Introduction

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

Photo © Agnès Noltenius.

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

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

Dozens of similarly stunning photographs of dancers fill the pages of Noltenius's book tribute to the Ballett Frankfurt, combined with her own words and citations from choreographer William Forsythe.[1] The images I've included here, with her kind permission, show the dancers enacting the duet *Duo*. This piece is the subject of this manuscript: a duet made in 1996 by Forsythe for the Ballett Frankfurt. The dancers are Regina van Berkel and Jill Johnson, both of whom are cisgender women. In these photos, we see them in their black *Duo* costumes, the long sleeve leotards, as well as wearing their practice clothes. They are in the Ballett Frankfurt studio on the seventh floor of the Opera House, with natural rather than stage lighting. To my eye, they are enacting *Duo*'s movements a bit differently than in performance—as they are closer, brought together for the camera lens, on the verge of touching. This staging of *Duo,* with Noltenius, brings out what the dancers feel as they dance this duet: a particular art of *togethering*. In this moving together, micro-movements and subtle timings are substantial. Noltenius's camera cuts through time into these transient experiences, showing them intimately in passing.

Figure 5 presents us with another picture of *Duo*—made by digital collage. Dancer Riley Watts's image of *his Duo* was made over twenty years after Noltenius's photos, in 2019 when Watts was at home between tours. The image shows Watts's body fused together with the body of his partner, Brigel Gjoka. Both dancers are cisgender men. They are wearing their *Duo* costumes: tank tops and sweatpants. Watts produced this picture by manipulating video stills. The pixilation was caused by Watts zooming in extensively—coming close to his body and overlaying his torso upon that of his partner. Watts describes this picture as corresponding to the essence and feeling of *Duo*, based on many years of practice together.[2] As with Noltenius's *Duo* photographs, the figuration of the face is absent. The image frames the common torso, core and arms. The dancers' bodies are different yet amalgamated: *together*.

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

1 Noltenius, *Detail*.

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

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

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

Photo © Riley Watts.

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

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

Watching *DUO2015*

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

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

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

Photo © Bill Cooper.

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

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

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

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

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

Researching the *Duo* Project

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

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

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

8 This counts performances between 1996–2018.

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

Figure 7 (left). Dancers Allison Brown (left) and Jill Johnson (right) in Duo *in 2003.*
Figure 8 (right). Dancers Brigel Gjoka (left) and Riley Watts (right) in DUO2015.

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

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

9 Byrne, "Ballet's Antichrist."

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

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

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

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

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

Photo © Dominik Mentzos.

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

> Allison Brown and Ms. Johnson wear black shorts and are bare breasted under see-through black tops in *Duo*, an intimate formal exercise. They are more than admirable in their concentration as they move in and out of classical alignment and into ballet's classroom positions.
>
> Despite its bare-bones academic air, *Duo* has a subliminal power. A phrase on the piano rises up into an electronic swell as the increasingly breathy dancers isolate parts of their bodies into extreme postures. Unison alternates with counterpoint, collapsible limbs contrast with light skips.[14]

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

14 Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the Dancers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Dancer's Perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

38 Cf. Leach, "Choreographic Objects."

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

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The Performer's Labor

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

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

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

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

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

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

43 Ibid., p. 80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Processing Choreography

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources & Methodology

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

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

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

51 See Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*, p. 359; more generally on the interface of practice theory and dance studies, see ibid., pp. 350–80. See also Klein and Göbel, *Performance und Praxis*; Klein, "Die Logik der Praxis," in particular pp. 134–39.

52 Klein, "The (Micro-)Politics of Social Choreography," p. 199.

53 Lepecki cited in Clayton et al., "Inside/Beside Dance Studies," p. 25.

54 See Clayton et al., "Inside/Beside Dance Studies."

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

56 See Sklar, "On Dance Ethnography," p. 6. Cf. Buckland, *Dance in the Field*; Davida, *Fields in Motion*.

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"study *with* people" and thereby to develop a close relation to one's knowledge—a way of "knowing *from the inside*."[57]

Anthropologists make close contact with their research subjects through the practice of ethnographic fieldwork—insisting this is fundamental to their knowledge production. They immerse themselves to gain access to and understand the meaning of cultural activities. According to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern: "The tradition of fieldwork meant that anthropologists learnt about systems by entering into relations with those whose social life they were studying."[58] By entering into a relationship with the material being studied, the ethnographer uses her body as her instrument of learning as she develops social ties. Erving Goffman describes this work as "subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation."[59] Anthropologists label this approach *participant observation*. This emphasizes their active role.[60]

