



# AT LARGE

*With Reasonable Doubt*





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## INTRODUCTION

*At Large With Reasonable Doubt: A Soliloquy En Masse*

To be **AT LARGE** is to be without limits; to ask oneself to step beyond the borders of one's own personal interests; to encourage one's artistic practice to spill over the edges of its own tidy definitions; to reach beyond the hermetics of a studio, a process, a group of collaborators, a milieu, a medium, a field, a city, or a country, and actively engage an expanse of thinking, doing, and being; to twist and fold multiple influences into a flexible but focused form of research and productivity, to push one's work open, to challenge one's own position in relation to what already is and what else can be done.

**AT LARGE** is a project that questions the position of dance in "the world at large" with a strong guard against generalization. In order not to simplify the word "dance" and in order not to globalize "*the world*", it has been important to specify the precise location and limits of each sphere, perspective, and frame that is assumed in the overall inclusiveness of such a project. Once the borders are defined, only then can we transgress them, observe where they are jagged or blurry, see where one slides into the other, choreograph the movement between them, and finally, become unstuck.

It is within these aims that the project **AT LARGE** was undertaken, and this book is a direct manifestation of one such attempt. In confronting ourselves with questions concerning the agency of taking a position in the field of dance and what that position is on a larger map of interlocking and concentric spheres, it follows that we share our questions with others and take their views into account.

The danger in making a work of dance about dance is self-reference. Rather than collapsing upon introspection or resigning to the comforts of what one knows so well, it has been important to identify the many pores through which the work can be shared and intersected by others. The collaborating artists are co-authors of the piece, our movement research has been often infiltrated by visiting participants, our invented social dance fad (called *Scratching*) is available for learning and viewing on [www.youtube.com/atlarger](http://www.youtube.com/atlarger), and in this book you will meet our dramaturges.

The sphere that is engaged in the following pages is that of the individual within the sphere of “contemporary dance”, via interviews with dancers and choreographers in two contemporary dance capitals: Brussels and New York. Alone in a room with a video camera, the interviewees address the objective lens as a stand-in for the gaze of a yet-unknown public. By removing the role of the interviewer, the dialogue is compressed into a soliloquy directed by one’s own associations, connections, desires, and interests. In the privacy of their own thoughts, to whom do the interviewees answer? Literally, nobody and everybody at the same time, the breadth of the potential audience forcing the precision of a perspective.

This mode of interviewing has been chosen in order to push the individuation of the speakers and capture the particularity of each in an utterly contemporary fashion. From Reality TV to YouTube testimonials, today the video confessional is a familiar, accessible, and performative form of self-expression. The setup of this virtual stage is an augmentation of the stage as we know it in the theater: a space for the delivery of statements or expressions by individuals to an anonymous and unpredictable group known as the audience. The videotaped interviews have thereby served as a platform for each interviewee to unravel his or her individually specific reasons for participating in the medium we all call dance, however diverse the definitions of that word may or may not be, and however

different or similar the answers to these questions are. In order not to create consensus, and in order not to fall back upon “common knowledge”, the solitude of the interviewees was a must.

Although not linked to their direct quotes, the participating interviewees are all mentioned in the credits at the back of the book. Extracting the names from the text is a choice to emphasize the content of the statements over the reader’s recognition of, assessment of, or curiosity towards the people delivering them. The overall process seeks subjectivity in order to highlight subjectivity as such, above and beyond it’s mere subjects.

Why a book at all? As one of the interviewees said, “*If there is something you need to say, then say it. If there is something you need to dance, then dance it.*” In the name of media-specificity, *At Large With Reasonable Doubt* creates a space for discourse in which to expose the motives that shape the dances people make and the opinions that define the contexts in which they are made and seen.

In unearthing the very basic questions that structured the interviews and structure this book, we hope to bring forth that which is normally unspoken and to make productive all that which is too personal or explanatory, too big and insurmountable, too implicit or assumed for the stage or for conversation between peers. Such questions operate invisibly in both of those contexts, and the answers to them define our field and our artistic practices. In making these tropes visible and by weaving several perspectives together, the aim is to create movement between them, to wiggle loose fixed meanings, to reason with doubt, and to allow for you, the reader, to take part in this reflection.

AT LARGE includes you.

*Eleanor Bauer*



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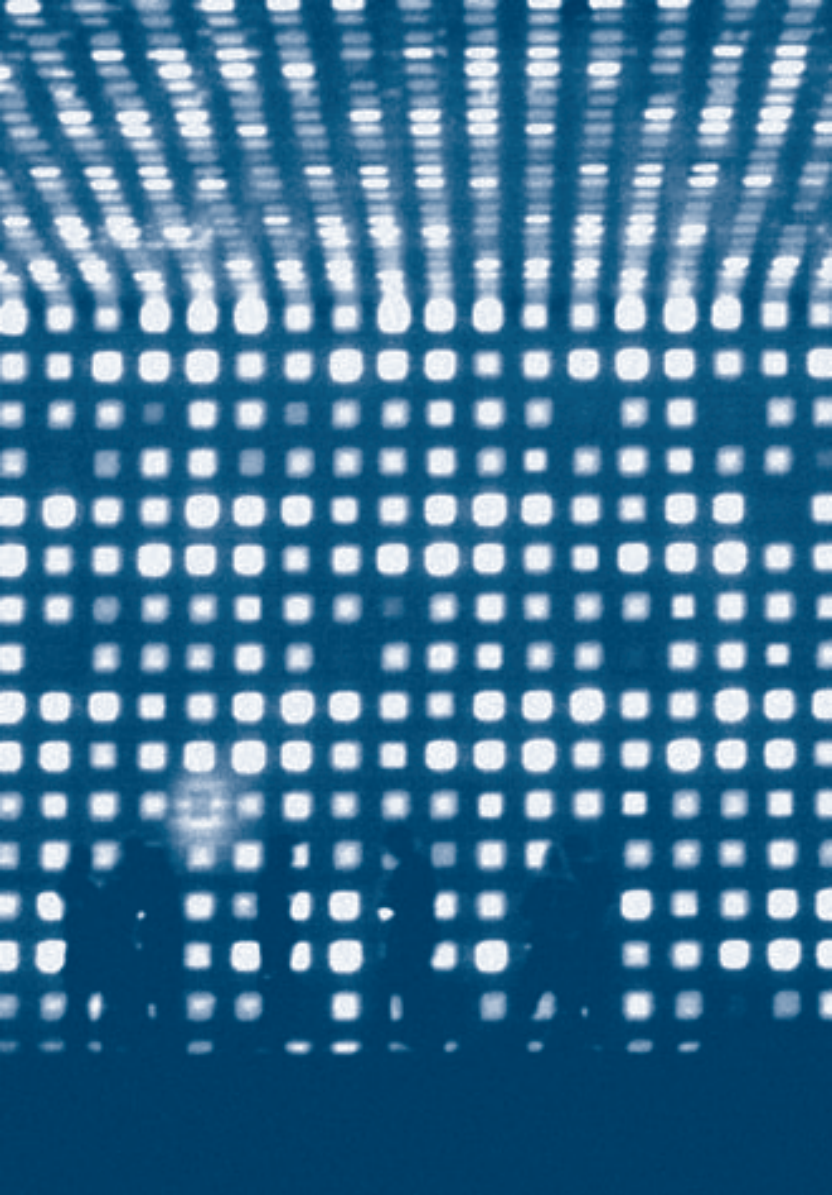
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1

