of the premiere on November 8, 1991.

10.4 The Chronology of Making *Duo*

10.4.1 Foyer: Material

In the context of the Ballett Frankfurt, Forsythe mostly created new pieces for groups of dancers—a process that engendered a room buzzing with movement.[23] Intimate rehearsals between the choreographer and only one or two dancers were rare; *Duo* dancers remember being excited by this occurrence. Dancer van Berkel recalled:

> We felt that it was for him [Forsythe] a moment (*she inhales audibly*) to let his inspiration [flow] and [follow] his desire of material … movement. We were not making the phrases at that moment together. He danced in front of us—with us. He … with his focus out, and we in the back … trying. And then of course Billy [Forsythe] always turns around, "Did you get a bit of an idea, or?" And it was filmed. Our film/video man [Nicholas Champion] was there. And he filmed everything.[24]

With less than three weeks until the premiere, and with three other short pieces to make in addition to *Duo*, Forsythe plans to invent the movement (or at least some of it) on this day, and then allow the dancers to learn it from the video—saving time. Champion's notes, which he makes in addition to filming, help the dancers reconstruct Forsythe's motion.

In the archival video, I observe Forsythe combining a small arc of his right hand with a few rhythmical steps falling backwards. Like a current of water passing turbulently across the bow of a ship, the waves of Forsythe's movements are caught by Johnson and van Berkel at different rates, as they absorb and think through what they see. The deliberate use of video recording means, as van Berkel explained, that the dancers need not save this movement to memory immediately; it can remain streaming, in a flow of invention—something Berkel differentiates as "dance," as opposed to "making."[25]

The unusual context of this rehearsal is relevant with regard to how the movement emerges. Because of the shortage of space (with only two studios) and the need to rehearse multiple pieces simultaneously, the dancers work within the theater foyer. This provisional space offers novelty to rehearsal: the dancers move upon a slippery wooden floor,[26] in the place where the audience typically drinks *Sekt* (German champagne) during the intermission, admiring the nighttime view over Frankfurt's inner city. During this afternoon rehearsal, taking place in daylight, the artists gaze out across the large vista of a park where trees and skyscrapers stretch up through the cold of winter. There

23 See Chapter 4: The Dancers' Practices.

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

25 Ibid.

26 On the floors of dance studios and on stage, there is a special type of vinyl laid called Marley that is smooth and nonstick. Now mass-produced and used internationally, dancers across European and American dance schools and companies work on similar floors. This is an interesting example of the influence of mass-produced material conditions, central to the development of the dance profession across many genres (such as ballet, jazz, modern, contemporary). In the case of *Duo*, the normal rehearsal conditions were disrupted (by way of a different floor, a fresh view and perhaps no mirrors), leaving its mark on the dance.

is no mirror supporting self-reflection and study—as there is in Ballett Frankfurt's two rehearsal studios, where the dancers normally work.[27] Johnson recalls that the particular qualities of this atmosphere of the foyer were important for inspiring the work, specifying that the "vastness" and "beauty" of the space left a trace in the choreography.[28] Her partner van Berkel confirms:

> I must say that, for me, space has a very big influence. I don't know how much space for Jill was influencing. I think the atmosphere, definitely, for us all three made that moment that moment in the foyer. Because that is the material [of *Duo*]. The material is simply that. There is not much changed from that moment."[29]

Not just the space, but the incidence of being together there: excited but calm, intimately attuned, letting "Billy's" movement pour through and between their bodies.

The movements appear to pass through Forsythe's body first. Forsythe attempts to integrate a small arc of his right hand with a few steps moving backwards. Bringing together the multiple small steps with the singular longer arc of his arm incites a dialogue in his body to make the rhythms align. This movement—oversimplified in my textual translation—is highly complex. Without lurching, Forsythe's body bobs, intuitively synchronizing parts; his movement is integrated but not repeatable. He tries again and again. Eventually, Forsythe tells the dancers that he will change his approach. Instead of seeking continuity, he then tries to "break up" the movements. Variations appear to become more known, but not less variable. Like something slippery, the movement is not easy to grasp—to stabilize and remember—as a movement that can be reproduced.

On the fourth repetition of his hand arcing, Forsythe discovers a way to fall into the movement and sink into dis-balance. Gesturing to the dancers to come closer to him, he moves while explaining: a trajectory of the right hand moving towards the ring finger of his left hand. Johnson and van Berkel copy this action, more or less, and then Forsythe waits—holding his pose in suspense. This suspense, different from a pose, is still animated: the thinking-feeling of where one is now, to intuit what movement might come next. Forsythe, I believe, is open to have an association, an idea or a physical impulse. Van Berkel holds her pose clasping her ring finger expectantly. Johnson releases the pose to quietly review an aspect of what she has just learned. Making a small gesture, Forsythe physically sketches an idea, which then blossoms into a new part of the choreography: a way of falling to the right, while dipping the head. As the dancers catch onto the new motion in the sequence, Forsythe switches into a mode of describing and teaching—demonstrating a movement in miniature before explaining details (such as how the dancers should place the chin down to their hands and how the head should retrace the arc previously made by their hand).

He is aware of where the camera is; he is teaching the dancers in real time, as well as making verbal note of things that he expects them to review and memorize later on. His switching between inventing, gesturing and teaching is fluid—in that someone without

27 The studios were equipped with mirrors hung with curtains—enabling them to be hidden when needed.

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

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

knowledge of the codes might not know what is instruction and what is 'the choreography.'[30] The focused mood is undisturbed by a female passerby in the foyer, speaking to a colleague. The trio of dancers keep their eyes on one another. They are intensely focused and, as van Berkel remembers, trying to keep "calm," while cooperating.[31]

"We needed each other to make this piece come out." Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.

REGINA: We know there was a moment called tree and it was outside, he said "the tree." So the movement started like that, for example. You know (*she marks the movement while speaking*) it kind of starts like this. It was not so much time we were there, and he improvised material and we were in the back trying to catch it and find details and look at each other. And we tried to stay calm. Sometimes you get energies that one dancer maybe wants to know it faster or better than the other one. Sometimes, dancers have a certain concurrence [competition] in those moments.

LIZ: Yes. Did you feel that then?

REGINA: No. That is what I mean. We didn't have that. Not from the first day. We needed each other to make this piece come out. It is such a special vibration when you are with Bill alone. And we were from the first moment on—like this trying to find the movement and giving each other strength. And I found that! I see that! You see that. We will find it out later!

LIZ: How did you work together after the first rehearsal?

REGINA: Next was to have those phrases in our body to present it to him again. We exchanged with him. We were ready to show him the material. We always (*her voice lifts up*) did the phrases together! It was not that one did that phrase and practiced that phrase alone. And then the other one practiced that phrase alone. No. We went always together to: let's try this phrase! Ok, this phrase! Shall we go there, a little? (*she vocalizes rhythmically*) *Ba ga ga*! Shall we try *be ga ga yeah*! Alright. I have difficulties there. Ok I wait for you. I wait for you. We felt, um, harmonized. But unspoken. It was not that we said to each other: "Now." We want to move together onstage. No! And that's how we are going to push the direction of the piece. No. Forget that … anyway forget that with Billy. That's the wonderful element of Billy. That it stays in such a live process. So, but for us in that moment, it gave us the right energy and hold, to make this material enter us. Feeling this was created in this very nice place with the nature view there. No mirror, ah. You do not look at yourself at the moment it is made. You don't go to your own body and check what the other body … no. You are just looking at him, and he looks at us. And we build new material. But for me, it was extremely him. I was so very thankful to receive that from him. In that moment. And we looked at him constantly on the tape. It was for me, a very special gift. Short gift though (*laughs*) in

30 Thanks to Timo Herbst for this insight.

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

> time. I remember that it was for me like … (*she vocalizes*) *Vlunk*! We just worked one and a half hours I think.

Together, the three artists continue inventing movement after movement, concatenating a new sequence until their bodies become warm—with Johnson and then Forsythe shedding their bulky sweatshirts. Their voices become animated as the mood seems to relax and the sequence starts to flow—with laughter, jokes and questions or observations from the dancers. As van Berkel explains, Forsythe gives movement but "*we* build new material together."[32] Johnson is more vocally active, while it is van Berkel who often "catches" the movement first with her body, creating waves of similar movements, with just a millisecond delay. They are precisely attuned to one another, though not (yet) perfectly synchronized; the dancers resonate Forsythe's invention.[33] They mimic, adapt, think, repeat and question. Together, they build.

Periods when Forsythe invents a sequence and the dancers actively soak up the movement behind him are followed by phases of cooperative review. At this point, the dancers and Forsythe alternate moving, talking and moving-while-talking. Speaking quickly and referencing the movement by marking, they palpate what they have invented minutes before, exchanging equally as interlocutors with shared responsibility, taking turns. Together, they remember. When they forget or diverge, they defer to one another for help. They pose questions. They invent further, including the dancers, who sometimes give suggestions by moving first. Forsythe also catches onto them: "Right!" They reiterate the concepts related to the movement, chorusing shorthand words that Forsythe has said earlier: "match," "ball change," "expand," "hip" and "over." They sing rhythms, such as "e ah," "ke ka" and "ba ba bum," switching easily in and out of language. They are focused, but also riding on each other's sentences and laughing in one another's company. The impulse of movement coming forth this way seems to make them extremely excited. They appear to delight in talking and moving together.

In this phase of the creation process, the focus is on inventing movement sequences rather than committing them to memory or perfecting performance. Attention is also on capturing and reciting details for the camera, to facilitate the next process of memorizing. The reviewing described above does not stop the motion from being made. It is a way of helping the process of invention become cooperative, serving to collectively grasp the movement that is passing through them so quickly, by sharing cognitive terms. Van Berkel and Johnson appear eager to display their knowledge and help whenever Forsythe asks, "What happens here?" When a gap appears that no one can fill, they agree to defer (later) to the video recording rather than waste precious time or lose momentum. At

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32 Emphasis (*we*) mine. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

33 I take the metaphor of "catching" movement from the dancers. Johnson explains: "I remember Nick Champion being there filming, and Bill, I mean it was one of those things, it was just flowing through him, I mean we couldn't dance fast enough in a way, because the ideas were just pouring out and Regina and I we were behind him just trying to sort of catch everything we could." Van Berkel concurs independently: "It was not so much time we were there, and he improvised material and we were in the back trying to catch it and find details and looked at each other." Jill Johnson, videoconference interview with the author, October 21, 2016. Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

times, Forsythe speaks directly to the camera, addressing the future Johnson and van Berkel to guide their study: "choose a version here" or "the shoulder is way up high." The camera, powered by Champion's dedication to documentation, is a soothing token of security, allowing everyone to trust in simply following the flow of movement invention. Memorization can happen later. Humans and camera together create an apparatus for capturing movement.[34]

Though the dancers later describe the ideas "pouring out" of Forsythe, out of him personally, it is a social affair.[35] Forsythe is in the midst of the two dancers and attentive to each of them. While reviewing the first, still-fresh sequence, they come to a movement of the head, the coordination of which proves difficult. Forsythe comes before Johnson to touch her hands, explaining more of what he was thinking. From the provisional piece titled *Marion/Marion*, he had associated (in a wordplay) from Marion to marry-on, hence the idea of the ring finger (or, expanding on that, the idea to arc the right hand to grasp the ring on the ring finger). This movement would subsequently be named *goldfinger*. Forsythe then turns to van Berkel, holding her hands like he had just held Johnson's—guiding her chin and arm to launch them into an arc. In the rehearsal that follows, Forsythe addresses Johnson and van Berkel equally, including them, touching them, instructing them as the sequences come forth. He appears to be inspired both by and with them. In the short breaks they take together, the three artists clap and wiggle with excitement over the movement that they are producing. This reveals Forsythe's tacit awareness of the attention regime in place; his deliberate effort to be fair, equally generous and attentive.

