

Introduction

This book inaugurates the research field of body-biography, introducing a scholarly framework for life story inquiry in dance studies and giving it substance through case studies with dancers. The endeavor is interwoven with reflection on my memories of becoming a dancer, a dance scholar, and a teacher of dance. It brings the personal into the foreground in the form of an autobiographical project that records the life stories of four of my dance teachers: Hilary Cartwright, Christine Kono, Chris Lechner, and Marcus Schulkind (born between 1943 and 1963 in England, America, and Myanmar). These four important but lesser-known dance artists have dedicated their lives to the art of movement transmission, choreography, performance, and healing. Their stories tell of the pleasures as well as the challenges of leading lives as body workers and artists in the West, enumerating the bodily and kinesthetic experiences that constitute the dancers' professional practices and their senses of self.

This book is equally a heartfelt contribution to my dance teachers' legacies and a scholarly reflection on dancers' autobiographies and new methodological approaches in dance studies. Contextualizing these life stories within an interdisciplinary research format, I bring theoretical writing on autobiography studies and dance history research into conversation with debates in interview research and ethnography; in doing so, I demonstrate how case studies from the field of dance—rich examples of dancing lives—may take on a broader value. *Body-Biographies: Our Life Stories in Dance* substantiates the complex demands of interpreting and publishing dancers' life story interviews: the care work involved in this sensitive participatory research, and the theoretical challenges of inscribing embodied history. Zooming out from the personal, I critically reflect on my methodology and its interpretative potential and findings, to discuss matters of embodiment, memory, identity, and knowledge.

This project, conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowed me to reconnect to teachers whose work had faced significant disruptions, awakening a mutual longing for renewed exchange and shared reflection on our profession. At the time of writing, my teacher “Hilary” is eighty-two, “Christine” is seventy-eight, “Chris” is sixty-two, and “Marcus” is seventy-seven years old. In recent years they have

battled cancer, survived a heart attack, moved around on two replaced hips and one replaced knee, suffered from a painfully pinched nerve, and had cataract surgeries in four eyes. Meanwhile, as I worked on this book, my own body has changed too—a bruised rib, a ruptured tendon in my left ankle, tingling in my right arm, white hairs, painful periods, some hot flashes, a mild scoliosis—small but persistent reminders of aging as a dance scholar in my mid-forties. And yet, despite these physical realities of our changing bodies, our lives continue. Cartwright, Lechner, and Schulkind are still teaching actively. Kono, now retired, continues to research movement and participate in weekly improvisation sessions in a dance studio with her partner. Witnessing both the precarity of our aging bodies and the vitality of our lives, writing this book rekindled these meaningful teacher-student relationships, merging academic intent with personal motives.

Responding to the intricate challenges of researching human bodies as culturally and historically constructed individualities, my writing investigates the potential of the invented term “body-biography” for dance studies and dance historiography. Body-biographies are extended processes of live review between dancers and dance scholars that generate knowledge, oral history, archival records, and scholarly publication. Some of this knowledge remains nonverbal and private; however, the publication process leaves a lasting trace through which significant aspects of this embodied storytelling become sharable with a wider public. This participatory, cooperative, and sensual research stands in contrast to other approaches to studying dance: distant dance history writing referencing primary and secondary textual sources; glossy artist interviews published without in-depth writing contextualizing their production; and oral history interviews that limit conversation to a sit-down question-and-answer format, missing the opportunity to document the “dance” of the interview. Against the backdrop of these approaches, I immersed myself in an autobiographical project, interviewing dance artists whose teaching practices had impacted me personally. I pursued a body-reflexive form of life story research aimed at inscribing scholarly knowledge and fostering my own development as a dance teacher. I listened to my collaborators’ interests and stakes in this cooperative project, attending to their concerns while developing my perspective as a dance scholar. In activities of live review, my dance teachers and I mutually reflected on the past and changes that we have observed within the dance profession. I also took the opportunity to dance again with them and to rethink the past, sharing my memories of their pedagogical practices and asking questions about their own journeys of becoming dancers and dance teachers.