# WHY DO YOU DANCE?

I wrote this sentence in an artist statement recently that said that I dance because my only consistent reference point in my life is my body. I don't know if that's totally true. That sounds very poetic. Sometimes I think the reason why I dance is not that poetic and it's more like, I dance because I started dancing when I was three and because I kept dancing, and it's become a — I almost said it's become a condition. I think it's more appropriate than saying I've become conditioned to it. It's a condition I have now.

And actually I don't really dance, which — There's a lot of information there for me. But I make dances that sometimes move around. Dance is less of a practice in my life and more of an idea. I don't mean to belittle that. It's real. It's definitely a real thing, it's just that what it is shifts around for me.

Maybe I can answer first why do I do contemporary dance. Why do I participate in the contemporary dance world? I started dancing quite young, with very formal training in classical Ballet. When I was seventeen I had a knee injury that required surgery. I didn't think I was going to dance anymore. As part of my rehabilitation I started doing ballet barre and class again, but then I realized that I wasn't as attracted to this fantastical world of perfection. After having endured such a significant injury I didn't feel perfect any more and in the Ballet world it's all about striving to be perfect. So I started to go see other kinds of dance and I saw that it was encompassing a broader field of emotions, experiences, and specifically interests. So that is why I got into contemporary dance. The reason I continue to dance is that I see dance and choreography as fluid terms that can apply to many different forms of creation and experience, and at this point it seems to be the best medium for what I want to accomplish artistically, mostly due to its fluidity and openness.

It's a great domain for exploration, attention, finding edges to cross, to fall off of. To create spaces, to discover spaces, to inhabit

spaces. Then there is the tradition of dancing to music, and sound and space are inseparable. When you enter a space you instantly integrate its acoustic qualities so you recognize it. At the same time of course it's always a strange experience because you hear echoes and reverb and it's the echo of the sound you make yourself so the space is reflecting back your activity and deforming it. So it's about going into the other. The stranger.

I can define a period when I was dancing for my parents; they were my audience. I was very happy when they'd see my shows at school. When I was around 20, I went to the *conservatoire superieur* to become a professional dancer, it was a period when I was dancing for men. The seductive aspect was quite present. And then that dropped and now I would say that I dance for an audience who knows about dance, who has a certain background in dance. So it's less seductive of course. My desire to dance changed quite a lot in function of for whom I was doing it - for the audience actually. So in the first period my parents, second period men, and now for a dance audience.

I think I don't even question it anymore. I can't imagine doing anything else for the moment (as much as I wait for something else to bite me in the ass and tell me that this is what I should be doing instead). I was always moving around. Since I first heard music I've been wiggling around to it. I remember knowing there was something called dance when I was four and I saw it on children's BBC Television, on an episode of Blue Peter. They had special guests, Balinese dancers, with long gold fingernails on with the turn-up. That was my first dance form, but just in the living room at that point. I was dancing what I called then "finger dance", which was lots of fingers and eyes. I remember frustrating everyone with all my hopping and jumping around. So I guess I don't really have a choice, but I still love it. And I wonder how much of it has to do with performing and how much it has to do with making, and if it was a class would it be as interesting. I like the idea of building

something, so I don't know if later in life I will be happy just doing step aerobics. I'm not sure. I love being part of a creative process and I love the fact that we know when things are right. Actually, the most beautiful thing about dance is concrete ambiguity. When you know that you can't pin something down, but it is a thing. There's something about learning to express things that are so, not necessarily *unexpressable*, but the beauty of it being so un-wordy.

I feel like dancing coordinates experience. It coordinates design, language, relationship to other people and relationships to culture, like how gestures mean something to me because of how I see people move on the street or at a party, or just people moving. What I really like about dancing is that it makes me feel coordinated, with abstract things and with people.

I dance to reconfigure my mind. I want to think that it might be possible to change, that I will change the way I perceive things, the way I listen to other people, change the way I perceive reality and also the way I treat information that I see. Maybe it's possible that I experience some kind of joy in the acknowledgment that I can change. It's also very much connected to my physical envelope. I need to dance because I feel this need to change my organization. I know it's very hard not to look for a specific shape, but at the same time I would like to think that it's possible to change the way thought processes lead to action and decision.

For a long time I had questions about if I'm really interested in *dance* or if it's something else, which is more about using the stage, what it is to perform, dealing with expression in a bigger sense, composing expressions, going in and out of sense and making new senses, twisting meanings. What keeps me dancing or interested in dance as movement research and pure physicality is that it's like a super-theater, and I'm very much into theatricality and how to create fictions. I'm interested in the mechanism of production of scenes and look-alike's.

Things that look like something that they are not, how to generate resemblance. Dance is a super-theater because it goes beyond what you can express with theater. In theater you use words, you use also physicality, but in the service of a text or in service of some kind of legible expression. In dance you can do just as much, but you can also go in-between. Between what makes sense you can create in-between expressions, things that are not legible, that you cannot say what they are but they're something that expresses something and it's almost concrete but you don't know where to place it. In that sense I like the possibilities of fictions you can make through physicality. My interest in dance is pretty much knowing how to articulate. The more you can divide, the more you can assemble in different ways. So the more you know how to use your body, the more possibility you have in your hands to generate a very broad physicality and "expressivity", not in the sense of self-expression but the possibility of *expressing* - no matter what you express. And it's that which I find very interesting: expressivity which is not understandable and for which you have to open new doors in order to make sense.

I like to specialize, I suppose, so that's why I still continue dancing, I like to make a science out of something.

I'm fascinated by the body; I want to get to know the body, mine and others'. I want to explore the possibilities of the body which are enormous. It's not necessarily about limits but rather about options. I think that the body and the mind, your soul or feelings, are linked together and they influence each other strongly. Working on the body obviously increases your mental awareness of yourself but also of your surroundings. When I speak about soul or feeling, I mean that still today I can get a big satisfaction from moving. I think that's where it started, where I started to dance. It was definitely from satisfaction of movement and then there was a snowball effect and I got more into the intellectual understanding or scanning of the body.