As an outsider, watching these videos over twenty years later, I wonder how much the movement really comes from Forsythe? Though the movement does "pour out" of Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson are seminal to the situation. It is because both they and the camera are there—as well as the deadline of the premiere—that the movement begins to emerge. It is also because all three, not only Forsythe, are exquisite movers, inspiring one another. Rather than compete, they all nurture the movement pouring forth. The movement is based upon their sharing and complicity, forming through the relay between their bodies. The movement is relational: through and through.

Forsythe helps the movements become known, or quasi-repeatable, by using his capacity to describe what he observes—in his own or the dancers' bodies—in words. He makes the movement graspable, helping it to endure. This is not a game as simple as choreographer moves and dancers imitate, but one where movement intention, encoded in language, must be fed forward into the flow of the three-fold imitation-game—the triangle of Forsythe, van Berkel and Johnson. Talking with abstract imagery and naming body parts seems to help, such as the arcs landing on a ring finger.[36]

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34 It might be worth emphasizing how difficult it is to improvise complex motions and remember them. The topic of movement and embodied memory is a central topic in dance studies. See Brandstetter, "Choreographie als Grab-Mal"; Siegmund, "Das Gedächtnis des Körpers in der Bewegung"; Wehren, *Körper als Archiv in Bewegung*, in particular pp. 147–59; and Bläsing, "The Dancer's Memory."

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

36 This is generally true in Forsythe's creations, reflecting methodology developed during the Ballett Frankfurt period. Forsythe's publication *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye* gives dozens of examples—showing how imagery of points, lines, planes and curves in space

Forsythe works with thinking-feeling abstraction. This phantasmagoria is fed by the unconscious (or the becoming conscious) without caring for psychodrama or psychoanalysis—more as *reverie*. Reverie and wordplay are modes of invention. Remember, Forsythe jumps associatively from "Marion" to "marry-on" and, to what will become a movement referencing a suitcase, he jokes in terms of a "carry-on." At the end of the rehearsal, Forsythe improvises another phrase while describing imagery and coaching execution, ending with the motion "turn on the shower"—what became *showerhead*.[37]

Within my research, neither the dancers nor Forsythe remembered references to Hitchcock's *Psycho*, a thread of the precursor piece *Marion/Marion* (1991), as important within the creative process. In my focus on the movement *showerhead*, I was the only one to fathom that this imagery could have sprung from Forsythe's imagination of the famous shower scene in *Psycho*. That this impulse was forgotten is helpful to illustrate the way that meaning-making is flexible and plural in this ensemble's creative work. The antecedents of *Duo* transformed quickly in the rehearsal chronology as the piece began to take shape—aspects forgotten and intentions found. The team's creative process is a weave of meaning-making, opening up an emergent and contingent process of cooperatively making movement.

In the creation of *Duo*, Forsythe's movement—more aptly, the movement passing *through* Forsythe—becomes *choreographic material*. Alongside this, sharing intention and communing abstractions are essential; yet dissensus also persists. *Showerhead* exemplifies this. As another example: Forsythe starts moving—swinging his right arm again, in an arc up and across his body, with greater energy than before. He describes this action as tracing the upper half-circle of a steering wheel—an association, I speculate, to the character of Marion, driving in *Psycho*. Humored by this description, van Berkel steps right up to him to grasp his shoulder and point to something she sees in the distance—laughing that she had imagined him gesturing over the visible treetops in the park. (In interviews over twenty years later, she again remembers the view as important to how the ideas were invented.) Johnson pitches in with equal enthusiasm, "I was thinking something else!"

This joke, that Forsythe's "steering wheel" can be van Berkel's "tree," is an indication of common understanding: they know that it is impossible to replicate one's inner imagination of movement intention, but they agree that it is essential to *try* and to share images. By talking about movement, they show that imagery is essential to making movement in *Duo* come alive—to turning improvisation into material for making choreography, for making the singular into something common, for making it endure. Choreography is a process between dancing and abstracting movement. Choreography makes movement a constructive tool, one that can build structures—structures that pliantly explore the borders of dissensus in consensus.

By the end of the rehearsal, seven sequences or "phrases" of movement have been produced, Forsythe generating them with increasing speed. These phrases are enough

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can be a generative means for improvising movements. Here we see another property of these abstractions: that they enable the remembering and transmitting of movement.

37 See Chapter 6: The Movement of *Showerhead*.

for Forsythe to craft nearly the entire sequence of *Duo*—making this rehearsal, focusing on movement sequence invention, one of a kind. This is why van Berkel remembers: "That is the material."[38] Gaining momentum as they work, verbal exchanges with the dancers become shorter. The last phrase of movement comes out intact in just two minutes, with Forsythe explaining his intention while he dances.[39] Finished, Forsythe walks forward slowly to sit down. He justifies, "I think it's enough. I think it's enough." His voice brightens with the remark, "I think that'll give you two days of material," to which the dancers laugh. He continues: "You know what we could do? You could theoretically … You could take … You could take the video …" The video tape cuts. The dancers remember that Forsythe asked them to take the video and review it alone in his office.

10.4.2 Office Work: Intimacy and Details

The second phase of rehearsals for *Duo* takes place in Forsythe's office, without the choreographer. This is a very unusual place for the dancers to rehearse, and there is no video record of this part of the process. Van Berkel and Johnson remember the office rehearsals fondly. In a room of approximately five by ten meters, Forsythe's office offered the dancers a place to, as Johnson described, "make sense" of the movement that Forsythe had previously invented.[40] It was, for van Berkel, also a place supporting intimate exchange about personal matters that were important to their lives in that moment—a safe space.[41] The dancers enjoyed being together. They appreciated having time to talk together, and they recognized how they needed each other to "make sense" of the complex movement recorded in the previous session.

The labor was pleasurable. Like two children, van Berkel remembers, the two women knelt closely, nearly touching, to review the videotape of the foyer rehearsal on a small viewing device. Analyzing the details of Forsythe's movement was important: Where did the movement begin? What were the complex chain reactions happening in his body? What parts of the body participated and what angles and trajectories did they take? The dancers also paid close attention to Forsythe's pedagogical explanations, about the dynamics and images helping to create the movement. Never overwhelmed, van Berkel and Johnson remember feeling curious and confident. Prepared by their previous years in the company, they had the diagnostic skills to learn this difficult movement material. And they had the security and pleasure of having one another, recognizing each other as gifted and capable artists. The work alternated between kneeling on the floor to study the video and standing up to learn the movement, checking their image here and again in the small mirror in front of them. In breaks they shared personal stories, learning more fully about each other.

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

39 This is the unison sequence of *Duo* van Berkel calls *poumphathan* and Johnson *paaahhpapadum* and I call *umpadump*, after Watts and Gjoka.

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

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

Although studying movement from video was common practice in Ballett Frankfurt, not all dancers were able to learn movement as fluently as Johnson and van Berkel.[42] Learning sequentially from Forsythe's first action to the next, Johnson and van Berkel smooth the lurches between steps and make sense of the gaps, forming a set of nine sequences or "phrases." To entertain and facilitate the process, they give the phrases and steps nicknames—relying especially upon Johnson's verbal wit. Some decisions were prefigured by Forsythe, who had spoken directly to the camera in the last rehearsal, saying things such as: "That was three versions. I think the first one was good! Take one." They did not take liberties, says Johnson, but they did make decisions, says van Berkel.[43]

As an ethnographer, I was very curious how Forsythe's movement, itself brimming with multiple versions, could come to animate two bodies in unison—a synchrony with close similarity that did not exclude subtle difference. Laughing and speaking warmly during an interview in Frankfurt, van Berkel tells me, "We felt trustful together to say: well, once he does that, and once he does that, we can do this." She demonstrates figuring out how far to reach an arm: "The mirror was only there to make aesthetic decisions. Let our arm go on here, ok—yes." In the office rehearsal, both dancers started to fill their notebooks with ideas to help them learn—van Berkel in her native language of Dutch and Johnson in her mother tongue of English. These decisions enabled consensus between them that still recognized that no two people can be the same. Van Berkel concurs: "I have a very strong belief that each individual is so different, and nobody can actually be concurrent [competitive] or against somebody else. Because we are not the same. We cannot be the same."[44]

Rehearsing in "Billy's" office was exceptional in the culture of Ballett Frankfurt. More typical was the taking home of a video to review at night, working without a rehearsal director or on one's own when a studio was free, studying movement from the notes in one's notebook; these were all common supplements to rehearsals. This reflects how—in comparison to classical ballet culture—Ballett Frankfurt dancers had a different rehearsal practice, demonstrating greater autonomy and responsibility.

Expanded styles of rehearsal were paralleled by the artists significantly questioning assumptions and practices about *how* to participate in creating and reproducing choreography. One example, relevant to *Duo*, is whether the choreographer's movement must be upheld as the authority to be imitated—an original, so to say, to be modeled—or seen as a draft to be further embellished? A related question, pertaining to dancers learning *Duo* after the premiere, was whether a prior pair of dancers' movements should be learned precisely by a younger generation, or whether there was a logic for how it could transform. From my interviews and observations of practice, the dancers showed

42 In the next rehearsal, Forsythe remarks to an observer in German: "There are some … that when I demonstrate, they can take it directly from the television: Dana [Caspersen], these two [Johnson and van Berkel], a few others. It is really amazing. It is difficult to take it from television." Translation by the author.

43 Email exchange with Jill Johnson, June 29, 2017. Interview with Regina van Berkel, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

44 All citations in this paragraph: Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Frankfurt, April 22, 2017.

differences of opinion regarding how closely one should adhere to Forsythe's or another dancer's movement demonstration. Some dancers believed in the value of attempting exact replication, others believed in translation from one body to another, and some were confident in the necessity of letting the past be the past and finding a personal version, in the here and now. Pairs had to negotiate these differences, to find consensus.

What the dancers agreed upon was that Forsythe's demonstrations and prior dancers' work were references, to be respected and studied rigorously—that is, not to be disregarded or disrespected. They concurred that these precedents were inspiring, even when such antecedents could and should evolve. It cannot be overstated how important the process of learning from Forsythe and other dancers' movement was to the culture of the company—an intersubjective process. In the case of *Duo*, both Johnson and van Berkel were extremely "thankful" to receive the movement from Forsythe. Van Berkel described this as "good material." It was for her "precious." It was a "gift."[45]

The transmission of the movement from Forsythe's body to a dancer's body is a process that gives movement agency, or potential. The time it takes, and the time passing between original and copy, enables something new to happen—it is not immediate. Even with a "gift" like the movement of *Duo*, the dancers must take great care, to learn and reconstruct the movement, to enable it to carry on. Noting how this can be confusing to new dancers trained in traditional systems of dance education, dancer Antony Rizzi explains:

> Eventually the work comes from the dancers. […] At a certain point the work is left from Billy and now it's the dancer's. A lot of times Billy will say, you know—when something's going and the dancer hasn't developed the thing. And they've … 'specially to newer people and they don't understand, and they're like, he's like, "I've given you a skeleton. All it is a skeleton. And now you have to, like, fill it in."[46]

Van Berkel offered a different metaphor, of working with a "puzzle."[47] Puzzling for her comprised of zooming into the details—carefully examining each movement before reconstructing the whole picture or phrase. She attuned to sensations, forms, proprioception (where a limb is in space, relative to the body) and rhythm (entrainment within the body).