While ethnography has historically involved cross-cultural encounters—typically of a white scholar researching a foreign folk—native, indigenous and insider accounts of ethnographers writing about their own communities have reappeared since the 1990s.[61] This genre of autoethnographic writing—interweaving autobiographical writing, personal narratives and ethnographic reflection on one's own group—has productively challenged the insider/outsider dichotomy and questioned the interrelation of self and other.[62] As a dancer from the Forsythe lineage, my research into *Duo* is an example of autoethnography. While my writing foregrounds my fieldwork investigating *Duo*, I also draw from personal narratives and memories of my experience as a dancer, to reflexively develop knowledge of the group I danced with. Though I was not an active Forsythe dancer at the time of research, I had the social ties and sensorimotor skills to deeply investigate *Duo* dancers' work. Even observing the shift and decline of my dancer expertise was helpful for my study, to clarify what changed by becoming a dance scholar and ethnographer.

Many dance anthropologists cite the advantage of having some form of dance training for their research.[63] They explain that this enables them to make faster contact with

57 Ingold, *Making*, p. 2, p. 5 (italics in the original).

58 Strathern, *The Relation*, p. 13.

59 Goffman cited in Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, p. 3.

60 Tim Ingold stipulates that participant observation is an anthropological rather than an ethnographic method. He thereby distinguishes ethnography, as a documentary practice of learning 'from' people, from anthropology in which methods "open up a space for generous, open-ended, comparative yet critical inquiry into the conditions and potentials of human life." See Ingold, *Making*, p. 4.

61 See McAuley, "Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal," pp. 80–81; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, pp. 1–26; Reed-Danahay, *Auto/ethnography*, pp. 1–3.

62 See Reed-Danahay, *Auto/ethnography.*

63 Anthropologist Helena Wulff describes the benefits of her childhood experience in ballet for her study of ballet careers and culture. She foregrounds the already established lens for physical competences, the effect of possessing social capital during her fieldwork and her ability to gain access to material that might otherwise be excluded to the likely detriment of her scholarly writing; see

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their community as well as to perceive movement acutely. How one senses, perceives and derives meaning from movement is known to change with expertise. Loïc Wacquant has demonstrated in his sociological investigation of boxing, *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (2006), that undergoing an apprenticeship can be advantageous for sociological study. Turning "participant observation" into "observant participation," Wacquant's apprenticeship enables him to penetrate the carnal experiences and relationships of the boxing gym in order to learn the "sweet science."[64] He argues that observation alone could never discern the meticulous build-up of skill, the fast reflexes during the match, nor the glaring pain after a fight. Still he cautions:

> My position […] is to say, "go native" but *"go native armed*," that is, equipped with your theoretical and methodological tools, with the full store of problematics inherited from your discipline, with your capacity for reflexivity and analysis, and guided by a constant effort, once you have passed the ordeal of initiation, *to objectivize this experience and construct the object*, instead of allowing yourself to be naively embraced and constructed by it. Go ahead, go native, but come back a sociologist![65]

While a *Duo* apprenticeship was not possible for me, such dilation between experience and reflection, between my biography and the practices encountered in *Duo*, are critically assessed and interwoven in chapters that follow.[66]

My transformation into a dance ethnographer involved reading ethnographies and private consultation.[67] I learned the process of making interviews and maintaining a field diary of notes, in which "thick description" is used to inscribe the events of each day and reflect critically about what was observed and done.[68] Ethnographers have written

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Wulff, *Ballet Across Borders*, pp. 5–11. In anthropologist Caroline Potter's work, her study of dancers' sensation requires more than a distant view. Potter embeds herself as an anthropologist studying dance training that she actively participates in, relying on her previous experience as a dancer, including passing an audition to attend the school. See Potter, "Sense of Motion, Senses of Self." Anthropologist Cynthia Novack learns and practices contact improvisation to write her ethnographic history of the form. She writes in particular about how her prior experience in other dance forms was constructive. See Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, in particular pp. 17–21.
Cf. Giersdorf, "Dance Studies in the International Academy."

64 Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p. 6, p. 66.

65 Wacquant, "Habitus as Topic and Tool," pp. 87–88 (italics in the original). Wacquant's approach to sociology, like Pierre Bourdieu's, advocated and relied upon ethnographic contact, yet still valued reflexive objectivity, achieved through critical reflection upon experience and the construction of one's object of knowledge.