There's something about the exertion of energy, the motion and force that lets things come out of my body that wouldn't otherwise necessarily. I'm not particularly vocal, but I have a lot inside that needs to get out. And I'm also really interested in the articulation of the body and the articulation of an understanding of the bones and muscles and finding systems within which the body can function because I think it's really beautiful. It's interesting to look at the way in which emotions can effect the body and influence the way that it sees the world and the world sees it. Being a dancer you are giving yourself the space to drop in to the body, to really see all those things. You can access that with Yoga or different kinds of body work, but I think dance is a form in which you're seen and there's something important about being seen.

For me it is some kind of fantasy of existence of life. Becoming a dancer was a way to give a body to my life, because I was very ghostly, as if I was not really existing. So dance was also, maybe unconsciously, an attempt to create a physical body — or to *give* body, because in French you say *donner corps* — to give body to something, an idea, and it was, I think, giving body to myself, asserting myself, my physical self or my essential self, asserting that I was somebody and that I had a body and a sensuality that I could express with it.

I'm fascinated by movement and what movement can tell, so dance as a way of communicating I guess. I feel comfortable when I dance. It feels like that's the right place for me — onstage also — to be saying something with movement and to be with a group of people that share the same thing. Also when I'm dancing, it feels like I'm in a different dimension. It shifts from reality into something ideal, an ideal world where you are busy speaking, making things happen, doing things together. With someone else, you have a suspension together, you agree about things, about so many different rules, about music, about space, which is magic. It doesn't happen so much in the world that you agree about stuff, and that you show it to

other people being able to say "*This is what we made for you and we agreed on this*". It's very pleasing, very consoling. It feels necessary ... although that's a bit scary because it's going to stop soon.

Right now, very much like at the beginning, I have a very strong urge to continue moving. It's hard to say this, but it goes beyond myself. Sometimes I have to do it. I don't know if that's just a result of practicing everyday through many years, more than twenty-seven years now, almost thirty years, because the body has appropriated the exercise of moving for fun or for expressing ideas. But still I *have* to do it. At the same time, I have to do it more consciously and playfully. It's almost as if when I started I was forty years old, and now I am fifteen years old. The playfulness of it has shifted. I have created a universe for myself where I can play with many things, movement-wise, dynamics, colors, rhythms, and that playfulness has become infinite: it goes forever and I just continue in it, and it's very joyful, so, yes, that's why I dance.

I started dancing very early, with gymnastics. I could stretch my body quite easily, I could do extraordinary things, extending, jumping. So it started from an attraction to being fantastical.

When I started I didn't ask myself why. It was about enjoying being active, pushing the limits, being very determined in doing something and liking the challenge of dancing. I used to do Ballet which is very demanding for the body and in a way restraining for the body but it didn't feel like that. I liked the form that it made me take at that time, and the kind of attitude that it would bring, and of course dancing to the music, but the main reason I think was to push my body towards a limit, to a point I would not normally go, and to like not being natural. In classical dance you deal with pain and I enjoyed the pain of going further with myself than I thought, or than what the others thought. I don't know if it's just in classical dance but there is something very individualistic in placing yourself

towards the others. So there was competition with others and with myself. In a way not very pleasurable but still pleasurable to these limits, and in pain. But I stopped doing that and now I don't dance so much anymore, or not in the same way. I do still dance somehow, and I dance a lot in parties, but there it's more about making a fool of myself, which is very enjoyable. In being related to my body, dancing brought me to the point of having pleasure or awareness of my body in my life. Through all these experiences of straining my body and extending the relation and awareness I have with it, it's become a more general focus towards the body, an interest in the body and what it means. It's no longer on a sensation level, I'm not dancing to feel things. I'm reflecting on what my body is doing. It shifted more to an outside thing than an inner thing.

I might start dancing again. And the reason I might start again is that I'm not satisfied by the other physical activity that I can do. I'm a scholar now and I sit all day. I usually run in the morning and do Tai Chi but I miss the sense of articulate knowledge, and the pleasure of that. I miss how strong I feel when I'm dancing. So I plan to return probably to Contact Improvisation or maybe even Ballet class, I kind of want to extend out my body. At a certain point I was trying many things and dance started working. I was good at juggling also, I could juggle with three balls. I tried acting and it didn't work, but with dancing it was working, so I'm dancing because it *works* for me. I feel natural in it.

Professionally speaking, I dance because it's a cool profession: you come together, you think about the dance you wanna make, you go into the studio, you put on your training clothes, and you try it. You try to make that dance. And then you shower. It's great. It's a great job.

There are 2 different things: I dance for myself and I dance as a job. I could quit and be doing something else with my life and I think I would still continue to dance, but more for a personal purpose or

some kind of "therapeutic" dance. Because dance is great just to get in touch with your body, your sensations. Very concretely it can help to treat yourself when you're sick or just to be able to notice that something is wrong or right.

It attracted me because it is a place where I could be myself on my own terms. There was a sense of freedom to that and also a sense of freedom, oddly enough, from critique. Even though the field ends up being about critique all the time, that's initially what drew me to it. I could express myself in that form. I found a sense of calm through it, a sense of grounding, a sense of freedom, a sense of joy. Dance allowed me to express my imagination from a place that I felt could be more than wholesome.

From the first time I was introduced to Salsa or the steps of people on television like James Brown and Michael Jackson, I wanted to move and especially to dance in specific rhythms. I went for it, but I never thought to be a professional dancer. The plan was to become a mathematician. I was really good in mathematics. But through the years, the desire for dancing grew stronger until I realized I was spending 75% of my day dancing. So I was questioning and all my friends were questioning, "*Why don't you just go for dancing in your life because you are dancing all the time?*" First it was just following the rhythms of the music, very playful. Then I would go and make my sounds and explore becoming cartoon characters. The roadrunner was quite influential. Then something very strong got me around twenty-one. Something inside of me wanted to break through with moving. Whenever I was on the beach I wanted to move. Whenever I was alone in some place I wanted to move. Not only following the steps that I have copied myself from Salsa to Pop or whatever, disco, but just to, just move. But at the same time, I was at the age of doing it as a realization to become myself, to get to know myself deeper, to get to know more about how I can be in society, physically manifested. So that became very strong around twenty-one, twenty-two.

Then through teaching and the questions from students, and through performances, especially working with such spontaneous performances, my reasons for dancing start to change through the decades.

I try to be intuitive, and I like the way that intuition feels in my body. Like off-the-cuff dancing, or when you suddenly feel like it, or when you get the score from the choreographer and it's two words, like "*crumble ... slowly*". It just feels good.

I like to do and to see things happen that say something especially. I like art that's really visceral or music that grabs you and is like *grrr*. I like to see a dancer or a performance that pulls you into it and you can sync up with whatever is going on in it. I think that taps in to something about being a human that is really important.