My life as a dancer, combined with my education in dance studies and ethnography, had prepared me with many skills to work as a meticulous, systematic, and creative biographer eager for kinesthetic life review. Scholar Karen O’Reilly encapsulates how the methodology of ethnography is a powerful form of inquiry,

enabling the researcher to theoretically interpret and narrate sensitive encounters. She writes:

Ethnography is a practice that: evolves in design as the study progresses; involves direct and sustained contact with human beings, in the context of their daily lives, over a prolonged period of time; draws on a family of methods, usually including participant observation and conversation; respects the complexity of the social world; and therefore, tells rich, sensitive and credible stories.¹

The specific way that I practice ethnography for this book, merging it with interviewing and life-writing, I present in detail in Chapter 2. Drawing on the practice of “participant observation” and debates on “writing culture,” my way of practicing ethnography is to learn relationally and respectfully—from and with dancers, and through my own body—by interacting in the context of my narrators’ everyday lives and dance activities.² I try to understand my research agenda through building longstanding relationships with dance artists that allow me to learn about their lives: to observe, question, participate, document, interview, interpret, write and co-write, evaluate, and edit. Ethnographic inquiry has trained me well for the ethical and self-reflexive negotiations involved in writing about living persons, their fleshy experiences, and my participatory encounters with their lifeworlds. Dancing has prepared me to observe, empathize, listen, and move with others. While the research around which this book is built was ostensibly focused on my dance teachers’ body-biographies, it was also entangled with my own life story. This intensified the reflexivity of the undertaking: offering me a richer understanding of my own life by necessitating critical review of my life phases, turning points, and memories of being and becoming a dancer. In this sense, my research design is similar to projects in the self-reflexive genre of autoethnography research, a term that I withhold because of the theoretical anchoring of this study in dance studies, rather than cultural studies.³

My artistic biography—born upstate in New York in 1979, resisting a career in ballet before discovering science and modern dance, then becoming a dance scholar after a career as a professional dancer in Germany—becomes an explicit object of reflection in the middle of this book, in the section “Interlude: Autobiographical

1 O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, 11.

2 These arguments are substantiated in my conclusion. Unlike positivist approaches to working with ethnography, my understanding has been inspired by recent practice and debates in anthropology. As two examples, see the discussion in Ingold, *Making*, 2–6 as well as the pivotal text, Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.

3 See Adams, Ellis, and Jones, “Autoethnography”; Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis, *Handbook of Autoethnography*; Bochner and Ellis, *Evocative Autoethnography*; Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*; Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography*.

Gestures.” Because of my mobility as an artist who has resided in America, Germany, and Switzerland, the dance teachers featured in this study had each decisively shaped my transnational career path yet had never worked with one another.⁴ As a collection, our body-biographies therefore do not represent a common cultural group, epoch, or dance style—as a case study or micro-history—yet they are still significant portals onto dance history. They offer insight into what dance scholar Karen Eliot calls “embodied history”: dancers’ memories of developing their bodily capacities while learning to dance, perform, choreograph, and teach, as well as narratives marked by these competences, informing how they perceived and remembered events within their communities. Body-biographies reveal not only these professional dimensions of dance history, but also the interwoven aesthetic and cultural currents that constitute embodiment, enriching our understanding of dance historiography from the perspective of the persons and bodies who shaped it.⁵

I chose the four dancers featured here because of their impact on my understanding of dancing and my sense of self—also my appreciation for their exceptional ability to articulate what bodies feel and can do. They are not prominent figures in the Western canon of professional dancers and choreographers. Their names may therefore be unfamiliar to the reader. Giving ample space for their individual voices, each one of these artists is introduced in the opening pages of their body-biography chapters (Chapters 3–6)—providing basic biographic data and specifying their migratory paths—alongside the history of our relationship. Born between 1943 and 1963 in England, Myanmar, and the United States, they hold American, British, and German nationalities and currently reside between Switzerland, the United States, France, Spain, and Germany. My scholarly decision to consider lifelines crossing national and aesthetic borders from these significant but lesser-known artists allows new perspectives of the past and overlooked voices to contribute to our comprehension of dance history. Their lives exemplify the rich exchange of dance culture across national boundaries, illuminating tales of migration and aesthetic transfer.