66 An apprenticeship was not possible because The Forsythe Company had closed and there was no possibility for me to tour internationally with the *DUO2015* dancers.

67 I am grateful to Susanne Schmitt for her coaching.

68 Anthropologist Sharon Traweek defines thick description as "detailed attention" to factors such as "settings, language, tone of voice, posture, gestures, clothing, distance, arrangement of movable objects, and how this changes from one interaction to another." Traweek, *Beamtimes and Lifetimes*, p. 9. Clifford Geertz, who expanded upon this term borrowed from Gilbert Ryle, writes: "The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts." Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 28. Though the process of writing thick description is integral to Geertz's view of culture as a meaningful realm of actions that is decoded via hermeneutics, it has served as a style of thinking that is useful to ethnographers in a broader sense. Writing thick description has been

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extensively about the challenges of turning fieldwork experiences into written scholarly work, highlighting the ethical as well as the literary problems.[69] To generate sources for further reflection, I routinely made field notes to document *Duo* performances visited, rehearsals observed, workshops attended and interviews.

Participant observation and reflection therefore make ethnography different from other methods that prioritize data viewed with the "gaze from afar."[70] Deciphering how the researcher's perspective is formed and how this influences scholarly inscription is the substance of reflexive ethnography. Theater anthropologist Gay McAuley writes: "The fact that there is no such person as a neutral or transparent observer, and that any analysis and even any description will bear the imprint of its own cultural moment, does not, however, invalidate the record."[71] Describing this negotiation, Margaret Mead referred to ethnography as "the balance between empathic involvement and disciplined detachment."[72] The phases of ethnographic practice support this: coming into contact; then taking distance and reflecting; then returning to the field to observe again. Similar to what I have experienced, anthropologist Sharon Traweek describes her research as follows: "Whatever our subjects make of us and how they make use of us is continuously negotiated with what we make of them and how we make use of them […]. It is in these highly situated encounters that we all are producing knowledges; we are both subject and object to each other, neither subjective nor objective."[73]

Contemporary ethnography recognizes the many layers of what it means to observe and to find an event meaningful.[74] Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has described fieldwork as the "intersection" of the "multiple identities" of the social researcher, which themselves change through contact.[75] Indeed, as Rosaldo forecast, in my research my identities were multiple: as a dance scholar, Forsythe dancer, ex-dancer, ethnographer, as well as other identities I held that were important outside my research. By conceiving my research process as an embrace of switching modes and blending identities, I chose to strategically move between styles of participant observation, charting a multiperspectival practice exploring the multiple realities of *Duo*'s site and enactment.

The name I prefer for my position as an ethnographer in this research is that of an *outsider-insider*: an insider as a former Forsythe dancer, yet an outsider because I also bear the motives of a scholar. Moreover, I have not performed *Duo* in the context of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company. Thus, I am outside the microcosm of the

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adapted by ethnographers who highlight the sensory or affective dimensions of their research fields, taking issue with the predominance of the linguistic. I did not use thick description in the manner of a symbolic framework to systematically decode the conceptual structures of Forsythe dancers or *Duo* spectators—thinking that dance movement is a form of symbolic action. Rather my approach sought to explore different registers of sense and meaning-making, across signs and non-sign bases.

69 Cf. Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.

70 Wacquant, "Habitus as Topic and Tool," p. 84.

71 McAuley, "Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal," p. 80.

72 Ibid., p. 77.

73 Traweek, "Bodies of Evidence," p. 211.

74 Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations."

75 Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth*, p. 194.

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duet, always positioned as a third party or interloper. My status could also be described as a "buddy-researcher" blending the role of a researcher and friend.[76] In this regard, I used my familiarity to gain access to sources and people, and my status as researcher to ask for assistance in translating the dancers' experiences and concepts into terms understandable to a wider public.

As an outsider-insider, I faced the challenges that ethnographers commonly face in writing up their studies: What points of view or content should I include and exclude? Whose knowledge is this, and which audience should it address? How do my choices in constructing a narrative do justice to my fieldwork accounts and render them intelligible to outsiders? How do I remain critical and show the limitations of these accounts, and not only serve to legitimize my informants' agency and intelligence? I attempt to follow the advice of Clarke and Vionnet, who, when discussing knowledge production in anthropology, recommend "prolonging" their informants' questions rather than writing about the 'other.'[77] In the manuscript that follows, I pay tribute to the dancers' experiences by *processing choreography* with them.