The question is more about what it is to be human, how to relate to other people, how to touch other people through dance and performance. The use of my body and the energy allows me to communicate with people in ways that I otherwise can't, to share things with people, and allows me to become vulnerable.

I have a great sense of freedom when I'm dancing. I'm not nervous to express myself that way. I tried to make a dance actually about this. The last dance I tried to make was about the body as a cage or as some sort of cell, personal prison. Something that contains a truth or darkness, things that are scary or private. But I failed in doing that because when I start dancing it's the opposite of that, I feel freedom from it, and that feels good.

What kind of question is this? I dance because I like it, and for nothing else. It's easy to be onstage while dancing, easier than theater for me. And it's fun. It's fun to expose your body and by exposing your body to expose yourself. In dance you have those

movements where every movement is total. In theater you play a role so you reduce yourself. In dance you don't need to reduce yourself. The total quantity of your cells, the full weight, all the instruments of your body are 100 percent present and fully exposed and that's nice. Dance is a little bit like cumming. Not like masturbation, but a constant to come, fully being there, even when you do little you are fully present. Except with language: language is related to reasoning and intelligence. You can be very present as a sense object in language, but dance is pure pleasure. Pure pure pleasure.

It's maybe because I'm a sloppy dancer that I don't have the pain that dancers have. I improvise. I mostly cannot repeat. So therefore it's also freedom. I'm free, but don't imagine these free expressions of happiness, that's not what I mean. Dancing has a lot to do with being in a state of potentiality, so there's a lot possible. Even when you do a set choreography, the way that you are onstage still has what I call fullness, a total presence in space and time. With dance your full being-body is present and that's fun. You can give a lot in dance. It's very nice to give, and to share. You don't give a specific thing, you give the whole, the total. I don't mean that you give you. It's not about expressing *yourself*. It's being in a state of being touchable. Touching and being able to be touched, by the eyes of others, or whatever else.

As a child I had a very dislocated relationship to my own physicality and started dancing kind of by accident. I wanted to do musical theater, so I thought, "*Oh, I have to learn how to dance*"; and in that process realized, "*Oh, I'm good at this, and I have a relationship to my body which is probably the most prominent it's ever been, and for the first time in my life really positive and empowering*". It was not necessarily understood in *those* terms at that time, but I still feel like there's something in that, something about the transformative power of its physical experience that remains. It serves as a space in which things of a certain level can occur. I've always felt like there's a kind of concentration in dancing that I don't experience elsewhere in my life, where

the physical body, the emotional self and the intellect are all engaged in an interconnected fashion. I would even say that's what's most particular about performing. There's a concentration that perhaps I don't find elsewhere and that keeps me connected to it.

In performing especially there's something really addictive. Or at least it catches you and you feel like you have to do it again and again, and it's never fully satisfying. You build a logic of your life around it. That's what I've done in my life. I guess everyone has something that happens at a certain point in their life, where they say, "*OK, this is the thing that organizes my goals, dreams, aspirations etc.*", and that was the thing for me but it wasn't the only thing. It went back and forth between other things but somehow it kept on coming back to performance, performing, being on stage, doing performance events. With performance I found that I could bring all the things that I deal with — intellectually, emotionally, artistically, culturally — into dance, movement, choreography. It felt like this thing that could always include what was going on with me, what I wanted to say and do and react to. I don't have the opportunity right now to perform or to dance every day and it's very easy in our culture, you don't have to dance. You can do a million things which don't involve your body ever and it's perfectly fine. So I'm dealing with all kinds of other aspects of projects, but not getting myself into a daily practice. I realise now, after about a half a year of that, it drives me crazy. It's a little bit difficult to make the kind of life where I can breathe. Dance is like air, or a branch, whatever.

It feeds me all of that good basic stuff that helps to be a more full version of myself.

It's an escape. I hate to admit it but it is. It allows me to escape the everyday craziness of the shit that we have to deal with all day long. So I dance to escape and I dance because I love the way it feels to move my body in ways it's never moved before.

What drew me into dance was the physicality, the sweat of it, to express myself through pure physicality. I started off in theater and acting. I got involved in street theater and alternative acting, improvisation, and I sort of wandered my way into dance classes starting with improv. I got seduced into the whole muscularity of throwing my body into it. The dances I made for like twenty years were very physical, sort of high-impact in a lot of instances. I am 56 now and I can't do those things to the degree which I used to do and I haven't found a way of transitioning. Everything I tried, like setting work on other companies or dancers felt kind of hollow to me. I felt like I couldn't make that translation happen. I like teaching, teaching is sort of my dance now, in the idea of creativity, to have people find their own path and not be copies of me.

I had a mentor when I was very young, Jimmy Waring. I met him when I was still in college. He showed me that there really was an important relationship amongst all of the arts and that this relationship could potentially be electrically charged and truly powerful. He also made it clear that dance was an activity that was *smart* and could be engaging on every level. That was also the time when I discovered experimental dance, experimental art, experimental music, experimental theater and all of these things have meant a great deal to me.

Dance is not my primary thing anymore, but I think that in the moments of dancing, that's the time I know who I am the most and that's what I felt throughout my career: that it was dancing that made me very clear about who I was and who I am. And I think that's why I stay attached to it and involved in it.

Simply, dance, dancing and making dances are so much who I am. That's what I *do*. On an immediate level, dancing gives me enormous physical pleasure. I rarely make dances that look very dancey but I still really like moving in those ways and so I still love to go

to class. I take different kinds of classes, some are more contemplative than others, some are more purely physical in a big way and I love both of them. I'm trying to figure out how to say this, but, there are some times that dance is a kind of meditation for me, there are times when I think of dance as something I do to go inside of myself, and there are times when it's something I do to go out of myself, which I recognize is completely impossible in the sense that always, there you are, so completely, mind and body.

It's the most natural, most objective, most subjective way to relate to the world; to communicate things that I care about. It's the best way to feel together and to feel alone. It's working with the tool that is most individual: my body, my bones, my flesh, my blood, and my thoughts, my feelings, my spiritual aspirations, which are closest to me, are the most similar to other people's, and the most different.

This is hard for me to say but it's probably the most honest: I think I dance so I can know something of God, and I don't mean a manifestation of some super being but in terms of a divine non-verbal relationship that's constantly swirling around us. Dance being the most synthesized expression of my relationship to environment, my body's relationship to environment, to space-time. To understand my consciousness in relationship to things and passing through them, moving from one moment to the next, the catharsis of relationship, being in relationship to people and music and a car that passes by you: I think that is why I dance. To understand the world around me and the world that I'm swirling through.

The way I think about these questions is that as soon the question is asked I automatically think about all these other questions, and the questions underneath the questions, so it gets complicated. Like for instance right now I feel like because I am talking to a camera, that I'm performing, which makes me think about why I wanted

to do this. Why am I performing? I'm performing right now. I'm dancing right now. So why am I doing it? The question underneath that is: Why have action rather than inaction? Well, that's because I prefer action than inaction most of the time. Maybe because action signifies life and inaction is death. And then why do I prefer life over death? That sounds obvious but I just do.