Each of these dance artists has left a substantial trace in the bodies of their students—in the form of their students’ dance practices and sensorimotor knowledge. My research considers my teachers’ life stories as well as the traces they have left in me: in the form of skills, memories, and habits of analyzing movement—also modes of emotionally and sensually feeling my body in connection

4 They had some existing ties. Cartwright had received acupuncture once from Schulkind when she was teaching the Boston Ballet around two decades ago. Schulkind had in fact suggested I study with her, after I had moved to Europe. Lechner remembered meeting Kono and her partner Dimitris Kraniotis in Greece, but Kono could not remember it.

5 Eliot, *Dancing Lives*, 6. See also 43 in Chapter 1 and the conclusion for further elaboration.

and rhythm with others. For this study, I observantly participated in “Hilary,” “Marcus,” “Chris,” and “Christine’s” current practices as teachers and dance artists. I reflected also on the dance documents my teachers have written, collected, and left behind. Cartwright is herself an accomplished writer on dance, with her own memoir.⁶ Schulkind, who worked extensively as a choreographer, deposited his performance archive of choreographic video recordings in the New York Performing Arts Library and maintained a personal archive of newspaper clippings. All four have made websites that provide narratives about their lived histories, highlighting their artistic as well as their pedagogical work.⁷ That said, the teaching practice of these influential pedagogues is only scantily documented, a gap that I also wished to fill through this life review project.

While for the purpose of this introduction I highlight these artists’ relationship to me as teachers, the four dance artists showcased here have taken on a variety of roles in the dance and somatic professions: as dancers, dance teachers, yoga teachers, choreographers, company directors, rehearsal directors, and more. They represent many dance styles: ballet and modern, *Tanztheater*, release techniques, and contemporary dance. Their life stories therefore show us the interweaving roles of dancers’ labor that are united through the mobile and changing “container” of their bodies as cultural workers. New evidence of these dispersions in multiple styles, techniques, and forms is also relevant for our understanding of dance history, illustrating the way dancers assemble personal pedagogical practices, their bodies integrating a layered “bricolage” of sundry influences.⁸

This project deliberately merged personal and academic registers, believing that rapport was essential for body-biographies to be theoretically revealing—of not only career highlights and nostalgic memories of youth, but also the troubles and challenges of bodily life. Rapport between interviewer and interviewee is known to be critical to the production of oral history, enabling us to ethically produce stories that shape our understanding of the past.⁹ Rapport is also critical for the publication phase, in which shaping transcripts into public life-writing requires considerable patience to negotiate the stakes of self-presentation. I was therefore conscious to choose teachers with whom I had the social bonds in place to navigate a collaborative and possibly confrontational process of life review and life-writing for publication. Despite our age differences and their authority as seasoned teachers,

6 Cartwright, *Dancing for a Living*.

7 References to these are found in their individual body-biographies as well as in the Bibliography.

8 Bales and Netti-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic*, 2–3.

9 Yow, “Interviewing Techniques and Strategies,” 157. Discussion of rapport also is implicated with the ethics of interviewing. Yow, “Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research.”

my relationships with Cartwright, Kono, Lechner, and Schulkind provided mutual, horizontal exchange. As pedagogues, they had not shown hierarchical, untouchable authority.¹⁰ Rather, I could dialogue with them and ask intimate questions—usually on the record.¹¹ This is not to make light of the power asymmetries arising from our age differences or my authority as a scholar with a university grant, a doctorate, and an audio recorder to capture their words. My reputation as a Forsythe dancer also signaled my values as an artist involved in experimental choreographic projects. But overall, I used my embodied know-how as a resource: insisting, with questioning prompts when necessary, that the body would not go unsaid, or implied, as it might within “sit-down” conventions of oral history narration, or even casual dancer talk.