The practical logic of zooming into details of the movement puzzle were defined by each dancer's individual body and body logic, requiring each dancer to follow their own timing and inquiry. But critically, and this point cannot be underemphasized, they did this investigation *together*—side by side, in the same small room. They gave one another time. They looked inward, somatically, at the same moment. They looked frequently over at their partner, to find a common flow, or to learn from what they could see in the other. In my interview with her, van Berkel read sentences written in her notebook:

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

46 Antony Rizzi, interviewed by director Mike Figgis: see Figgis, *Just Dancing Around*, 26:00–26:30.

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

"I'm there for you," "I hear you," "I will wait for you," "I see you," "I feel you," "I'm with you," "I change it with you," "I answer you."[48]

"You puzzle every single movement out in little parts." Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.

REGINA: We felt very … in a certain vibe in understanding the details—because that is also fascinating in Billy's work, you also analyze so many details: Where does the movement come from? And ah! It goes (*she vocalizes*) *gung gung*, there! Or it's from the shoulder and then the heel. You focus your brain every time to be very zoomed in to elements. It is like a looping eye [magnifying glass] you know? You look at the phrase not as an aesthetic outer view … You dive every time inside, which makes your view so … detailed. We were there, also, with our backpack already … You know, secure. I was already three years there and you know Jill, I think, I think a bit longer because she was already before me there. We felt trustful to go into that detail. We were not insecure. We believed that we can get these complicated movements. And that we can transform that, together.

LIZ: Can you speak about some of the details that you remember? What kind of details were important in the movement?

REGINA: That is again the puzzle situation. You puzzle every single movement out in little parts. And then it becomes a bigger part of a puzzle. And then the bigger part of the puzzle goes in the whole picture. So yes, you remember the elbow in your side (*she demonstrates "goldfinger" holding her right arm up, palm facing the ceiling, elbow attached to her torso*). And that it goes over the bow and goes into your finger and then you remember that feeling, the warmness of your elbow in the side of your body. But then at one point, it goes together and it's not so, anymore, maybe that detailed. But the process goes by very detailed. So, understanding located parts of your body. Parts that come together.

LIZ: This is another type of synchrony.

REGINA: Yeah, and details of where exactly, which angle of the head or … temperature. You know, the warmness when you have your elbow there (*she demonstrates it touching her side*). It's connected. It gives you a hold also, symbolically, it's a match-up. And also, the grabbing of the ring finger, or grabbing the foot—yeah. That's that kind of small detail in your own physic [physique]—what Jill experienced differently than me, I'm sure. But we went through all those details together. Each needed also maybe their own time a bit. We didn't have maybe straight away things, each one's so logical, but then we gave each other time: "Oh, I have to get that again." Okay, and we try it again. Or you look at each other and at how to find a way to flow the movement. I mean 'right' means harmonic for us together. There is no right or wrong in that way. And for me, that atmosphere was very special in that close, small space. I'm positive that it was

48 Ibid.

> also indirect a very special thing to be in his office. I don't know how much his office was nice place, but it felt good to be in his office, somehow. His space was for us a special place.

"Necessity was the mother of that invention because our dance company never had a lot of time to make the work," explains Forsythe.[49] In public commentary, such as this remark from 1999, Forsythe is transparent and pragmatic about needing to teach the dancers choreographic competence in order to make pieces quickly. In the case of *Duo*, there is critical time pressure to get the performance up and running in just short of three weeks. There is a scarcity of rehearsal space to do so and also a limit to the presence of choreographer, who has to be leading multiple and often parallel rehearsals. Forsythe's actions during the creative period making *Six Counter Points* demonstrate that he was adaptive and resourceful within the municipal theater system (his qualities in stark contrast to the slow, bureaucratic workings of the institution at large), harnessing spaces such as the foyer or the office. Also, Forsythe cultivated a working culture of self-motivation, offering dancers independence uncommon within the framework of classical ballet, where supervised rehearsals are the norm for all but the very highest principal dancers.[50]

Johnson and van Berkel's personal exchanges during the office rehearsals are essential to developing the intimacy which is pertinent to *Duo.* From my interviews, it was revealing to find that the closeness of bonding and studying movement in Forsythe's office will produce a type of synchrony that gives character to *Duo*. This is indicative of the type of emergent potential evoked by being creative in Ballett Frankfurt: a sort of listening to what is being produced, under and through particular conditions. The dancers are certain that *Duo* holds the traces of these rehearsal spaces—from the inspiring vastness, beauty and novelty of working in the theater foyer, to the closeness and intimacy of working in Forsythe's office space.

10.4.3 First Studio Rehearsal: Conceptual Pacts

In van Berkel's notebook, the first studio rehearsal is dated January 6, 1996—a Saturday.[51] The archival videotape jumps directly into the scene, showing Johnson and van

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49 See Kaiser, "Dance Geometry."

50 An example of a rehearsal called by the principal dancers without the choreographer occurs in Maiorano and Brooks' investigation of Balanchine's creation of *Mozartiana*. See Maiorano and Brooks, *Balanchine's Mozartiana*, pp. 146–49.

51 Keeping notes was a practice common in Ballett Frankfurt; dancers Allison Brown, Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel all referred to their process of note-taking and the information they had recorded about *Duo*. The dancers' notebooks contained information about the steps and choreographic structures, as well as corrections and coaching from Forsythe. Additionally, archivist Nicholas Champion kept detailed rehearsal logs. *Répétiteur* David Morrow also kept rehearsal logs and comprehensive notes on the development of pieces longitudinally. The latter were kept in small notebooks that he could conveniently take on tour. Forsythe also commonly kept a notebook. In The Forsythe Company, *DUO2015* dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka rarely took notes. A software called Piecemaker was created for video archive storage and annotation by dancer David Kern, which shifted the focus and process of note-taking, centralizing and digitizing notes.

Figure 36. Video still of the first studio rehearsal of Duo, *January 6, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and William Forsythe.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

Berkel dancing in unison, Johnson to van Berkel's left—the same positions they took in the foyer, and the relationship that will become the primary constellation of *Duo*. Without Forsythe between them, they focus predominantly on each other. They are again wearing sweatpants, T-shirts and socks: van Berkel in white and sea green, with a bandana around her long neck; Johnson in black, about to put on a woolen pair of leg warmers. The back side of the ballet studio is littered with small snapshots. Broad windows and a balcony flood the room with light, offering an exquisite view over the south side of Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen.

Forsythe is off camera, heard but not seen. He sits or stands at the front of the room by the mirror—taking the usual place of a rehearsal director, aligned with the view of the audience. His role has changed since the last rehearsal he had with the dancers, when he stood in close proximity to the dancers, giving impetus to the field as the movement inventor. His gaze now becomes more important, with the dancers ready and nervous to show him what they have prepared in the office. Over the course of the rehearsal, the light transitions from daylight to evening blue to darkness; the movement phrases that Forsythe invented—and the dancers have learned and named—become a new common material that Forsythe himself can dig into. The dance progresses from sequence fragments to a growing whole—the days dissolve into the weekend.

Van Berkel remembers that it was a "delicate" moment: that they had "those phrases in our body to present it to him again" but they did not want to "look from the outside to ourselves." They did not want to break the harmony they had, or be sent off in a different creative direction—as was common in Forsythe's changing creative process. They

wished to develop the experience they made in the office, which had grown meaningful to the artists; to not lose it to the effects of different contexts or demands. It was risky but still imbued with trust. Rudi Laermans captures these stakes well when he writes: "cooperative work of the creative sort cannot do without a serious dose of reciprocal confidence: the risk that a co-creation process may go wrong is exchanged for the risk of mutual trust."[52] In this moment of palpable pitfalls, the team members know that doubt can snowball. In this *Duo* rehearsal they manage to synergize. The dancers' confidence in Forsythe increases their self-confidence. In parallel, Forsythe's confidence in the dancers enhances his conviction to make choreographic decisions. Laermans calls this: "joint faith."[53]

From the outside, this delicacy is barely evident through the medium of video: the atmosphere seems relaxed as the women review in synchrony, vocalizing a bit—with breathing and tones that help cohere their action. Their timings are comfortable and elastic: waiting for each other when one person's movement takes longer, or when someone has a glitch in memory. Such solidarity was essential to *Duo*. Working so quickly to learn this volume of material was a cognitive challenge even for these intelligent artists.

Forsythe watches, offering remarks here and there about how a movement can be accentuated or revised. He absorbs the two women intently, almost in reverse of what occurred in the foyer, when they were listening or paying attention to *him*. When the dancers pause, Forsythe asks them to continue—to allow him more time to watch and refresh his "vague memories" of the last rehearsal. Watching their movement in the stu-

52 This, and all subsequent citations in this paragraph, see Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 339 (italics in the original). Klein also observes that Pina Bausch's creative process with her company involved fragile negotiations of uncertainty, risk and trust; see Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, p. 197.

53 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 339. I concur with Laermans' critical observations on trust, based upon my experience as a dancer in Forsythe's ensembles. Laermans finds that the fragile trust between dancers and choreographer is constantly at stake and in negotiation during a choreographic process. While trust is risked from moment to moment, it is also built and forecast long-term. Longstanding trust is forged when a choreographer can repeatedly make novel performances and knowledgeably direct the dancers, and when a dancer is able to contribute consistently over many years to the satisfaction of the choreographer. In companies where relationships between dancers and choreographers are long-term investments, Laermans observes that a choreographer's decisions may involve the maintenance of trust as opposed to what is 'best' choreographically (i.e., by including contributions from all dancers equally, or not rejecting material from a trusted collaborator, and so on). Laermans also notes the complicated vulnerability and psychological complex through which dancers may feel hurt when they do not receive recognition or affirmation by a choreographer; for example, when she or he does not put their "material" into the performance, or worse, gives it to another dancer; see ibid., pp. 300–10. Laermans observes, "artistic trust generates both a general climate encouraging dancers' autonomy and a relatively non-disputed sense of heteronomous authority, legitimating the choreographer's directivity." Ibid., p. 340 (italics in the original). Some but not all *Duo* dancers, supported all the above aspects noted by Laermans. Some Forsythe dancers were also ambivalent about Forsythe's authority. As I show here, in *Duo*'s creation, delicate moments when trust could be broken and hurt inflicted were largely avoided because of polite communication, the dancers' pact of togetherness and Forsythe's division of attention equally between Johnson and van Berkel. *Duo* was an atypically harmonious and a continuous creation in comparison to other examples from Forsythe's repertoire.

dio provides a common ground and helps Forsythe presumably shift into third-person knowledge of the movement.