2

WHY DO YOU MAKE DANCES?

I am interested in the voices let's say. When someone is moving, what's going on inside. Or what's the thought of a person, what he's thinking while he's moving. So I started doing my own choreography because of this interest in having a person in front of me thinking of something, and the ambiguity between a moving body and a thinking body.

I make dances to make something in which people can be fully present. In making, you also *discuss* dance. I make dances because I want to rethink the *dispositif*, the use of dance, the thinking about movement, what is movement, what can be movement. Movement can also be a thought. Thinking is moving, language has a lot of movement, where does the movement happen, visibly and invisibly, those are nice things to think about. And then the whole question of presenting and representing, seducing or not seducing, to use dance as a discourse, all of these discussions are very interesting. To work with this specific material of the abstractness of dance but also to be as concrete as possible means to have a concreteness in abstractness. This has enough difficulties and enough problems to have fun to work on.

It's the thing that most tangibly ties together a lot of abstract questions. I think about certain concepts and ideas because I am living them, and then I come up with other concepts and ideas based on those and I apply them to the work. The work is like a meta-model, a staging ground where you can try things out with the way you think and feel about concepts and ideas.

With dancing being something you do for your own body, it's very related to yourself, whereas choreography is much more related to the relationship between bodies, the construction of movement, the meaning production that movement contains and how this can communicate things in the world. So I make choreography because of this capacity. I am interested in the field of performance

for several reasons. As a medium I find it extremely complex in how it deals with time and duration which is something very different from visual art. I'm also very busy with connecting to cinema for example, but also to visual art, sculpture and so on. For me that has more to do with thinking about art production in general and how these fields are actually interrelated. What it's basically about is to produce content, to speak about something.

I am an artist who has chosen this form as my primary form though I've always also considered myself to be a writer, and my dancing and writing have a great deal to do with each other. That became more of an important circumstance for me when I went to graduate school and completed a doctorate that allowed me the opportunity to really focus on meaning-making in dancing and writing, and bringing those together is very important for me, whether or not a dance actually involves eventually having an actual text, though many of mine do. I did actually have a crisis when I was in college about whether I was going to move primarily towards visual arts or towards dance, and I went towards dance. That's still largely the way I approach art making: the mix of dance and visual arts, of ideas in the visual arts, visual art history, and dance history. The meaning-making of visual arts, writing and dance, these are all important to me as ways to generate dance material and to experience dance material, as a dancer and as a viewer.

I still make dances because I need to be making something and I'm familiar with the language of dance in a way that lets me be serious about making things, serious with myself in that process. It would be more difficult for me to try to make things in another medium because I don't have that experience. My answers to these first few questions are depressing me because I feel like I just keep saying that dance itself is sort of irrelevant, replaceable, or coincidental as my medium of choice. But I also believe in images. I don't think I would want to be a writer; there's something important about

dance being a mostly non-verbal form of communication. I like the interplay of making something that can be un-nameable in verbal language, and yet specific so that it is accessing language. And I don't think of it as a universal language, but there is agreement or understanding among multiple people that can have a specificity without it always being a nameable thing.

I make dances to articulate the ideas that I have in my mind and my muscles. It's the place where I bring theory and thoughts and visceral, sensual, experience and aesthetics together. I recognize that sounds very general. What makes it not be general is that what those things are over time have really changed. There were times when it was really important to me to work purely with movement. Over the years I've become more interested in the way that ideas permeate movement. Sometimes it's an idea that prompts me to begin a dance. And even though I very often don't go in the direction that my initial material first prompts me, there is a thread that continues.

The idea of process has always been at the bottom of what intrigues me and keeps me captivated — the fact that every day I come in and there's a little more work to do and that it's never fully achieved and never perfect. The steps are tiny and incremental but profound. In working on yourself as a dancer you're working on yourself as a human being and you feel these little shifts. I feel the same way about choreography: there are always problems to solve. For me the work is always about people, even though I'm working with classical ballet to a large degree and extending that idiom to contemporary dance/contemporary ballet, I want it to be about real people. I want it to be about emotions that are tangible, about experiences we all have. So I think that I'm pushed to make work because it's something about our lives and I think I'm pushed to make work in the Ballet idiom because of the challenge and difficulty and rigor of the actual technique. I feel there's something about the pointe shoe

that is confining and difficult. Rather than trying to make it always be a beautiful thing, I'm exploring how it can give life to the human situation. There's fragility in standing on that little tiny surface, also something kind of hard and not mobile about the pointe shoe. All those things interest me and I make dances because I am compelled to: as soon as one is finished, I have an idea about another, and I need to get back in the studio. When I'm in the studio with wonderful dancers who are open and intelligent and interested in working with me, I feel the most full in my life.

More and more often I think to myself, maybe instead of just saying I make dances, I say I make art. When I make art, anything can happen, it doesn't have to be just dance. I can do anything with my body, combined with an object or a computer, it can be anything. Maybe I'm not even in it. Maybe it's choreography or dance for a machine of some kind. It's hard to get behind dances, behind entertainment. It's hard to imagine dance as something that's not purely illustrative of some concept, but that's actually engaging in my life or in the audience watching me or watching my piece. When I mean illustrative I mean showing something that you could actually just talk about and I think that's a problem with a lot of art in general. It's hard to find a real use for it, without it being ego-art or utilitarian.

I work with different elements: I have the sound element, the visual element and the actual physical element which are all called the dance. So the question maybe isn't "*Why do I create?*" which is a huge question, but "*Why do I include dance in my creation?*" Because in dance, the only instrument is the self, not even the human body but the self. The human body is the self so somehow to be a human and to dance is connected because the basic element of dance is the human. Certain types of theater are similar in that way. That's why I include dance in what I do: because I believe in the power and beauty of the human and the self.

The act of organizing space and time — that's basically what a choreography is — when you are involved in that very action, it's the thing that allows you to be as individual and universal as possible. To work according to the laws that govern a notion of unity in nature. It's also the fact of relating heaven's verticality, heaven's energy, heaven's horizontality, or energy. To exercise yourself in it according to those laws which manifest themselves in nature: that's what dancing and making is about. Sort of abstracting the fact that I'm gonna die. Because dancing is about the mortality of the body and about dust.