While I empathize with all four of these artists physically, it is interesting that they all have bodies that look and move differently than mine (and each other’s)—perhaps this is even part of my attraction to learning from them. They share a common verbal wit, as well as compassion and generosity. Part of their “auras” as teachers are their energetic capacities in the classroom. Their reputations are built upon their power to help others to learn and the care they take of each and every student in the dance studio. I was aware of the benefit of having interlocutors who were verbally confident and self-aware in their discussions of what they have observed, done, and experienced. These protagonists’ rhetorical skills of interpersonal communication and metaphor make them highly articulate speakers to report back on dance practices and history. They are also self-critical and value the ethics of telling the truth within relationships. It was to my advantage that they possess great extroverted energy and a strikingly powerful sense of humor when leading groups. All these qualities meant that I benefitted greatly from their collaboration, bringing their rich ideas into dialogue and then print.

For other scholars or dancers contemplating a project of researching their own dance lineage, I wish to highlight the advantage of not only making interviews but also defining a common publication project, in which we “shared authority”—borrowing the adage from oral history scholar Michael Frisch—to bring life stories into print.¹² My teachers were curious about what the process of research would be and what form the final text representing these conversations would take; overall they seemed very open to what other dancers and dance scholars might draw from it all. I too valued exploring new terrain, having previously used

10 The authoritarian pedagogical legacy in Western stage dance remained strong even at the end of the twentieth century. Reviewing this theoretically and from sundry sources, see Lakes, “The Messages behind the Methods.”

11 My speakers did not initiate discussion of sex and sexuality in their private lives as important for telling their life stories in dance. While an interesting component of embodied history, I respected this boundary.

12 See Frisch, *A Shared Authority*.

biographical interviews only as background for semi-structured interviews about dancer expertise.¹³ Moreover, despite being close to my teachers, I had never taken the time to listen to their life stories at length—discussing, for example, childhood or wider topics such as aging and injury. Conversely, they did not know much about my past or my work as a dance scholar. Therefore, this project formalized and deepened our prior discussions. Not only a nice stroll “down memory lane,” our conversations involving mutual life review were heartfelt and probing intergenerational exchanges about bodily values, dance careers, dance history, and its protagonists.¹⁴

Aging, injury, and career inflection points are highlighted in these stories, told not to create hero myths but rather to reflect upon lived experiences of the dance profession and leave stories that younger generations of dancers might learn from. I was interested in these artists’ kinesthetic knowledge, honed by the multiple roles they have taken within the dance profession—aspects that also are often compartmentalized within our study of dance practices and history. I did not know what narrative techniques my narrators would use to link or signal ruptures and transitions between their life phases, nor which roles or themes they would foreground in their career narratives. Having selected two men and two women, three White artists and one Asian, I was curious how their gendered and racial identities would reflect different positions and perspectives as artists. I was also interested in their distinctions between personal and professional activities, and how their bodies might conflate or distinguish between the two. These matters are elaborated upon individually in Part II of this research, presented in the four body-biography chapters.

While teachers occupy a vitally important position in the dance field, contexts of dance education are still undercharted in dance history, in contrast to canonical choreographic works, authors (choreographers), stars, and techniques.¹⁵ This opportunity to reflect on dance history more from the perspective of day-to-day classroom studio practices and relationships underlying the networks of choreographic production interested me. As did, of course, the embodiment of these practices, for I believe, like dance oral history scholar Sanja Andus L’Hotellier,

13 I exploratively undertook two life story interviews while researching my PhD dissertation, but because of limited time with the dancers, chose other interview approaches more suited to my research questions. See Waterhouse, *Processing Choreography*, 38–41.

14 For discussion of life review, see Summerfield, “Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice,” 11.

15 Some exceptions to this include: Bales and Nettle-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic*; Diehl and Lampert, *Dance Techniques 2010: Tanzplan Germany*; Warren, *The Art of Teaching Ballet*. See also the oral history project on the Bennington Summer School 1978–1979 at the Columbia Center for Oral History. L’Hotellier, “The Bennington Summer School of the Dance Oral History Project, 1978–1979.”

that “recovering the sensibility of a dancer will offer a new perspective for a more intimate approach to dance history.”¹⁶

Without further ado, these protagonists are again (in order of appearance in this book): Christine Kono, an American dancer born in 1947 who worked in ballet, modern dance, and Tanztheater contexts; Marcus Schulkind, an American modern dancer and choreographer born in 1948; Hilary Cartwright, a British ballet dancer born in 1943; and Chris Lechner, a German dancer born in 1963, who transitioned from ballet to the contemporary dance field. Detailed introductions to their positions in dance history and seminal high points in their careers are provided in the opening pages of each of their individual body-biographies.