Forsythe has authority: "There you are different!" he calls out. "Lean over more there. Don't round your shoulders Regina." To Johnson, on a particular flat movement of the hands: "Be careful of your thumbs." Between directives, compliments: "Oh my god, you guys are really observant."

The delicacy that van Berkel remembers is the subtle, yet palpable potentiality of creation. At that special moment, no one knew where the creation was going. The dancers did not know what Forsythe would do. From the interaction I observe on the video, Forsythe also appears to be in a mode of trying out. Berkel reflects that although it was unspoken, she and her partner "did not want to be put up towards each other" or "torn apart"—they did not want one or the other dancer to be "pointed out as better."[54] Forsythe—whether explicitly or implicitly—gives attention, feedback, compliments, and touch in equal proportions. Johnson and van Berkel's friendship together with the sheer difficulty of the task facing them, was a sort of protection from competition: they needed one another to enact this difficult movement.

In their fluid mastery of the motion, the dancers show that they have come to a harmonic consensus. They do not look perfectly identical, but the coordination animates their different bodies very similarly. Steps launch and pull directly from one to the next, showing the accomplishment of a narrative or sequential memory: from steps to a *phrase*. The dancing looks new—having shed Forsythe's rhythms and groove from the last rehearsal, it acquires another form of torsional liquidity. The interior vibrations of Forsythe's body, the discontinuities of weight, have been smoothed and infused with ballet technique. (In hindsight, van Berkel remarks, what has been lost is almost a shame, even though what they found—together—proved to be so enduring and rich.)[55] Transitions have been made. Integral memory has been achieved. Some details of the movement have been forgotten or lost (such as Forsythe's rhythm, looseness and informal performance), but other aspects have been added (perfection of *épaulement*, attenuation of line and clearer flow between actions). To my eye, this *Duo* is now recognizably the *Duo* of the premiere. The previous dancing in the foyer was closer to Forsythe's body and quality of movement. The movement now is a co-movement—that is, a consensus that Johnson and van Berkel bring forth.[56]

Forsythe appears to want to get back in the middle: to direct and shape what they have made possible. Using dancer Antony Rizzi's metaphor, the flesh they have given to his "skeleton" now can be set in motion: relationally, between one another, and in time and space. A structure can be built, organizing the movement. It is already com-

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

55 Regina van Berkel, interview with the author, Zürich, May 5, 2017.

56 This is neither strictly dialectic nor dialogic. As in dialectic processes, the dancers' co-movement involves negotiating and adapting differences, but these are not initially posed as thesis/counter-thesis, nor are they completely resolved in synthesis. Like dialogic processes, the co-movement remains in process and under negotiation. Here I develop my remarks from Richard Sennett's discussion of dialectic and dialogic conversations; see Sennett, *Together*, pp. 18–20.

monly agreed that Forsythe has the authority to make decisions about what possible movements will be chosen and organized.[57]

To do so, Forsythe needs to "grasp" the movement: to use it and build a structure with it. Language serves that purpose well, creating markers that the team can share to further engage in the material.[58] The phrases, and some steps, have been given names chosen by the dancers. Johnson and van Berkel have written them in their notebooks, in different languages and with different spellings—Johnson in English and van Berkel in Dutch. Forsythe listens to the dancers to understand the names that they have invented or remembered from the last rehearsal, asking: "What do you call that?" "How do you begin it?" "What do you call this?" "How do you spell it?" He writes bizarre titles for movements like "egyptian" and "snakedress" down in his notebook, and jokes with the dancers about the names that offer ambiguity—one phrase they riff is called "poumphathan," "pump it up," "pump a dump," "paaahhpapadum," or "papadum," and so on.

The practice of naming is highly playful and associative: rhythms inherent in the movement, or funny things that happened while they were practicing (such as a dancer walking by singing, "nah-nuh").[59] The names have many variations, given the complex rhythms and strange word play that they put together. They do not need to be singular to

57 Compare to Laermans, *Moving Together*, pp. 350–51.

58 Dance scholar Katarina Kleinschmidt's meticulous praxeological research of concept-building in contemporary dance rehearsal argues that building concepts are generic, generative routines across many choreographic teams' processes, requiring little justification for their employment. Kleinschmidt designates two levels: naming (of movement material or improvisation tasks and qualities) and concept-building, in which principles are systematized. In *Duo* rehearsals, I observe only the former. Kleinschmidt argues that naming serves cooperation by designating an episode as material for further use and enabling discussion between people about the same phenomenon (such as the motivation, intention and what works and does not work). Naming intertwines with the movement, as a learning device and memory prompt, and also through conceptualizing aspects that may inform properties of the movement. Naming can also save energy, for example when the dancers recite names while marking (that is, moving with reduced energy). All these occur in this *Duo* rehearsal. Unlike in Kleinschmidt's examples, in *Duo* I did not observe concepts being named or exchanges about what a concept meant. In *Duo,* there was coherency of names in the pairs but not always across pairs of different generations, supporting Kleinschmidt's argument. In my view, naming in *Duo* serves: (1) the dancers' memorization, (2) Forsythe's desire to structure the performance, (3) the dancers' rehearsal, such as choosing where to start and (4) feedback. The concepts that the dancers need to make the work (concepts such as unison, counterpoint, cues or sorts of imagery and tasks) are all understood by the dancers by their prior work in the ensemble. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 130–63. This practice of "nicknaming" pieces and steps is found to be widespread in ballet. See Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 90–92.

59 As Kleinschmidt notes, naming in dance rehearsals often has the iconic function of a sign. See Kleinschmidt, *Artistic Research als Wissensgefüge*, pp. 140–42. For example, in *Duo* the term *goldfinger* represents a property of the movement in which Forsythe spoke about a ring on the ring finger. This was humorously further associated to James Bond and the film *Goldfinger* (1964). The discussion of the name *poumphathan/paaahhpapadum/umpadump* is an example of rhythmic onomatopoeia and alliteration, turning the movement's rhythm into a name. It interesting that, despite the vocabularies varying slightly from person to person, they function in practice. Also, intriguing is how the names change longitudinally. Systematic study of this variance and change was unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.

function as common referents for the movement. They serve as oral shared references, or "conceptual pacts," that are close enough to function.[60]

Forsythe further directs and shapes the movement through verbal interjection and prosodic coaching of dynamics, alliterating rhythms to help create more complex polyrhythms. The dancers refine their knowledge and movement execution through dialogue with each other and with Forsythe. When needed, Forsythe steps in to show or correct a movement: walking into the frame of the camera to explain the flatness of a plane, or to touch Johnson's hands. Again and again, he is encouraging, motivating, complimenting: "Beautiful, ladies" and extending his vowels: "V*ee*ry v*ee*ry good." He honors their pact of supporting one another.

"Yes, that's how you whisper the word inside." Interview with *Duo* Dancer Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.

REGINA: (*referring to her* Duo *notebook*) Phrase 1 starts with the right hand on the right side. We call it "goldfinger." Then there was a phrase 2, and that was "carrying on"—we had a certain suitcase in which we moved carrying on, heel, heel. And then there is a phrase 2B, it's a continuation with the *arabesque*. Phrase 3, I have called "tree." Phrase 4 is "snakedress." And phrase 5 is "surfman Joe." And then ballet combination 1: "nah-nuh" (*laugh*). The good thing is that Jill, […] we are very different persons. Jill cracked me up! Jill is such a funny person, in her face and in her humor. Yes. Then there is ballet combination 2: "enough of that," and then ballet combination 3 is "poumphathan."

LIZ: How do you spell that?

REGINA: (*she spells*) p-o-u-m-p-h-a-t-h-a-n (*then repeats the phrase, which she pronounces in three syllables: poom-PA-than*) "poumphathan" (*she then writes it down to show Liz*).

LIZ: Ah! (*laughs*) In 2015 that word has turned into "umpadump" (*pronounced in three syllables: UMP-pa-dump*)! I am not sure how to spell that.

REGINA: (*she laughs*) Yes, that's how you whisper the word inside. Maybe there are different versions, because I am a Dutch person, so maybe Jill wrote it slightly differently, I don't know.

LIZ: Yes. It's interesting, Ballett Frankfurt dancers kept notes in their notebooks. Forsythe Company dancers less so. It was more oral.

"So, it was an alliteration." Videoconference Interview with *Duo* Dancer Jill Johnson, June 28, 2018.

LIZ: My next question is about "umpadump."

60 Brennan and Clark, "Conceptual Pacts and Lexical Choice in Conversation." See also Waterhouse et al., "Doing *Duo*," p. 4.

> JILL: (*laughs*) I would need to check my *Duo* notebook. My recollection is that it was "paaahpapadum." (*She pronounces this in four syllables: pah-PA-pa-dum*)
>
> LIZ: Oh, this is so great! I was calling it "umpadump" because that is what I heard from Riley [Watts] and Brigel [Gjoka]. But I recognize that this is a chain. Can you tell me yours again?
>
> JILL: What is coming to mind is "paaaahhh papadum" (*She pronounces this: paah-PA-pa-dum*). Like it followed the first rhythm of Bill, or us trying to do the movement. Alliteration. Like bend: "pah" (*she marks the gestures of her arms while speaking*), then "papadum." So, it was an alliteration. So, you *plié* in fifth [position] first and then the hand that bounces off.
>
> LIZ: Oh! That is a totally different rhythm than "umpadump." On a video, I watch you riff on it. "Papadum," "Pump it up," "Pump a dump."
>
> JILL: (*laughs*)

In the second part of the rehearsal, Forsythe experiments with the music for *Duo*, asking the dancers to try the movement to a piece of what Johnson remembers was "beautiful" choral music—the voice of a woman singing, with mandolin-like accompaniment.[61] Johnson recalls, in an interview over twenty years later, the miraculous way that the music and the movement fit: the movement sequence ending at the same time as the music, as if by magical serendipity.[62] In the archival video, Forsythe also seems very pleased. But it is too early to commit; he is exploring possibilities. The dancers, trusting Forsythe, and sensing potential with him, are content to explore options.

Duo has not yet been named *Duo*. The rehearsal tapes are still labeled under the working title: *Marion/Marion*. By the last hour of rehearsal, the piece seems to be finding identity, through the movement quality, the performers have developed and the clarity of the phrase work. After the women finish the phrase called "snakedress," Forsythe makes a declaration:

> Ok fierce: (*emphasizing each word*) I—love—that. Ok, I am not going to write that down. Because what I am gonna do […] I am gonna do the majority of the thematic, I think, as *unisono* [unison], it is so impressive ladies, it's really beautiful, wow. And then when we get to a certain point, I am going to use *snakedress*. We'll do *snakedress*, and begin to connect it to all the other themes and then just do a very brief, extraordinary counterpoint. (*the phone rings, Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson return to marking and discussing snakedress*).

This statement does not ring with the conclusive nature of an epiphany or decision. Forsythe's tone is very friendly, and the phone interrupts. The declaration does not progress into "talking dance" in which the choreographer substantiates his decision-

61 This is ancient music from the 14th century. The CD was given to Forsythe by composer Thom Willems. In David Morrow's notes, he labeled this source the "Ars Magis." David Morrow, email to the author, July 26, 2017.

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

making and dialogues with the performers.[63] The two dancers return to working on their own, still intent to master the movement *snakedress*, which has unusual properties of syncopation of arms and legs. Forsythe, known to experiment extensively in creation, has expressed a possibility. (As we shall see, this is indeed what he proceeds to develop in the next rehearsals.)