I think that when you let things come out of yourself, they mean something. In the same way that there's a subconscious emotionality to the movement of the body and what is stored in the body, there's also a subconscious creative force that makes things necessary to come out, and there are different ways in which you can organize them, focus on them, obsess about them. Right now the dances I make are kind of ridiculous. They more have to do with taking working so seriously and then just letting it be fun and pointless. But it's *not* pointless. Living where I do, in New York City, I'm really stressed and freaked out all the time, worrying about this and that, about money and being on time, I do a hundred-thousand things and I just want to make some shit that is entertaining. I'm working on this centaur fantasy death metal popperetta with my friend Katy Pyle and it's all very serious and it comes from a very real place but it's also completely ridiculous. I relate to the fantasy world. Growing up in the eighties I was into *The Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal* and unicorns, playing *Zelda* in this total fantasy world. In a way, dance and performance exist in that world. Not necessarily, but there's a reason you go to see stuff. It puts you somewhere that isn't in your everyday existence, and I'm torn about whether dance is the thing I want to be making, but I don't consider myself a choreographer so I guess I'm not really making dance.

Why I make dance is a complicated question because it's actually why I make artwork, and why that artwork is dance, *if* it is dance, *when* it is dance. To me, making artwork is just how I manage to keep connected to the act of living. That sounds very romantic, but I think there's a lot of truth to that. I think that I probably have a certain amount of Nihilism, for lack of a better word, and making work for whatever reason keeps that tempered. It doesn't give meaning in a definitive kind of way, but it does engage a certain kind of relationship to life that is pretty important to me. Honestly I feel like part of making work is about keeping my own sanity. That's curious because there's another side to it. Making work is so hard in the world as it's structured now (and probably always was for different reasons, I don't think that's unique to this moment at all). Making creative work is hard because you have to go into the place of not-knowing and kind of sit there, and that can be really overwhelming, or at least it can be very overwhelming for me, and I've often thought that's a funny kind of oxymoronic aspect of my personality, that I'm somebody who really craves knowing and gets enormous satisfaction out of things like numbers that are correct and yet ... I was very talented in math as a kid, but became *really* interested in math when I realized that you can get to a level where numbers stop having that definitive quality. So it's ironic that I am spending my living really devoted to this form that resists a definitive declamatory stance. Art is really not about that, and dancing in particular is not about that. In relationship to dance, physical experience or some kind of connected relationship to experience is something that is perhaps slipping away in some way from our culture as it becomes more and more concerned with image, so it's interesting how dance has this visual aspect but also has an aspect that's really, very much for me about experience. And so much that it's resistant to actually existing in the world beyond the moment that it's being experienced, because once it's not being done, it doesn't actually exist. Very different than plastic arts that exist whether they're being experienced or not. There's something about that ambivalence

that's a really frustrating aspect of this form and one that draws me back to it.

The body allows for a certain kind of questioning. It's in-between the outer connection of how people relate to their own bodies, what they see in the bodies of others, and what you feel of your own. It creates a connection that brings us certain thoughts, and maybe that's somehow a way to reflect in-between an inner feeling and these outside feelings of how I see people and how I can see myself from the outside. And this is why I use the body to do things or to say things, [*look at camera, look down, smile*] if I might say that I *say things*.

I don't know if I make dances, I mean I guess I'm making a dance right now and how I'm organizing my speech and my thinking in relationship to what I'm trying to express, in relationship to these questions, but I don't really make dance phrases and I don't really like making dance phrases. I find too much objectivity in setting a piece of movement material. So I guess what I'm interested in making are works that have a framework around a specific process or a specific series of relationships, improvisational scores in relationship to environment. I guess I make dances because these things I make, the work I choose to engage with, I engage in for stimulation of myself in relationship to whatever I'm relating to. Sometimes I wonder if what I'm interested in making is dances and yet other times it seems like that's the absolute best categorical term which can describe what I feel like I've been pursuing for a long period of time in my life.

As a maker the reason why I call what I do "dance" is that it's dealing with space. Over time I've accumulated quite a lot of information on how people perceive space as a metaphor in the work they make and all the different ways that people use this word *space*. Recently I've come back to a word that I like from the times when I

was studying mathematics theory, which is the word *topology*, which is a branch of mathematics that deals with space without any measurement, without necessarily adding concepts of silence. How can you say *shape*, as we generally deal with it in every day life, *shape*, as in square or round or angled, that's topology. So I like the word topology because it's so general. It deals with questions, for instance, like orientability. Probably you know the Mobius Strip. We call that a topological space in mathematics, one that no longer has a front and a back, so that it's actually impossible to re-orientate. So you come up with spaces which have unexpected properties and it's the kind of twisted little things that I like to use as metaphors to take away the ground underneath people's feet and make them realize that they can explore much further than they thought they could.

I feel this urge to organise my research, to let my ongoing research crystalize at some point. To organise everything that I'm interested in, maybe not everything, but to organize things that I'm interested in into some thing that that feels like a medium in order to communicate with people. I think I make in order to show. I make in order to show or to communicate something that's on my mind that otherwise maybe would never be put forward into the world.

I love to bring my personal point of view onstage about what I think of movement besides the established dance steps that we all have learned, including myself. I didn't study so much a specific style or technique, but I followed very closely the steps of Salsa, in the discos, the pop steps from street dance, the folkloric steps from Venezuela, and then from there I developed my own way, which is an exercise almost like a political statement. I want to really present *my* approach on a stage. For the public, which includes my students or fellow professional dancers, to see that there is another possibility. There's not only a *few* possibilities but there are more than that. When we all go for what we love to do, and how we love to move, we will always present a new possibility for movement onstage.

The making of dances involving other people, other dancers, is for me very exciting because of how I have approached it (and have learned also from my teachers and the choreographers who I have worked with, like Simone Forti and Pooh Kaye). Allowing the inputs of the dancers that I have selected for my pieces to come into my life, the collaboration with the dancers reaches immediately my creative process and vice-versus. So when I go into a research, or inside a studio, I say I'm gonna make a piece with this group, that for me means also, to learn more about myself with the help of the others. And I hope that that opportunity is transmitted to the other dancers.

I could say I love performing but there is something about the making that is totally fulfilling. The fact that I can combine both makes it perfect. So I don't have to choose between performing or making, I perform in the pieces that I make. At first that was hard, but now it feels like it makes a lot of sense and I don't think that they go against each other. I need to be in the work I do when working with others. It's necessary for me to have the physical experience together with the other performers, and to also carry that onstage.

And I make dances because it's hard. It's the most open and yet the most sticky thing I can imagine to try to do. You have to create it for yourself and then you have to keep defining it for yourself and it can fall apart at any moment. That is also the really unruly and fantastic thing about collaborators: once you implicate others, the piece builds resistance. It won't fall apart because other people are invested in it, but it also won't become whatever you want it to be or think it can be because now you have other brains and bodies involved that will always contribute and feed it things you can't. This is great, a great pain in the ass and a great adventure. So I make dances because it's a really bizarre way to work [*laughter*]. And it's work! It demands a lot of work, but its work that requires so many different kinds of skills: organizational, communicative, personal, physical, expressive, practical, it's complete. There is no better way

that I can imagine I would keep myself completely *over-employed* on every potential level.