Sources

Currently, Forsythe has no public archive, rendering access to materials difficult for scholars.[78] In June 2015, I was granted access to Forsythe's private archive of materials from Ballett Frankfurt/The Forsythe Company—boxes of sorted materials within his office. I was permitted to make copies of relevant programs, company calendars (*Spielpläne*) and archival videos of *Duo*. The video sources discovered included 37 archival videos of *Duo* performances.[79] Archival videos were found of rehearsals filmed when creating *Duo* in 1996 and reconstructing *Duo* in The Forsythe Company in 2012. I used these exceptional materials as aids to reconstruct the dancers' practice. I additionally attended live performances, workshops and rehearsals (2015–2018), obtaining video recordings, press materials, photographs and programs that I added to my collection.

The archival videos of *Duo* performances enabled a diachronic or longitudinal reading, supporting comparison across time spans and between different interpretations. Yet these sources have important limitations. Dance scholars Tamara Tomic-Vajagic and Christina Thurner have presented balanced analyses noting the benefits of video analysis while also critically reviewing how traces represent or *mis*represent performance—through the quality of the recording, the camera's specific gaze upon the event and the absence of live and contextual cues.[80] One benefit of video performance analysis

76 See Snow et al., "Fieldwork Roles and Informational Yield." Cf. Corte, "A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory."

77 Translation by the author. See Vionnet and Clarke, "Prolonger plutôt que restituer."

78 Forsythe's documents are currently in storage, with the intent to make them available to the public in the future. I reference the current titles of the archival recordings in Appendix F, section 1 to aid future reference.

79 These are unedited videos made by Forsythe's team for the purpose of internal documentation and use.

80 See Tomic-Vajagic, *The Dancer's Contribution*, pp. 73–76 and Thurner, "Prekäre physische Zone."

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for my purposes was triangulation: that is, in the comparison of the changing appearance of the choreography, shifting over time, with the dancers' accounts and memories of their embodied experience.[81]

A praxeological production analysis similar to the one engaged in here has previously been sketched by dance scholar Gabriele Klein, for *Das Frühlingsopfer* (*The Rite of Spring*) from Pina Bausch. One challenge Klein notes within her analysis is the sheer expanse of data, performances and participants involved in a large group piece for 16 pairs (32 dancers) with over 300 performances.[82] One benefit of choosing *Duo* is that the smaller scale of a duet enabled the whole network of dancers to be considered—spanning the perspectives of all eleven dancers who have learned this work in the contexts of Forsythe's ensembles. Yet the extensive video record of *Duo* nonetheless proved too large to study rigorously, when considered in addition to the rehearsals and my interviews with the dancers.

Key Performances

In order to reduce the complete set of 37 performance videos of *Duo* to a smaller yet representative subset to enable closer study, a cross section was used.[83] This limited the study to a set of seven *key performances*, which spanned the history of the piece in a representative manner (from 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2013, 2015, 2016, see Appendix F). These key performances were not necessarily the best or most ideal performances of *Duo*—which would in any case be difficult to assess. Rather they were selected to explore the diversity of the piece. *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts assisted with the selection process.[84] According to a "mixed methods" research approach, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are valued on equal terms, my approach to video analysis blended ethnographic and quantitative methodology of information visualization.[85] The details of this approach are provided in section 9.2.

Fieldwork & Interviews

> It is difficult to talk about what we experimented with [in *Duo*]. Because you need to live it. Someone who has lived it will see the difference. This [performance] is the product. It is hard to say that "this is what it is." Because if we will do it tomorrow, then we will

81 Further elaboration on my methodology is provided in Chapter 9.

82 See Klein, "Die Logik der Praxis," p. 131.

83 A cross section is a term used in the natural sciences and mathematics, medicine, as well as architecture and design. It refers to a cut of the material or body. When a cross section is well chosen, it can be a pragmatic way to make inferences about the whole.

84 The criteria for selection were: (i) to foreground the artists who have danced *Duo* most frequently, (ii) to reflect these performers' entry into the piece, maturation and their shifting partnerships, in order to study their interpretation, (iii) to capture the variation of the choreographic structure and the range of *Duo* performances within different theatrical settings, and (iv) to select recordings with the highest quality audio and video. The later varied extensively between the two decades, marking the shift of documentation practice from film to HD.