After the interruption of the phone call, the dancers "run-through" the sequence of actions Forsythe has strung together during this rehearsal.[64] Timing them, Forsythe notes that the women have learned a sequence of six minutes of movement during one rehearsal. An onlooker is amazed, and Forsythe as well, because they have built so much choreography so quickly. Forsythe again praises the artists for their "brilliant" work, for swiftly absorbing so much information. *Duo* speeds forward, based on the performers' prior skill of incorporating movement and relating it between them. The first delicate moment has been passed and—attributable to the women's will to stay together—*Duo* has found form, centering on side-by-side performance of mutual entrainment.

10.4.4 Second Studio Rehearsal: Structuring *Duo*

Figure 37. Video still of the artists talking before the second studio rehearsal of Duo, *circa January 6, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson, William Forsythe.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

63 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 353.

64 A "run-through" means performing from start to finish without stopping.

"That was a beautiful communication." Interview with Regina van Berkel, April 22, 2017.

REGINA: We were not reflecting too much. There was more trying to be open for what is coming. Trying to be free … also in that studio, in that moment when Billy watched, to be free to show in that moment your experience with this. Not the energy of doubt or nervousness, or maybe an energy comes up that we are put against each other. Billy also didn't say much. I cannot remember if things were good or not. It was just there.

LIZ: […] Do you remember the next step from phrases to the sequence of *Duo*? Do you remember how it happened, that you started doing different material and then coming back in to unison? Because in the last rehearsal, you were almost always demonstrating in unison.

REGINA: That happened in that day when he structured it. But I think our desire not to be alone in that piece and each speaking another phrase was a very strong demanding/timing. I think. We didn't speak about that. That's something of reflecting 21 years later—my instinct of thinking back and putting my feelings in words a little bit. I think we went back and forth a little bit. "You maybe start" and then, ok, uhm, we do that, ok. "Maybe you go back there?" "Or can you do then that phrase Regina?" It happened quickly. At one point I just write the whole order out [in my notebook].

LIZ: When I reviewed the video, I was struck that Bill had to relearn the names, so that he could move with you—direct things. Talk to you. He doesn't get up and move very much in the second rehearsal.

REGINA: No, no, no, no, no, no!

LIZ: I hear his voice, so he's off camera most of the time, and it sounds like a pleasant exchange.

REGINA: Yeah, yes. I cannot speak for him, but my feeling was there was maybe in the moment before, maybe a little blackout or a little, let's say, a "doubt" of the order of the phrase. That was a beautiful communication.

LIZ: And opportunities presented themselves. For example, there is one complex movement (*I demonstrate an Alignment*). I watched it [being assembled] and it looked like you would follow the curves and open with one foot and Jill on the other foot—it was symmetric, not identical—and then it became: "oh, that's fine," and then you just changed legs. It seemed very organic, including blackouts and findings.

REGINA: Yes, so that's how it went. I don't know, but I have the feeling that he took that. That's a beauty of Bill, that he also really sees in those moments what's coming. I had the feeling it was a unique moment of us in that desire which I cannot define. I also believe certain things are not to be put in words, that's the magic of it all. Of course, you can try to find out, and now, 21 years later, I can definitely say: space, absolutely, the person, character, absolutely. I think if you do a cast, you almost have to look how the

characters of the people are. (*laughs*) Well, character is maybe too complex. Well, that's anyway the question! Do you want to reproduce something that had this situation? Or do you like to use the material and see what comes up with different characters? 'Cause *Duo* could also be representative of an ugly concurrence [competitive] duo piece. Or in bits harmonically, and in bits not. Or not synchronized and irritating, let's say. I don't know. Since I also choreograph, it's fascinating to not hold on to things that happen, but to believe that things are happening [because] of a very unique energy state. Of course, you can study that I think, again and again. We both wanted to be together. The basic issue was: "we want to be together." I'm here for you and you are there for me. And I'm not here for me.

LIZ: And why? Why did you want to be together?

REGINA: We […] through that we could give ourselves, really, we could be ourselves, in that form. It's a certain support to each other to be yourself in that moment. And we held on, in that way I believe we took Billy with us. And it's also, I remember—I don't know if Jill has expressed that—but in the moment structuring, there comes a little bit oh, this phrase, or now she goes there but I want to come back to her again … You know? You don't want to go too long: you alone that phrase, and I alone that phrase. Somehow you want to come back again. So, the puzzle starts, the structure starts. And, you know, we indirectly also gave tempi, by knowing we want to be together, somehow.

10.4.5 First Time on Stage: Intimate Reversals

The shift in rehearsal from the dance studio to the stage is a giant leap—the scale and context of the theater change the habitat of working and the participants' perception of the "studio-born" choreography.[65] Forecasting the audience's perception becomes critical: How might this dance be perceived? To imagine the audience's perspective, Forsythe must move away from the dancers and adopt distance. From my experience, Forsythe often chose to delay this, and this is indeed what takes place in *Duo*'s stage rehearsals. In the video documentation of January 10, 1996—the first stage rehearsal—Johnson and van Berkel are on the stage of the Opera with Forsythe, inhabiting the vast space like an intimate studio. Forsythe has postponed the final step—to move back and sit in the tech booth or in the audience. This suggests that he wants to continue to work intimately: with his body, his voice and the interaction of dancer-choreographer in the studio. There is, fortunately, still time—ten days until the premiere.

65 American choreographer Doris Humphrey notes in her manifesto *The Art of Making Dances* (1959): "One of the peaks of anxiety in choreography is that moment when the studio-born dance is transferred to the stage. Immediately space works magical and often appalling differences. Distance has weakened almost everything about the dance. Dynamics are not so strong, personalities are dimmer, timing looks slower […]. Also, there is a seeming illogicality in the fact that detail is much more apparent at a distance. One would think that small movements and inaccuracies would be easier to see at close range. Not so, in practice." Humphrey, *The Art of Making Dances*, p. 161.

Figure 38. Video still of the first stage rehearsal of Duo, *January 10, 1996. From left to right: David Morrow, William Forsythe, Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

Figure 39. Video still of the first stage rehearsal of Duo, *January 10, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, William Forsythe, Jill Johnson.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

The stage rigging is lowered, so there is no theatrical lighting—just work lights. A few chairs are at the front; Forsythe sits on a table, his jacket thrown beside him. In silence, he watches the women perform the structure that he has set in the last studio rehearsal, his left hand on his hip, hunched forward. Beside him, *répétiteur* David Morrow sits partially hidden behind a stereo. Between them is a device for communicating on the loudspeaker to the technicians. The camera zooms in and out. The women are caught in the middle of a unison phrase, both in practice clothes that make them look like harlequins: each wears a white T-shirt, van Berkel in sea-green pants, Johnson in orange. The only sound is of their bodies, folding, stepping, brushing and breathing.

They pass through the sequence with ease, without any rising action or intensity—the typical push in the middle that often occurs in Forsythe's dramaturgies. After the women finish, Johnson looks down, clears her throat and walks forward, perhaps listening to the indiscernible remarks Forsythe is making to Morrow. Van Berkel releases her arms with a flung gesture that dissipates her presence sideways into the space. She steps a bit nearer to Johnson, but also lets herself breathe; both are panting. Because of their grace, one can easily forget how difficult this movement is to execute. Forsythe rises to his feet and, with two soothing vocal waves, reassures the artists: "Very, very good. Very, very good." The women rise from their resting positions. Van Berkel smiles; Johnson responds, good-naturedly, "I was thinking while doing it, he's not going to like this." They talk and laugh, all mirroring the same posture: hand on hips, relieving tension in their lower backs. Together they seem to be satisfied with the arrival into the theater space and the potential for their current piece to take root here, in its new habitat.

The first critique is regarding the movement: Johnson and van Berkel display a professional allegiance to performing the movement with coordinative rigor, performing the movement identically. At this stage in the process, Forsythe however is interested in both identity and difference. This attention to difference is new since the last rehearsal. For example, when they ask Forsythe a specific question regarding a discrepancy in their arms, he comments that he prefers that they actually do it differently. After they try a problematic section again and miss their alignment to synchronize a motion, a conversation begins about how to perform it correctly. Forsythe runs between the two women, gesturing with both hands waving above his head, as if trying to stop a cat fight—lightly dissipating their questions and enforcing that they do not have to come to consensus here.

In the rehearsal that follows, Forsythe focuses on drawing out their differences when they perform different actions, as well as using differences to find a new consensus. At one moment, he prompts Johnson to improvise a funky version of ballet jumps (*gargouillades*), to which they all laugh, Johnson riffing that she has "hoochie class." Judiciously balancing his attention and the dancers' potential to solo in the composition, he searches for something similarly ornate for van Berkel, proposing a traveling sequence with a flurry of taps and ornamental gestures of the legs sideways and back. "Differentiate things" he vocalizes, demonstrating what he means while grooving in his black high-top sneakers. When the bustle of movement results in discoordination, frustrating her, he touches her hands, comes near and gives her time—to encourage incorporation of this way of grooving that does not come naturally. She remarks, this way of "going back-

wards and forwards at the same time" is extremely difficult. But later van Berkel shows her own prowess at another moment in the sequence—bending her body backwards while rising up from the floor. Perhaps noting the opportunity to boost her, Forsythe expresses satisfaction and asks for Johnson to try the same; "unfair advantage" quips Johnson, always quick with her sense of humor. They all laugh. This give and take, challenge and attempt, seems to be an enjoyable type of comradery. Now Forsythe builds individual elements into the dance, carefully proportioned to be fair and just.[66]

Having sketched the initial choreographic structure within the previous two studio rehearsals, at this moment Forsythe finds opportunities to increase the complexity of this structure—organizing relations of Johnson and van Berkel's movement that he expects to challenge the spectator's attention. These micro-alignments and semi-correspondences are more intricate to arrange than the previous contrapuntal sections. As such, they also require more refined skills of pedagogy and direction for Forsythe to set them in motion. Some opportunities need only to be caught—accidents or mishaps that prove advantageous. Other choreographic decisions are deliberately produced through effort. For example, grasping a chance moment where the dancers end in alignment, Forsythe yells "Good!", then both go into the next movement together. Forsythe continues to direct: "I want you [Johnson] to go forward then I want you to reverse backwards and sideways to Regina [van Berkel]." Johnson understands that she is to rewind her previous steps; she improvises a solution that Forsythe approves. Building momentum, Forsythe adds more: new reversals, a short insert (a *non sequitur*) of new, fast, isolated motions for both women, and a few intervals where one or both dancers walk backwards in curved spiraling paths. Forsythe crafts subtleties, where the performers change from pure unison to being synchronized in time, with contrast in the angle of their bodies. At one point he asks the dancers to find a way to change their places, so that Johnson is not always on the right side of the stage. These details are essential to making *Duo* essentially *Duo*, making it a dance not just in unison but one that negotiates different degrees and types of synchronicity. Forsythe's editing is far from erratic—it is part of his skill in how to refine patterns and transitions of organizations. First draft the structure, then add nuances within it.[67]

From experience, I know that the cognitive challenge to incorporate and remember these nuances is extreme. While the camera is there as backup, the dancers seem not to need it; they learn rapidly. Miscommunications arise, particularly when Forsythe conceives ideas that are difficult to explain in words to the dancers—language may be an issue, as van Berkel is not a native English speaker. At one point, Johnson catches on more quickly; Forsythe takes time, to patiently explain exactly what he means to van Berkel. But overall, the dancers seem not to remember competition or stress. The dancers' joy in moving together, their pact of support, coupled with Forsythe's frequent

66 This shows that despite withholding the effects of negative competition, Forsythe and the dancers do push and challenge one another.