I make dances or have made dances because that's part of what it's all about. You make dances, you perform dances, you think about dances, you go and see dances, that's all part of the work. It's not that I have like [*gasp*] moments of clarity that I *have* to express upon the world. But I don't think you can have one without the other. You can't do without making, without thinking about, without going to see, etc.

When I started dancing I made dances because I danced in dances and it's a form of *response* to want to also create an instance of what it is that you're doing, especially appreciating the form and intelligence of dances. I'm good at moving around vocabularies that already exist, at thinking formally, and I really enjoyed those kind of formal/spatial terms. I found that I could relate the way that I thought about the world to these instances of coming together and leaving, of space and rhythm. I found that everything that I recognized in my own thinking, I could create an analogue for in dance. Whether or not I was able to manifest it choreographically, I could still see it ideally in my mind. So again it's responsive, and kind of a map of thinking.

As I continue to make creative work, that idea stays of making something which is *too* full, that it is the *map* of thinking, or that you're in the presence of thinking, you're in the presence of the fruits of something having been thought-through. My approach to performance, what I ask from the actors in the plays that I write, is that it has to be thought-out and approached in the moment, and then that the structure of the event itself asks for some kind of thinking, by which I mean a sort of responding, cataloguing, pattern of recognition on the part of the audience. So the idea of being in the presence of a mind and stimulating the presence of somebody's own sense of their own mind, is why I make things.

As I've thought about that over the last few years, I've found a lot of material for that coming out of philosophical sources and ethical sources, just the idea that creating a situation wherever people are in time with each other and thinking, is a loving act. So I make things from that perspective. I started my career being young and talented and expecting myself to be an exception to the rule like anybody who moves to New York and tries to be professional in a field that doesn't have many slots. I started really, I think, with a sense of my own specialness, of my own ego and the more I went through my dance life, the more I was willing to step away from that, without downgrading my sense of my own intelligence but also without making that claim on the world that I needed to be recognized or having the expectation that I would be. I started formulating everything I did in terms of this idea of an act of love. But I think that ego and vain glory permeate the discipline of performance as taught within this society, as a professional aim in this lauded genius-appreciating, special-case creating world and why I don't make dances now is because I ask myself not to think that way anymore.

When I started studying dance I was part of an era that was the logical extension of New Dance, with studies of anatomy and a really formal approach to the body. It is a very very beautiful thing but not necessarily that interesting to a lot of people, or that accessible or enterable. So I started to find my way into writing because however the body is shared, this sort of esoteric dance vocabulary isn't, and I found myself wanting to address things. Over time, finding that I actually love language and singing and all of these things besides dancing, the ways that I made dances became more for fun and energetic relief in those shows I was making. I still write plays. So I make plays right now and I want them to be a good event and I want them to be the presence of the mind.

But *dances*: why do I make dances. That's completely the question because I lost somehow all interest in the movement for movement, or movement for the sensation it gives to me. It's about enlarging your perception, not only to your body but to the environment you are in, and through your body you enlarge your perception.

I make dances because I am after making a statement within the field about what can be done with it. I do this often, I recognize it in other pieces I've made: I actively propose a definition of what the medium itself considers itself, to push and pull the performativity of the definition of the field. So I guess I also make dances to register complaints in a fantastic and constructive way [*laughter*], that is not about making dances for a dance-participating audience alone, but also conducting manipulations of perception that *anyone* can enter.

I make things to make ideas exist, for this idea about the possibility of a reconfiguration of the mind to be visible. Not only like a documentation, dealing with the mind not only on the analytical level, but more of something connected to poetics, to go away from didacticism. I make dances to make exist ideas about the reconfiguration of the mind.

That's a funny way to put it, to make dances. I started as a dancer, so I was dancing for other people, and of course, when you're dancing for other people you make movement so you create dances, you make dances for your part or other parts. But it was always for me very clear that I was an *interprète*, a dancer for choreographers and I never expected to be a choreographer. I started to be very interested in, not in making dances, but in getting close to a choreographers position, by doing a show in which I conceived of and put everything together and I realized I was more interested in the construction of

the piece than merely being the *interprète*. I wasn't satisfied anymore completely by just being an *interprète* and I wanted to express ideas about representation, about dance and do it myself. It took me some time and a lot of fear, but I think I made dances to try to figure out what it would be and what it would mean to make dance. Basically, what kind of dance I would like. It's a hard question.

Let's be specific, let's find out what can be the difference between dancing and making dances. It relates to the question of whether I'm an interpreter or a maker when I perform and create. In the work of João Fiadeiro, as I experienced it, we explored the difference between reality and the stage, so the question is, what do you create on the stage, and how does it relate to reality? What does an audience see onstage as a reality, what does it see as the story that's creating itself, and how do you play with these things? That's I think where the word interpreting becomes interesting again. So for a performer, in the whole process and at the moment of performing, you should have someone who made a structure for people, for an audience to play this game of real and imaginary, to play the game of making stories, and that is the maker's job: making spaces for spectators to inhabit. I was just re-reading Sloterdijk, the introduction to his books *Fears*, connecting geometry and love, and he tells the story of an inscription above the entrance of a school that says everybody who does not know about geometry should stay outside and everybody who is not willing to enter into a love relationship with his fellow scholars should not enter this place. So it's again about space. What kind of spaces we create, with what rules.



3

WHAT POSITION, ROLE OR  
PURPOSE DOES DANCE HAVE  
IN YOUR LIFE?

The position, role or purpose of dance in my life? Dominant.

It feels like a very difficult, and yet very necessary relationship in my life, and one that has made it hard for me to have other interests or even other *people* in my life that are as important.

I'm referring to it all the time; while reading a book, while thinking of something, while watching a film, I watch it with a choreographic eye. So dance is always there. That it's my job also means that when someone asks me what I do I say I'm a dancer and choreographer. So it's also my social position.

Most of my social relationships and all of my work are determined by being a practicing dancer. And the purpose of it is that it's my income. It's my social world and it is my imaginative realm — it's the place where I get to coordinate my experience, and coordinate myself with the world.

My dancing, or how I like to approach it beyond myself, is a reaction to the environment I am in. Sometimes it can be very rhythmical, because it's things that we already know, and sometimes it can be very a-rhythmical, of rhythms that are not really a part of our everyday life. I am like a pregnant woman and then these babies come out through the movement. And I like that very much. Through the doing I have learned to associate any aspect of my life through dance. From my dreams, the realness of my dreams, from silence, colors, from my morning life, lunch, nights, from my classes, my waiting outside for people, from my walking in the forest, from all these life experiences that I go through, even from writing a paper on a computer, they have always and now stronger than ever gone through my dancing or my dancing has gone through that. I see the world through a dance point of view, through movement.