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The interdisciplinary framework that I develop in this research blends dance studies analysis and historiography with auto/biography studies, life story research, oral history, ethnographic methodology, and embodiment studies. The terminology I have used thus far in this introduction, such as “body-biographies,” “life stories,” “auto/biography,” “life review,” and “oral history,” will be unpacked thoroughly in Chapter 1. My methodological concerns regarding how this study designed the interviews and negotiated the ethics of cooperation and authorship of written representations of life story narratives are detailed in Chapter 2. The research questions motivating the project include: How can life story research be grounded, theorized, and adapted for the purpose of dance studies and dance historiography, particularly regarding the embodied dimensions of becoming and narrating a self? What are the specific benefits and challenges of body-biography as an approach to dance scholarship, and how do these build upon existing techniques of interviewing and life-writing? How might my observation skills as a dancer, as well as my reservoir of embodied skills and memories, enable me to sensitively and theoretically support dancers’ life story narratives and inscribe these in print? Can my autobiography, in pieces and fragments, become written through the lives of others, and can others’ life stories become written through our life review as *our* body-biographies?

Current dance studies research is newly attending to the potential of dancers’ autobiographies for dance historiography—considering sources written, performed, and spoken. This research is advancing how these personal testimonies might be more productively interwoven into dance studies scholarship. There is new attention to giving dancers’ voices greater prominence in historical accounts, while exploring the historian’s role in contextualizing and interpreting these positions.

16 L’Hotellier, 25.

Recent dance historiography has advanced new storytelling and self-reflexive writing techniques, involving the researcher's affective and critical encounters with sources, while engaging with theories of praxeology, intersectionality, postcolonialism, gender studies, and critical race theory to speculatively re-imagine and rewrite our understanding of the past. Recognizing the methodological potential for collaboration between dance artists and dance scholars, in his article "(Re)Making Dance History Together" (2022), dance historian Timmy De Laet imagines new processes of dance historiography, such as working in partnership with dance artists and their practice-based methodologies to write about the recent past.¹⁷ I will review these theoretical currents in the subsequent chapter, situating my own approach of cooperative life review within this exciting field of dance studies scholarship.¹⁸

My research of body-biographies explores how telling, dancing, and writing life stories are intertwined modes of self-formation and self-presentation—not uncovering an essential self but revealing processes that articulate self-understanding. Here I build upon dance scholar Christina Thurner's research into performative aspects of dancers' autobiographies under the umbrella of "autobiography as performance."¹⁹ I view dancers' life story narratives as forms of creative self-reflection. People rarely portray a static self. Rather, in their life stories they may expose the frictions, subversions, and inventive ways that we present ourselves for and with others: telling stories that rehash the past. Life stories, as I shall account for in Chapter 1, change over time—depending on the moment of telling and the imagined audience. For this reason, I favor the term "life stories" in the plural, rather than the singular form customary in academic usage. There is an "autobiographical promise," according to autobiography scholar Philippe Lejeune, by which the reader conventionally assumes a writer will tell a "true" story about his or her life.²⁰ Autobiographical imagination seems, especially for dancers, to entail self-exploration and empowerment, as well as imaginatively contesting narrative norms. To clarify this point, I do not view autobiographical testimony as the "real" history around which a work of art should be contextualized. Nor should autobiography be disregarded as fabulation: inaccurate and frequently self-aggrandizing. In other words, I understand dancers' autobiographies as a discourse in relation to other accounts of history and memory, in relation to other

17 De Laet, "(Re)Making Dance History Together. Working Towards a Collaborative Historiography of Dance."

18 These remarks I substantiate more fully with references in Chapter 1, in the subsection: "Auto_Bio_Graphy as Dance." Some key influences are: Carter, *Rethinking Dance History*; Eliot, *Dancing Lives*; Ruprecht, "Tanzhistoriografie"; Thurner, *Erinnerungen tanzen*.