67 Reversal is a strategy that Forsythe uses at large in his choreographies on many levels; that is, moving backwards, moving and then reversing the same action, moving in retrograde, changing the facing, doing things unusually, and so on.

praise and equally divided attention, keeps them optimistic. Yet the situation is still precarious.

The result of Forsythe's editing is that the structure becomes more "baroque," in the sense of being folded in compressed space and time.[68] Through repetition, and supported by his encouragement of the dancers, Forsythe composes a short insert, creating one of the most complicated sections of the choreography. (While this appears to be spontaneous, I realize Forsythe has actually fulfilled what he previously declared in the studio rehearsal: to use the movement *snakedress* as a knot in which to loop and re-loop structures.) Elsewhere in the composition, he adds repetitions, reversals, loops, changes of angle and changes of position. This makes the choreography a sort of labyrinth, with recurring branches. In sum, this knotting and folding of the sequence—growing more complex with each rehearsal—becomes a particular challenge of *Duo*. A dancer might lose track of 'where' one is in time: Is it the first, second or third repeat in the sequence?

Forsythe's edits reflect his aesthetic of counterpoint. Describing his approach elsewhere, Forsythe explains:

> What I'm doing […] is choreographing your attention. […] The timing of the actions is so constructed as to engage your predictive faculties; for example, if you're observing a choreographic situation, you might realize that there's a certain amount of controlled information coming out of it, whether dense or sparse, recognizably patterned or stochastic. What I strive to provide are contrasting structural alternations that play with your anticipation of these informational densities.[69]

In this rehearsal, Forsythe's gaze and attention become the organizational axis; his speculation about the audience is the second spindle around which the cooperation churns. Such actions do not need to be conceptualized through "talking dance" as they are basic strategies within Forsythe's rehearsals, exhibited in his process of construction for many pieces. Forsythe is forecasting, based upon extensive experience, about the "constant reduction and selective actualization of aesthetic possibilities."[70]

In the second phase of the rehearsal, Forsythe continues to speculate, testing the studio studies in the new context of the stage. He tries the *Ars Magis* recording on low volume while the dancers repeat what they have worked on thus far.[71] This time the music proves less magical, even troublesome. When they finish, van Berkel talks directly to Forsythe while walking toward him. She illustrates what she means with her body, while speaking rapidly: "In a way without music," she makes a gesture that looks like sign language, bringing her fists together "it's more one." She catches her breath. "It's so"—she brushes and twists her rib cage, then circles both elbows forward back around. "You get more …" then turning to Johnson for affirmation, "… Do you feel that too?"

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68 Here I borrow from Deleuze's reading of Leibniz. Relating this to Forsythe's work, see Maar, *Entwürfe und Gefüge*, pp. 93–96. While Forsythe also develops folding one body's movement in the space of the kinesphere, what I mean here are structural folds: how the choreographic sequence is developed in space and time.

69 William Forsythe, in an interview from 2017. See Neri, "Interview with William Forsythe."

70 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 353, p. 356.

71 See footnote 61 in this chapter.

Supportively, Johnson says, "Absolutely."[72] They are all aware of being at a critical point. Forsythe is trying to jump into the conversation, with soft interjections, explaining his view that what worked perfectly *once*, an arrangement of music and dance as if he had planned or choreographed it, is not something that *always* continues to be efficacious. Forsythe is planning and yet still listening to the potentiality of each of his choices. The music is put on hold. The reaction of his dancers is critical.

In the final hour of rehearsal, the artists continue to explore options. Using ballet terminology for jumps (such as *sauté, jeté*), Forsythe asks whether the movement in a certain section could be more sprung. In passing, Forsythe proposes some ideas about the lighting—perhaps after the first piece on the program, he might hang the light lower for *Duo*, to emphasize that the first piece is played very close to the audience (that is, downstage), and the second piece (*Duo*) opens the space back.[73] Forsythe floats the idea of developing some *non sequitur*—part of the anomalies and exceptions that he finds necessary in his choreography of attention. Champion then turns off the camera. When filming resumes, the dancers are running in a circle, trying cross-lateral movements—a parade that never finds its way into the choreography. Though these activities do not all become part of the final *Duo*, they show that the group is experimenting. They illustrate how Forsythe assumes directive authority, while still looking to his dancers as sounding boards for his ideas, as well as people he depends upon to enact them. Some of these proposals are quickly incorporated into the structure, some provide steps on the way to other decisions.

10.4.6 Second Stage Rehearsal: "Take Your Time"

Figures 40–41. Video still of the second stage rehearsal of Duo, *January 15, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, William Forsythe, Jill Johnson.*

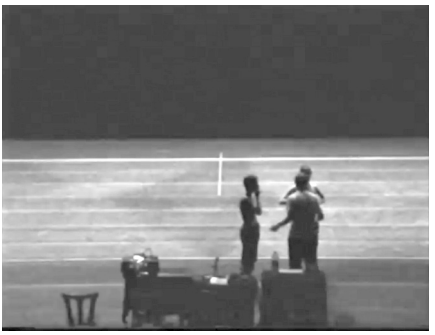

Photo © William Forsythe.

72 As this example so beautifully indicates, there is often mixing of language, gesture and dance when the artists communicate with one another.

73 While the Ballett Frankfurt program for *Six Counter Points* listed the pieces as separate works, this shows that Forsythe is also thinking of them choreographically as one continuity.

The tape labeled: January 15, 1996, (five days before the premiere) begins in the middle of the women dancing the same unison phrase—the start of the sequence. They are finding their groove—I see more subtle delays, more intricate timings, more elasticities. The unison is growing more tethered, more magnetic between them. On the stage there is a square of white tape, like on the periphery of a tennis court, marking a boundary; the women willingly disregard and cross over these limits. The new segments inserted in the last stage rehearsal, the knots and intricate reversals, appear to be fluidly encapsulated into the sequence. Forsythe is hard to see and hear, sitting in the shadows behind a table, on stage.

I observe a new section of the choreography, perhaps introduced during an interim rehearsal with no video record. Johnson and van Berkel run backwards and fall to the floor—almost as if they had been shot, recalls dancer Allison Brown.[74] After a long pause, they intermittently slide their limbs to variations of *Duo* positions, made awkward or foreign by the obstacle of gravity—certain limbs stretch gracefully while others collapse passively on the floor. In this rehearsal, the dancers break their action and assume pedestrian postures: propping their heads upon their hands, as if leisurely reading magazines on the floor. They hold this resting stance for ten seconds before returning to the mode of improvisation. Perhaps this motif is the discovered *non sequitur* that Forsythe had expressed interest in during the last rehearsal? According to Forsythe, *non sequiturs*, exceptions and "anomalies" are there to keep the audience interested in the patterns that are emerging; without exceptions, minds become bored, placated.[75]

The dancers continue. Forsythe breaths a "nice." Transitions appear to make sense. The sequence has been adjusted to have movements of more or less momentum, speed and surprise. Johnson and van Berkel are farther apart then they have danced in the studio. They finish the choreography, closing on *fifth position* and facing forward. This time there is a soft silence, in which the whole space settles—like a resonant last note of an orchestra playing. Softly, Forsythe says, "Very nice" and van Berkel beams a radiant smile, while walking forward to him. Johnson looks down. Both women move forward toward the choreographer, while smoothing their hair with their hands, presumably wiping sweat and brushing small hairs from their eyes. Van Berkel looks to Johnson.

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74 Fieldwork note, studio session with Allison Brown, Frankfurt, September 23, 2016.

75 In an interview in 2012, Forsythe says, "Counterpoint in bodies I think help [sic] keep the brain alert. It has to do with the way that movements are timed and the distribution of anomalies throughout the choreography." See Whittenburg, "William Forsythe in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg," p. 9. I remember the term "exception" and "opposite" was more common in studio parlance than "anomaly" in my time as a dancer in The Forsythe Company, used in particular during and after the creation *Theatrical Arsenal II* (2009); see Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, p. 29. In the next *Duo* rehearsal, Forsythe will choose to omit the exception described above (with the dancers lying on the floor), while keeping the slow *développés* he constructs for van Berkel and Johnson. This indicates that not just any exception will do; rather, there is a compositional art to the exception, both in its timing and mode of contrast. The sorts of exceptions in *Duo* change over the piece's history, including more frame- and role-breaking over time. In *DUO2015*, for example, the dancers stop to catch their breath with their hands on their knees like basketball players, they exit the stage light, they roll into knots on the floor, and even bend the codes of their movement vocabulary, by making subtle gestures referencing b-boying and hip-hop.

What they say in their initial discussion—the three of them clumped together in the dark side of the stage—is difficult to hear on the archival video recording. They laugh. Forsythe moves around a bit, gesturing, looking eager to move. Van Berkel asks for a short rest. Forsythe announces: "Take a break," then walks away, respecting that they are winded and need a moment for their bodies to soften. But, unable to hold back his burgeoning ideas, Forsythe turns around excitedly to talk about timings, demonstrating actions with his body. The dancers' work has garnered his enthusiasm. Much of the subsequent stage rehearsal focuses on the details of timing. Forsythe begins, "It is getting too …," van Berkel finishes his sentence, "… even." Forgetting the need for a break, they begin to work again.

Overall, the dancers are well aware that Forsythe dislikes dull phrasing. He is notorious for constructing pieces that "overwhelm" and "lull."[76] Naming his work now not as "choreographing" but "rehearsing," Forsythe develops the dancers' timing choices through verbal coaching, mixing language and prosody. A collection of his comments exemplify these exclamatory directives: "Really push your bodies, nnnneeeah!" "Use more hip" "Stay on the edge. Do not go down" "e da da e um" "e ah, eh da um" "Get that a little more sudden!" "More more more, I would say" "Increase the scales of the curves. Make them demonstrative" "That's it!" "One more time, ready?" "OK, on that thing. Turn it. The *glissades* come out of the turn. Know what I mean? You know what I mean!"

The imperatives, coupled with Forsythe's excitement and affirmatives, cause the dancers' movement to become much faster, even faster than they will ever perform this movement. Frequently, Forsythe vocalizes as they dance, becoming their music—giving a clear rhythm to work within; making accents, dynamic shifts and phrasing more precise. Johnson laughs that she is holding her breath, "You too?" she asks van Berkel, who answers "Yeah." After further work, Forsythe affirms: "OK very nice. Better, better, better. Ok, better timings."

Having caused their movement to accelerate, now Forsythe works at the other end of the range: slowing time. This is both respectful of the dancers' energy and part of his strategy to expand the dynamic range of their effort—both at the high and the low end of the spectrum. At a new place in the sequence, Forsythe stops the dancers in action, and interjects, "I want to add something." He then asks Johnson to stop and very slowly lift her leg to the side, using the ballet term: *développé*. He explains: "I want everything to stop" (meaning not only her, but also the audience). Johnson proposes some adjustments, adding an arm to shade the movement's classicism. After checking the movement in context, Forsythe crafts a similar moment for van Berkel in which she lifts one leg to an extension back (not an *arabesque*, but an "alabesque" says Forsythe, using the dancer's slang for a movement outside the classical canon, between back and side). Again, they receive equal attention from him, and likewise equal solos before the audience. Here, and again later in the rehearsal, Forsythe tells them: "Take your time."