85 Johnson et al., "Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research."

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> go even further. Or this is not that anymore. It is *this*, because it is traveling … being in constant change and listening.[86]

Early on in my work, this conversation with dancer Brigel Gjoka laid out many of the problems that I would face as a researcher. It was my task to contemplate what was ineffable and difficult to observe from outside of *Duo*—a shifting and live logic of emotional and fleshy process. My fieldwork, using a choreography as a location or site, was unconventional, as was my focus on the dancers' practice in both the present and the past. To learn intimately about the dancers' work, I defined frames in which I could take part in the dancers' reconstruction of *Duo*. This required experimentation with ethnographic and interview methodology.

The activities of my fieldwork are listed in Appendix E. For one year (2016–2017), I cooperated with three primary dancers: *Duo* dancers Allison Brown and Riley Watts, and Forsythe dancer Cyril Baldy, who had served as a ballet master for *Duo* in the staging for the CCN – Ballet de Lorraine in 2015.[87] I also travelled to meet in person with four further dancers who have danced *Duo*, and reached another two dancers by phone/video-conference. Most of my interviews were duets between a dancer and myself, mirroring the primary constellation of *Duo*. When possible, I engaged with pairs of *Duo* dancers in joint interviews. Additionally, with each dancer I conducted a semi-structured interview, focusing on their biographies, the circumstances surrounding their joining Forsythe's companies, their experience with *Duo* and the occupational culture of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company.[88]

There were obvious limitations to the format of a sit-down interview for learning about doing *Duo*—some dancers also wanted to think *through* their bodies. To further understand these corporeal and relational aspects, four methods were developed that relied on interview elicitation and prompts.[89] These were named *studio sessions*, *teaching sessions*, *talk-through sessions* and *data-review sessions*. Given the impossibility to talk with any dancer directly while performing (or to interview them officially before or after) and the tendency for the dancers to describe *Duo* in terms of the ideals of what one should do, as opposed to the concrete difficulties, these elicitations enriched my understanding of *Duo*'s practice. Further information on these approaches is provided below:

Studio sessions took place in a dance studio, using the artistic context as a form of emplacement and memory prompt. I asked the dancers to physically teach me aspects of *Duo* and to 'show-tell-include' me in what was important in dancing *Duo*. These activities gave me sensory, kinesthetic and affective access to doing *Duo*, putting me in relation to the dancers and letting me learn with and from my body. Here I discovered the terms that the dancers had for their tacit know-how, while sensing their logic with my body. The sessions allowed me to perceive something that I could not know from spectatorship or oral testimony alone.

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86 Brigel Gjoka, interview in Dresden, March 6, 2016.

87 The dancers were paid for these full days of investment.

88 The structure of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix E, section 9.

89 On elicitation see Harper, "Talking About Pictures."

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Teaching sessions: To come closer to the practice between experienced *Duo* pairs, I observed a workshop in which a pair of dancers passed on aspects of the choreography to novices.[90] This permitted me to watch the pairs move together from a much closer vantage point than when I observed them dance on stage. Another advantage of such a context is that the young adults learning *Duo* were apprentices going through the process of skill development. This revealed implicit aspects that expert Forsythe dancers were not aware that the duet relied on—such as sensorimotor skills pertaining to Forsythe's repertoire at large, and their extensive shared history as partners.

Talk-through sessions made use of the extensive video archive and my selection of key performances. I asked the dancers to watch a key video of a *Duo* performance and to talk freely in real time; often we dialogued about what we observed and found important, or surprising. By this means, I absorbed the words and concepts that the dancers had for their tacit know-how and their abilities to read the performance based upon their practice. Building up trust with the dancers, I was also able to discern what can go wrong in performance.

Data-review sessions were used to explore further questions emerging in my research. Inviting the dancers to review specific archival video sources, I asked targeted questions about moments in a performance video, for example: How did you coordinate the synchrony shown at this moment? Did you give a cue here? How did you coordinate this alignment? This enabled detailed study of the dancers' interaction and cross-comparison of dancers' answers.

Two further techniques I used for gathering information in my fieldwork were strategic usage of quotations and statements. I used these techniques to learn if the dancers had the same terminology for their physical experiences and whether pairs or dancers with the same role shared a common understanding. In undertaking this technique, I would cite information that another dancer had told me, or explain my own perspective, and then ask what my informant thought, or simply wait to hear how they would respond.[91] So as not to unduly bias my study, this approach was used only after semi-structured interviews in which I listened and did not dialogue with the artists. Through discerning use of these techniques, my fieldwork started to show a web of perspectives on the same moments and events.