19 Thurner, *Erinnerungen tanzen*, 20–24, 79–93. Translation by the author.

20 Initially called the "autobiographical pact" but subsequently revised. Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, 120–22. Missinne, "Autobiographical Pact."

artistic practices; in short, autobiographies are the fashioning and storying of embodied memories in a manner that is deeply revealing for historiography as well as other anthropological concerns regarding how persons, bodies, and meanings are mutually constituted and individual-collective.

Foregrounding reflection on dancing bodies—recording testimony on embodiment and examining interconnected bodies—is the intention of the concept that titles and begins this book: *body-biographies*. The body is well known as a vitally important but difficult register for study in the social sciences and humanities.²¹ In contrast to prior scholarship universalizing and objectifying “the body” as a material, the term “embodiment” is preferred by scholars who view bodies as singular-plural and epistemologically constitutive of personhood and subjectivity.²² While the testimony in this book will contribute further to this understanding, I decided not to call the book “embodied biographies.” This choice reflects that this relatively new term—growing more prominent in discourses especially since the 1990s—is foreign to many dance practitioners, especially dance elders; only Lechner used it during our interviews. In contrast to the scholarly concept of “embodied biographies” the term “body-biography” helped me to invite dance artists to share stories that illustrate how they have come to understand and labor with their bodies. The simpler title affirmed their authority on these matters. My dance teachers’ life stories present their own bodily terms and representations; they share aesthetic judgments about bodies in their cultural communities, while also discussing norms and experiences of discipline and power. As we shall see, my invitation allowed for the frictions, ambiguities, contradictions, and multiplicities of embodiment to be narrated: lived bodies, dancing bodies, teaching bodies, choreographed bodies, traveling bodies, aging bodies, as well as sick and injured bodies. These embodied matters are reflected upon in greater detail in Part II and the conclusion.

While dance scholars excel in this theoretical domain of describing and interpreting performing and dancing bodies, we too lament the challenges: our bodies’ ephemeral acts, the persistence of dualities and stereotypes, and bodies’ resistance to articulation and generalization.²³ Dance scholarship has written extensively on moving bodies, showing bodies’ socio-cultural, political, and

21 This literature is vast. Highlighting relevant texts that have impacted my view, from sociology, anthropology, and gender studies, see: Blackman, *The Body*; Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Mascia-Lees, *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*; Mol, *The Body Multiple*; Shilling, “Embodiment”; Williams and Bendelow, *The Lived Body*.

22 See Mascia-Lees, *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, 2.

23 Scholarly writing on dance that impacted my review includes: Dixon Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body*; Desmond, *Meaning in Motion*; Ness, “Being a Body in a Cultural Way”; Foster, *Corporealities*; Foster, “Dancing Bodies”; Foster, “Choreographing History.”

historical formations while contemplating their power and discursive resistance. Using emplaced life story interviews as a method to generatively and cooperatively produce life story narratives, within the freshly invented and named framework of body-biography, I opened an energetic space for learning dialogically about dancers' (em)bodied experiences. Body-biography jumps with alliteration into a *poiesis* of telling us about bodies. It proposes an explorative, experimental, effervescent, and cooperatively written biography, intimately reviewing bodily praxis.

This project was conceived to rethink how I have honed my own body and movement understanding as a dancer—to contribute this perspective to the field of dance studies. I hopefully make very clear through this research that I do not espouse “dance” or even “the body” as universal ideas, across space and history; quite the contrary: Dancing bodies are constructed and intersubjective cultural formations, involving organic (and as the example of hip prosthesis makes very evident, also inorganic) bodily materialities. Bodies are nexuses. Studying my cohort of teachers, I make my changing body—this living material sitting here, shaped by norms and transformed through practices, always acting and reacting, shifting between me-ness and other-ness—into a tool for inquiring about dance practices in the present and recent past. I was interested to use my biography as a litmus test to reflect on how embodied experience becomes a “source” for dance scholarship. This involved critically addressing the difficulties in homing in on embodied experience as a scholar—with my body and its registers as a test—showing what may be glossed over in narrative conventions for life stories and obscured by scholarly writing that omits attention to this micro-scale.