In the second half of rehearsal, the artists take more breaks from moving. Forsythe uses gaps to banter about details relevant to the piece. He tries out a title and Johnson quips back an alternative. They try new music. They continue to work on timings

76 See Vass-Rhee, *Audio-Visual Stress*, pp. 209–31.

and to discuss discrepancies: Johnson asks van Berkel about a specific section, "Do you take longer? Do you take more time?" Later, "We always get on the opposite leg there," Forsythe resolves, "I would not worry about it." He asks them to restart from the section called "tree" and reminds them twice, "Take your time. Take your time." They finish with four minutes left; Forsythe checks his watch. They come back into their tight huddle on the stage. Conversation is again hard to hear. They talk about the floor section, perhaps making the change to cut the *non sequitur* they introduced. Champion leaves the camera running.

10.4.7 Technical Rehearsal: Gold Costumes and a Big Stage

Figures 42–43. Video stills of the technical rehearsal of Duo, *January 15, 1996. Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and technicians.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

Technical rehearsal is the name of the challenging process of bringing the medial elements together on stage: the dancers trying movement for the first time in their costumes, the composer adjusting the music, and the technical team experimenting with Forsythe's vision for sound, light and stage design. Stress looms in this type of rehearsal. There is little time left to interweave the production layers.[77]

In *Duo*'s technical rehearsal, Forsythe has broken from the dancers, pulling himself off the stage and into the technical post at the back of the theater, in the first balcony. The camera is also positioned from this vantage point, capturing the sound of conversations among the crew. Nearly the entire artistic and technical team working together on *Duo* is present at this rehearsal—the stage, sound and light technicians, the pianist and the dancers. Forsythe is the pilot figure whose decisions take command.

After marking through some of the movement, the two dancers perform from the beginning, for the first time, with costumes, sound and light. They are wearing sleeveless gold ballet dresses, with skirts to their knees and flesh-colored socks. Lights are focused down onto the stage. The background is dark, the flooring light grey. The space

77 Because of the complex settings of Forsythe's choreographies, often these elements were tried out before, in the studio or first stage rehearsals.

is animated by the sparse sounds of a woman's voice speaking isolated words ("together" "two" "one" "two" "one" "suspense" "seven minutes").[78] This is punctuated by intermittent strains of live acoustics, soundings like an organ and a trumpet, adding volume and dramatic tension. These are all new conditions the dancers adapt to.

Forsythe is experimenting drastically with the lighting. He requests that all lights except from the neons coming from the front are turned off. To communicate with the dancers and everyone else simultaneously, he has a microphone. "Good, thanks ladies," he tells them as a signal that they can stop. Johnson jokes about her performance: "Fierce *développé* guys!" noting how Forsythe picked the worst moment to change the lights, right in the middle of her balancing on one leg! Forsythe and van Berkel laugh.

Everyone knows the importance and the perils of this sort of rehearsal. All the elements are being tested together. As longstanding collaborators, they are aware that these investigations might be arduous; that much change can take place until all the conditions are right. Forsythe is notorious for throwing out old ideas and finding new ones within this editing stage. The dancers face the real possibility that their work could fail—that they will not get to perform what they have rehearsed to this point, or will do so in a new manner. Practicing power, Forsythe manages these possibilities, shifting from "soft governance" to polite yet firm direction.[79]

When the video restarts, Johnson and van Berkel are performing the movement without sound, just breathing-movement. The stage appears extremely large. Forsythe is exploring the vision he has expressed in the first stage rehearsal: using the full space of the stage and finding the right light to illuminate them.

To be heard, Forsythe must give cues over the microphone. While the dancers are in the middle of dancing, he stops them. With an air of frustration, he switches to German to tell a technician with firm politeness that the floor needs to be taped as quickly as possible. The team uses the gap to multitask: the technicians tape, the pianist asks the dancers to demonstrate a cue (Johnson's slow *développé*), the dancers mark the movement together, the pianist and sound technician discuss timing. The hall reverberates with the deep banter of male technicians speaking in German and crashing noises—the sources of which are not visible in the tight camera shot which remains focused on documenting the dancers. A man walks across stage and returns with a roll of white tape. Drilling is heard and three men are seen taping the floor. Throughout this, Johnson and van Berkel continue to practice, moving forward onto the front of the stage when their space becomes occupied. They converse with Forsythe about the "spacing" of their movement on the stage—he requests the dancers to "use the whole big stage." Johnson jokingly making the sound of a truck honking as she passes the technicians.

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78 The speaker is Dana Caspersen. This is the sound score for *The The*, a work by Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe, which premiered at Nederlands Dans Theater a few months earlier (October 1995) and will be the first piece, before *Duo*, on the program *Six Counter Points*.

79 On "soft governance," see Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 354. Mutual trust is especially important at such critical inflection points. In Forsythe's creative process, the mood and judgement of whether the process was going well often had a significant effect. In the occupational culture of Forsythe's ensembles, optimism and humor were used strategically by the dancers and Forsythe to lighten up tense situations. The dancers tended not to criticize and over conceptualize, demonstrating trust of the choreographer and one another.

The camera cuts; the construction work magically disappears; the dancers restart. There is the click of a stopwatch being switched on.

The dancers perform the first few minutes in silence before the musical elements come in (piano, a woman's voice and penetrating acoustic sounds of various orchestral timbres). As the dancers perform, Forsythe and the technicians experiment with the sound levels and the lighting. A spotlight appears on Johnson. Forsythe comes on the microphone again to request the dancers (softly) to "be a little closer together" when they dance. The women strain their movement, moving valiantly across the enormous stage. They finish a full run-through of the sequence without being requested to stop. There is the click of a stop watch. "Thanks ladies," says Forsythe, as Johnson collapses forward with her hands on her knees to breath. The piece is 9:08 minutes in duration. The camera cuts off.

There is no tape of the discussion that may or may not have happened after this exploration. In my view, the enormous space challenges the movement material. Equally, the expanse and heavy acoustic layer do not support the intimacy and togetherness that has been so critical to their version thus far. The dancers are courageously doing their best but their energy dissipates without a fitting theatrical frame to hold them. Though Forsythe is calling decisions, the materials themselves (the space, movement, light and sound) are also steering the common exploration of potentiality. The dancers' exhaustion is partly a symptom of the situation not cohering with what they are enacting. Because of a "genuine cycle of trust," the team continues to follow Forsythe's piloting without resistance.[80]

When the camera turns on, the team is trying something new. Van Berkel and Johnson are separated on a diagonal, having finished the movement *showerhead*. Van Berkel is downstage on a *black* dance floor, Johnson is upstage on the *grey* one. The contrast of the different colored floors acts a new register for the composition, constructing the space. Forsythe directs Johnson to perform the "tree" phrase, and then for both the dancers to run backwards, falling to the floor. Following this, he directs van Berkel to commence her low-level floor movement and then for the dancers to rise together to standing. Next, Forsythe proposes that he would like Johnson to repeat "tree" and then for her to suggest some traveling material to move upstage, before she and Berkel repeat the fall. Johnson arranges the movement immediately.[81] Forsythe takes the affordance of the contrast of the black and grey floor to suggest a transposition—Johnson and van Berkel switching places while falling (now Johnson downstage, van Berkel upstage). I recognize, finally, what has been missing in rehearsal thus far: the prologue of *Duo*.

Exemplary of most works in Forsythe's process, *Duo* comes together through many small decisions, and many people's contributions, based on trials along the way. The team has found the beginning to the piece, but through the 'wrong' context. The black and grey floor will not be part of the final *Duo:* ultimately the dancers will perform

80 Laermans, *Moving Together*, p. 340.

81 Seconds later, Johnson forgets what she has done and van Berkel comes to her aid—illustrating the difficulty of remembering movement and their pact to help one another.

only with a black floor overlaying the apron, not using "the whole big stage."[82] The materials at hand provide a creative contingency. The dancers are able to improvise and fill in the gaps for Forsythe, as well as to frequently pose suggestions—framed subtly as questions—that respect his authority to decide.

Forsythe is still not sure of the music, asking to go back to the *Ars Magis* recording they had tried previously, on low volume. As the dancers practice, Johnson offers van Berkel a hand to get off the floor. Regina gestures to her costume. "Feels what?" asks Forsythe. Van Berkel laughs, "The costume falls totally down," pulling her top to show it sliding down her chest. Forsythe teases her: "Were they out?" Regina confirms, laughing "The breasts are out!" She appears very comfortable with her body and Johnson joins with her laugher. The costume sliding down is a minor annoyance that can easily be fixed by the costume designer after the rehearsal. They quickly return to business, running through the new sequence.

Experimenting further, different colored scrims come up and down. Music that sounds like Björk comes on, then a very spooky science fiction soundtrack with the sounds of birds, ethereal strings and ominous clangs. The dancers run through the entire choreography as all sorts of new sounds pierce and clutter the space—they are still entrained to one another. They appear very exhausted but also persistent and dauntless.

As they approach the end, Forsythe stops them, asking the women to come forward so that he can speak to them. Enacting a decision, Forsythe calls to the technicians, "*Hauptvorhang zu*" (close the main curtain). The stopwatch turns off.

He asks the dancers: "Do you think it would be possible? Do you think spacing-wise that we can do it on the apron?" Van Berkel points to the front and answers confidently "Yeah." Forsythe justifies, "I am not getting any (*pause*). It is so nice to watch you up close. But I am not getting any—it is not visceral enough. And I think it would make you work better together. I feel sometimes you (*he searches for words*) pushing through steps." The dancers' chance to react is thwarted by the sound of multiple technicians talking on stage and the black curtain coming down behind them. Forsythe says to the person beside him, "I want to see how it looks in this lighting." And then, after the light shifts, sounding positive, "Oh this is intense."

Forsythe's asks encouragingly: "Gals, just show me the beginning." They dance for ten seconds. "Good. OK, that is good. We'll try that tomorrow." Van Berkel answers brightly "Yeah." Between juggling talk with different technicians, Forsythe speaks to them: "Thank you ladies. Thank you very, very much." He offers a quick correction about one movement, and then again, another affirmation: "Thank you very much ladies, today was just a question of lighting and …" The camera turns off.

Figure 44. Video still of the dress rehearsal of Duo, *January 19, 1996. From left to right: Regina van Berkel, Jill Johnson and an unknown photographer.*

Photo © William Forsythe.

10.4.8 Dress Rehearsal: Black Costumes

The women are on stage wearing black leotards—with long sleeves, translucent mesh above the waist, individually cut neck- and leg-lines and black opaque trunks.[83] These are the chosen costumes for *Duo*. Though barer than the gold costumes, they appear to be much more comfortable for the dancers to wear. Unlike the gold costumes, the black ones stretch and stay in place.[84] Before the run-through begins, the dancers are zipping through the sequence, practicing the movement with their arms—a method of cognitive review like speed-reading one's notes before an exam. They are sometimes talking, using their names for the movements, and sometimes laughing. The pianist is playing and the sound technicians are testing sound samples. With hindsight: all the intrinsic elements of *Duo* are in place.