Additional interviews helped to grasp a wider sense of the team's practice: with the composer Thom Willems, pianist David Morrow, dancer Dana Caspersen and long-standing employee of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main*, Bruni Marx. I chose to interview Forsythe last, to ensure that my work with the dancers would take precedence—not to give him the final word.[92]

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90 These workshops took place with advanced dance students in a pre-professional training program at *Arts Factory International* in Bologna, Italy, with dancers Riley Watts and Brigel Gjoka.

91 From this, I agree with scholar Ute Corte that strategic use of quotations and statements is valuable: "to trigger longer accounts and reactions to what it [sic] is described in the excerpt; second, to triangulate the validity of their contents; and third, to learn about sensitive matters by giving a pretext to approach the topic and ultimately providing a way of inducing extensive and sincere answers." Corte, "A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory," p. 31.

92 Ethnographer Georgiana Born describes similar decision making in her ethnography of IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music), which was then directed by the founder

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Citations of these interviews and my fieldwork notes are included in the final manuscript, as is common in ethnographic writing. To give the dancers' testimony prominence, in addition to short citations of evidence, long citations are indented and formatted with a special font, to highlight them for the reader.[93] The decision not to anonymize the informants' stories was made with their consent—or in most cases, the dancers' explicit wish to be acknowledged. Sensitive material has been anonymized and is identified as such.

Overview

The study is organized in three parts. Each part opens with a short review of the existing research.

Part I (chapters 1–5), titled *Art World*, develops an ethnographic portrait of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company, interwoven with a close consideration of Howard Becker's concept of "art worlds," as cited in the title. The inflection of this writing is sociological. Chapter 1 begins with an overview of William Forsythe's biography, positioning this study within the current Forsythe scholarship, and providing a short review of his teamwork with the dancers. Chapter 2 describes the infrastructural and material conditions of labor in these institutions, concluding with an interpretation of the spatial acoustics of *Duo*'s music. Chapter 3 outlines the dancers' transnational career paths and dance backgrounds, highlighting their diversity. Chapter 4 zooms in upon the dancers' practices, showing the tension between creative work and routines of rehearsing, training and touring. I conclude in chapter 5 with a chronology of *Duo*'s performance history, substantiating *Duo*'s art world.

Part II (chapters 6–9), titled *Movement*, considers the dancers' movement practices. Chapter 6 begins with investigation of one movement, the curious example of *showerhead*, following how this movement is mastered, conceptualized and passed down through time—individually and collectively. In chapter 7, I turn to some of the material and relational aspects of *Duo*'s movement, drawing upon Erin Manning's philosophy of *relational movement*. In chapter 8, I analyze the dancers' rhythmical *entrainment*, exploring how this practice reconfigures the modes of synchronization enacted in ballet. I conclude in chapter 9 with an overview of the movement principles of *Duo*, which gives further concepts for relational components. I also chart the movement of *Duo* longitudinally, visualizing the piece's structure and change over time.

Part III (chapters 10–11) discusses the concept of *Creation* and specifies the creative forces within the dancers' labor. In chapter 10, I investigate the creation process during the making of *Duo* in the Ballett Frankfurt in 1996, providing a vivid, chronological account. My reconstructive ethnography emphasizes how the artists work contingently

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and distinguished composer Pierre Boulez. She writes, "it has seemed to me far more to the point to report the representation of Boulez, and the sense of his impact, through informants' testimony and my own observations rather than to invite being overwhelmed by his own authoritative, and better-known, account of things." Born, *Rationalizing Culture*, p. 9.

93 To highlight the difference between omitted phrases and the speaker's incomplete sentences, the former is designed by bracketed ellipses and the latter by unbracketed ellipses.

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and relationally, investing in both the potentiality of the emerging piece as well as one another. Chapter 11 concludes the study with a longitudinal analysis of the dancers' re-enactment of *Duo,* from 1996 to 2016, highlighting the interrelated activities of learning, reconstructing, rehearsing and performing. This final chapter offers extensive analysis of the dancers' own perspectives on *Duo*'s emergence as a project. I conclude the manuscript with a chapter synthesizing the findings of *Processing Choreography*.

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