Conscientiously reaching out to a broad readership, this book is composed as a composite of different poetic and theoretical articulations—scholarly writing, edited life story interviews, movement descriptions, and my own life-writing. The order that I have chosen for the chapters focuses on the interdisciplinary theoretical foundations and methodology first (Part I), before examining my case studies of four dancers' lives (Part II). Artists and scholars from neighboring fields might read this book in reverse or nonlinearly: for example, by diving straight into a dancer's body-biography, then shifting back and forth between the neighboring theoretical materials and stories from my other protagonists. I imagine that doctoral students in dance studies might be drawn directly to the methods chapter of this book (Chapter 2); this section was written with my own seminars in mind, given the shortage of materials available for students that describe how dance interview research is conducted. At the start of each chapter, I provide orientation that should allow these different readerships to make their way through this volume, and at the end of each, I restate my conclusions in compact scholarly language. I follow conventions of academic writing throughout to expansively cite the diverse texts and other media that impacted my thinking: academic books, interviews, digital content on the internet, and documents or photographs that I have studied in

my teachers' personal archives. Footnotes also expound on the dance terminology and dance artists referenced in our conversations—recognizing that this embodied knowledge, circulating mouth-to-mouth or body-to-body, has not all been reflected in peer-reviewed dance scholarship.

The linear progression of this book is as follows: Part I develops the theoretical framework of my research. In “Chapter 1: Life Stories as Sources for Dance Scholarship,” I position this study within the broader discourse on “life story” and “auto/biography” research, as well as recent developments in “auto_bio_graphy” research in dance studies, clarifying my terms and exploring the potential and challenges of interpreting life stories as sources for the study of dance. In “Chapter 2: Body-Biographies: A Novel Methodology for Body-Reflexive and Participatory Dance Research” I critically examine the methodology invented for this embodied research of life stories, situating my approach in relation to other examples of interview research and publishing oral history. Between Part I and Part II of this book, I shift tone with the section “Interlude: Autobiographical Gestures.” This chapter sketches my own life stories and illuminates the troubles and themes of body-biography from a personal perspective.

Part II is composed of my case studies. The body-biographies of my teachers span: “Chapter 3: Christine Kono,” “Chapter 4: Marcus Schulkind,” “Chapter 5: Hilary Cartwright,” and “Chapter 6: Chris Lechner.” Alternating male and female narrators, and moving from two American to two European perspectives, these stories are introduced with materials substantiating our relationships and key narrative themes within the discussions. For the last chapter, “Conclusion: Writing Embodied History,” I return to a scholarly tone to reflect on how body-biographies devise a proactive and participatory approach to recording embodied history, creating sensual sources that enable dancers and dance scholars to rethink the past.

Lastly, I write this book at a time in which the global study of dance warrants careful framing of one's habitus and cultural framework. My writing reflects my perspective as a White, female, Italian-American dancer and dance scholar, working at the University of Bern and writing at the crossroads of German and English-speaking dance studies. My research focuses on a small case study of protagonists whose lives interlace with my own biography as a professional dancer that has lived and worked across major cities in America and Europe. My claims are predominantly explorative, not generalizing. By studying Western subjectivity and personhood via the contextualization of very personal stories, I examine how self-portrayal and narrative conventions are constructed in particular contexts of socio-cultural, historical, and aesthetic living bodies. This exploratory research cannot, however, speak for life stories for and by members of minorities; nor can this research yield refined arguments based on cross-cultural investigation. I sincerely hope for other scholars to augment and diversify what I have commenced in the way that my singular life and scholarly background could enable. I hope my efforts

to speak loudly, as a composite of five persons, will be understood as a vocal effort to encourage others to respond, not as seeking to dominate or to inappropriately generalize about dance identity.

Everyone has stories to tell about their lives and bodies. The scholarly value of these narratives is here put to the test for persons whose life stories commonly are given purpose, meaning, and continuity through dancing.