82 The apron is the front part of the stage nearest to the audience. In the Frankfurt Opera House, it extended under the proscenium arch and over the covered orchestra pit, right up to the first seats of the audience.

83 From the changed structure of the beginning of the choreography, I deduce this must be after the previous rehearsal on January 15, 1996. It might be the "tomorrow," mentioned at the end of the previous tape. What I observe is in the file labeled "January 10, 1996."

84 Though I can only speculate, it is my intuition that the problems with van Berkel's costume in the previous rehearsal are what triggered the associative leap leading Forsythe to clothe the dancers in translucent mesh, exposing their breasts.

In the tech booth, composer Thom Willems has joined William Forsythe. Pianist Margot Kazimirska is backstage at the piano, playing the score that Thom Willems has given her. "We're going to try a few different starts," says Forsythe, as he and the backstage team discuss whether they should begin with piano or acoustics. With movement, stage, light and costumes chosen, the last step is the sound layer.

The piece still does not have a title. Cueing the pianist, "Margot, go," to start playing, Forsythe jokes that he will call the piece "Mar Go Go," to which Johnson makes a hilarious retort—imitating his proposal and making it sound like a parrot. The pianist behind the curtain cannot see the dancers and they realize there is no way to cue her to begin playing. Not wishing to lose time to have a technician locate and install a monitor, Forsythe decides that for today he would give her the cue himself. They will get a monitor for the next rehearsal. When Kazimirska voices a question backstage, Johnson repeats it so Willems and Forsythe can hear. Other messages pass back and forth over the intercom. The backstage crew is busy testing the pathways of communication they will need during the performance, creating a ruckus of overlapping voices.

Forsythe commands complete quiet. The stopwatch clicks on. The women dance the piece once, in the version nearly identical to the premiere. Outside of earshot of the performers, Forsythe whispers with Thom Willems while they are dancing, tailoring the sound levels: cuing sometimes the piano to rise higher in volume than the acoustics, and sometimes the swelling acoustics to become voluminous. Intermittently, the ancient music threads in. In the black space, the women's movement appears fuller, yet lighter—more uninhibited, less pushed. Their breath is not lost in the soundscape. They appear to stand closer again and to be concentrated upon one another. At the end, Forsythe cues the piano to stop and says "And, lights out!" to indicate a blackout. Without losing a beat (entrainment), he goes onto the microphone to say: "That was absolutely beautiful ladies. Thank you. That was stunning. (*pause*). That was stunning. Thank you. You were absolutely …" The camera cuts off. Forsythe affirms, from his distant position—via the only avenue he has, projecting his voice using a microphone—that he is grateful and that the work is beautiful. As a last gesture, Forsythe affirms the work as having reached a place where he is satisfied.

10.5 Analysis

The creative process of making *Duo* is a context-specific and contingent form of cooperation—a form of "thinking while making" rather than "thinking before making" that is heavily dependent on the real materiality of bodies and the situations of each rehearsal context.[85] In the timeline of creation, Forsythe moves from his role of inventing movement (being on the 'inside') to a role-shifting director (that is, 'outside' and 'distant')—arranging and editing the sequence, designing the theatrical elements, and taking the role of an outside eye. The role of the dancers is distinct from that of the choreographer in that they focus almost exclusively on memorizing and performing the designated movement together. They are not passive tools, but dancers who

85 Ingold, "Thinking Through Making."

speak with each other and Forsythe, making suggestions appropriate to their task and pact—to fulfill the movement potential. In comparison, Forsythe takes multiple views of the choreography as the piece emerges and is responsible for weaving the different threads of the work together: movement, light, sound, costumes and space. Chance and contingency, as well as the dancers' material bodies, are essential to making *Duo* uniquely *Duo*.

The production of *Duo* relies on longstanding practice creating choreographies together. It does not make something from nothing (that is, the blank page or clean slate). Nor does creativity involve one monumental decision that crystalizes a plan for making something novel. Rather, it involves bringing elements together and enabling them to change, through decisions large and small, and the contributions of many players.

The antecedent, the choreography *Marion/Marion* (1991), is a starting point that inflects ideas into the process. Forsythe's vision of the choreography (as involving unison and counterpoint) is not presupposed, but comes in the first studio session (specifically, after the foyer and office rehearsals). Finding the proper lighting and spatial context is a decision made by Forsythe in the very last minute of the technical rehearsal, after exhausting other intuitions.

Salient factors shaping the identity of the piece include the pact between the two performers to dance together and not be competitive with each other. Also, the integrity of movement material made on the first day, which remains an essence focusing the dancers' pact to support rather than compete. Thirdly, the material conditions shaped the piece: lacking rehearsal space, the artists worked in unusual contexts, and these took influence on the duet (such as the entrainment produced by intimately rehearsing in the small space of Forsythe's office). The creation of *Duo* relied on the extensive trust between Forsythe and the dancers, and their mutual tolerance and sensitivity to choreographic potential. It was also significantly impacted by Forsythe's shift from soft to strong governance over the course of the rehearsals. The above resumé shows that *Duo* was not brought out of thin air, nor by the will and decisions of one person, but through processes of bringing people, materials, contexts and practices together.

How does the choreography become known or present to the people making *Duo*? And to what extent do these people understand the choreography in the same way? Because of their history of cooperating, the team members can share understanding: exploring as the potential of their creative materials produces an event, intense and interesting to them. Rather than being confined to communication through verbal language or "talking dance," this may be felt more as an affect, intensity or emotion than a conceptual articulation. Thus, their way of thinking while making is also a feeling while making. Yet there is also one clear moment of explicit validation. This occurs at the point when all the elements come together and Forsythe publicly (that is, over the loudspeaker) praises the dancers' work after the general rehearsal. This suggests that *his* public recognition is primary for the team to acknowledge the work. Yet clearly before arriving at that point, the creation requires a web of people working in their respective mediums—artists, as well as support personnel.[86] Forsythe nets these efforts, by com-

86 Cf. on personnel, see Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 77–92.

municating in different languages and with different repertoires and styles of direction (imperatives, questions, proposals, dialogues, and so on).

In the end phase of the process, the dancers are, to borrow a difficult image 'the canaries in the coal mine.'[87] By this I do not mean sacrificial life forms, but sensitive creatures, who show early signs of the stage elements not providing a frame in which their movement, as practiced thus far, can be potentialized. Though Forsythe asserts authority in evaluating the intermediary stages of the choreographic process, it is also the dancers' bodies that have the ability to recognize whether the practices are suitably congealing. For this reason, they hold great power. They are also, during creation, placed at risk (a stressful and energy consuming affair). Forsythe and the dancers, I believe, are equally cognizant of this unspoken aspect of their relationship. This supports my argument that both explicit and implicit understanding of the potential of a choreography forming are highly socialized and embodied.

In the example of *Duo*, technologies and modes of inscription provide seminal memory aids: from the video camera—without which Forsythe's improvised movement would be lost—to the participants' notebooks. These inscriptive and capturing modes are tools for committing a choreography to memory. Yet the artists' practices of rehearsing and creating are equally critical to helping the choreography congeal. The *Duo* rehearsals demonstrate how talk and sociality, as well as nonverbal communication, are indispensable within the choreographic process. Forsythe and the team negotiate the powers of what are perceived and appreciated in the emerging dance: they actively risk, take chances and document all of this, in order to define a repeatable constellation of creative potential.

These observations are significant for our understanding of the concept of choreography. André Lepecki explains choreography as "not only a discipline or technology of the body, not only a mode of composition, not only a register, or archive" but an "apparatus."[88] Drawing from Foucault, Lepecki observes how making dances is a means of defining signification and perception. Choreography not only sets in motion tools for preservation, memory and iteration of dance, it demarcates, "those hegemonic modes of aesthetically perceiving and theoretically accounting for dance's evolutions in time."[89] These forces are in play when Forsythe's team creates—requiring the team members' attention to preservation and tolerance of ambiguity, as they generate and eliminate.

This ethnographic approach has shed light on some defining aspects of Forsythe's choreographic process in *Duo*, but also more generally—showing how Forsythe implements choreographing the audience's attention, drawing on cognitive ideas about human interest in pattern emergence and change. This is seen most clearly in his editing process, in which he adds exceptions, contrasts and micro-structures, in the belief that these will be interesting for the viewer. He also coaches the dancers' phrasing, to range from greater passages of "taking time" to other sections of acceleration and springing, based upon the principle that variance is pleasing and holds the viewer's curiosity.

87 This is an English saying, which refers to miners' practice of bringing caged canaries underground with them. The birds, if exposed to toxic gases, would die, warning the miners to exit immediately.

88 Lepecki, "Choreography as Apparatus of Capture," p. 120.

89 Ibid.

The process reveals little conceptual talk about aesthetic judgement and the meaning of the work in the studio. There is also almost no direction of the dancers' breathing, which emerges as an implicit process—necessary, and yet unguided. Words like "unison," "counterpoint," "cues" and "alignments" are the most common working terms, and they are general to Forsythe's working process, not specific to *Duo*.

Based upon this study, I would describe creativity in making *Duo* as the *moving thinking-feeling while making*—that is, *the tuning of collaborators to the potential of ecologies of materials, relations and practices*. The team, throughout the timeline of the rehearsals, moves quickly—crashing and colliding and testing, without extensive time for reflection and justification. Aside from the names of the movement and phrases, the common terms used are already there, in place from other choreographies. For the participants, creating choreographies involves events emerging, differently than in daily life, in which the forces and feeling of attuning are palpable and exciting. *Duo* shows creation as *a process that tunes to an event's potential*.

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This chapter has analyzed the creation of *Duo* at the Ballett Frankfurt in 1996. Section 10.1 described the sources and methods for the reconstruction, based on study of approximately ten hours of archival videos of rehearsal as well as interviews with *Duo* dancers (Jill Johnson and Regina van Berkel) and with William Forsythe. The limitations of these sources were discussed critically. Section 10.2 has oriented this account of creation within Caspersen's overview of the range of Forsythe's processes. Section 10.3 discussed the relationship of *Duo* (1996) to its precursor, *Marion/Marion* (1991). Section 10.4 chronologically analyzed each stage of the team's rehearsal: from the first rehearsal taking place unusually in the theater foyer, to the final dress rehearsal on stage. Rich description of the labor has been interwoven with lengthy citations of interviews with dancers van Berkel and Johnson. The writing is evocative, designed to give readers the feeling of being in the room with the artists as they work.

Section 10.4 analyzed the process. The argument I build through this interpretation is that the creative process making *Duo* adhered to a semi-directive and cooperative "thinking while making" approach that was heavily dependent on the real materiality of bodies and the context of each rehearsal.[90] Forsythe's choreographic leadership involved initiating, editing and focalizing the team's shared intentionality. Having created together before was vital to the efficacy of this complex, mediated and altogether swiftly cohering teamwork—this adventure of exploring potentiality and discovering together.

In this chapter, I have shown how creation was processual: bringing something new into existence, while relying on old components and practiced methods. In the subsequent and final chapter of this manuscript, I will consider the possibility that creation was not limited to the phase of making of *Duo* in 1996, but rather sustained and continually fostered the *Duo* project throughout its history.

90 Ingold, "Thinking Through Making."