I work a lot which means basically that I filter all my experiences through my work or towards my work. It's maybe quite horrible to be so instrumental about experience in general, but nevertheless that's how it functions for me, at least for the moment. So it's not so much the question of the position that dance has in my life but the question of what position my life has in dance or in choreography. Because I think I function or I experience the world through thinking about choreographic practices. That's kind of sick, come to think of it, but nevertheless I think it's like that. I'm interested in the construction of relationships, the construction of realities, the construction of the world, so I'm always busy analyzing the mechanisms of how things are working, whether it's human relations or sexuality or the experience of the body or the politics of expression, I'm engaged with analyzing mechanisms. Trying to understand the mechanisms is basically also being aware of trying to reconfigure them, by analyzing and coming to the point where you can actually work around them.

My dance work is a field of investigation of things that I don't understand or am troubled by. Those little ornery burrs that stick to you in life and existence get addressed or questioned. There's an attempt to understand them through the dancing and the making of dances. In my idea of process there's always been an attempt to think about my concerns and relationship to the world in a broader scope so that it isn't about looking at my own navel, but trying to understand the world in which I live at this moment in time and trusting that if this is a question mark for me, then this question could be shared, that it's not just about my experience but about trying to relate to a bigger picture of other peoples' questions and other peoples' select ornery burrs that stick on them. I'm trying to create a space for learning something about those, and having that shift and move.

Again, the question refers to space. It's asking about what position. So, if you ask the question *where*, rather than *what ... where* is, *where* do we want, it's irrelevant *what* do we want, or *what* we are. I was brought into this question at the start my exploration in dance. The first choreographers I worked with described their work as creating spaces. I would say it's about doubting actually, about holding on and letting go. It's about discovering in physical exchange how people are as a whole, how people are in space, where people are.

The position it has in my life is always changing. I go through phases where dance is more or less important and more or less engaging. But it's always there. My friends are all involved in the dance community or dance world somehow. I've met amazing people and had amazing experiences, all for dance, and I do identify myself as a member of a dance community, whatever that may be, which is a complicated statement. Due to economic situations I have to have a day job and that often takes up a lot of time. I wish that I could give more time out of every day to dance, to choreography.

For the past four years since graduating from school, I worked as a dancer and tried to make money doing it. I would take jobs that provided an income, that I thought I could live on, but that didn't really work. There was too much time between gigs, not enough money, and I didn't love it. I didn't love most of the projects that I was doing. But they served a purpose. Now I realize that the position or role of dance in my life hasn't really changed, I've just acknowledged that it's more out of love. It's like a family member, a lover or a friend. I just do it out of love and I don't expect anything in return. No, I shouldn't say that. I've got a lot in return.

I like to get up in the morning and go to the studio. I like to be on the stage. It's also a little about seduction, wanting to be loved. But for me it's more and more a way of trying to understand the world and organize energy. It's a way of thinking, a way of breathing.

With getting older it gets more important. With my body aging, it's a challenge to find different ways, other ways of dancing which are of a different nature of intensity.

It's funny because I met a kickboxing teacher and I asked him about the strategies or psychological tricks in kickboxing, and he told me that even if the person is very strategic or psychologically strong and has good training, if he has no pleasure doing it, this person will not be a good kickboxer. So the notion of pleasure in doing something is very important. But dance is also my job. So it means that I do it every day.

Beyond it being my job, I'm actually struggling with figuring out who I am outside of my world as a dancer. Who am I without that? So then another question is, who am I *with* that? So what role does it have in my life? It's a big role. It keeps me ticking, keeps me interested and focused.

It's the thing that everything gets measured up against. It's so intrinsically tight to my identity at this point that extracting it or saying that there's anything else outside of that is a little bit mute. Although, of course, there are other things outside of that, but it's somehow the most tangible thing. It's kind of a constant.

Though it's something I identify with, I'm wanting to move more towards finding out who this person is that's not a dancer. At this point, dance gives purpose to every day of my life. It gives me a reason to work towards something that is incredibly challenging.

Compared to other activities that I have, dance is like a track, a long road that is starting from birth to death. It's not only an axis, because I try along the way to organize the dance activity in my life so as not to put it in a too-direct position. Meaning, I try, by doing other things — like stripping, which is connected to dance but is

also a strategy of voluntary intoxication, where I go very much into seduction — I try to in a way maintain the big idea I have about dance in an indirect position in my life, and not to make this errand more important than life. At the same time I am very willing and I want to do a lot in this field, but I am afraid of concentrating all my energy in a single direction. So the question is how I can maintain this kind of axis while staying open to other possibilities of, for example, making a living. For the moment I also make money aside from the dance field, which gives me a lot of distance. But it's also because I don't want to be too serious in a way. I think dance is also for me connected to an idea of knowing that you are where you are.

Dance is what I do, pretty much all the time, though I'm not very obsessive about it. I can easily let go of my work when I go home and do other things. Maybe not when I'm in the middle or towards the end of a project, but there is more to life than dance. At the same time it's what drives me the most. I've thought about studying something, going to university, but I can't sacrifice the time that that takes. I can't put dance on the side for more than a weekend, or two weeks.

Everything that I think, everything that I see, everything that goes through my head can fall into my dance thinking, so in a way it does take over my life. I don't see an end to it. It's not something that I *know* how it is and I keep on doing it. I don't see the bottom of it. So I can see myself doing it for many years, as there's a lot to be found.

I'm interested in many things, but I've been looking for the one main thing where I could put most of my energy, so that my life makes sense, so that there is this one thing that is the main drive, and all my doubts and certainties go towards that. It's steady and it's always there and I know that I can count on it. If I could do whatever I wanted and I didn't *need* to do anything, I would still need to choose one thing to get up for every day. It's about focusing all your thoughts

and interests into this one activity that you can invest in and that rewards you in time. After years of doing it, it still brings you to new places. I have the feeling that I can only do that with one thing that I invest in on the very long run. I could do movies for one year and then music for another year and then read for another year. But no matter how intensely I would do that for that one year, it would never reward me in the same way as what dance is doing for me after 15 years. There is a long curve. In wanting to stick with it and wanting to go on, it delivers. It's like a long relationship. There are things you experience in a relationship after a long time that you cannot experience in a short relationship. That's how it is. It's exciting to change, but it's very exciting as well to stick with something.

It's only in the moments of dancing that I actually know who I am. And actually, the rest of the time I kind of get the feeling that I'm confused who I am. So dance is a support system for me and it's a life force. It's the thing that makes me like life. One of the things.

Sometimes I wish I were a writer or musician because I feel like there's more of an audience for that in general people are more interested in those forms of expression but I feel like I can't *not* dance. I don't know how that relationship evolved, but if I'm not dancing I get kinda crazy, if I don't have that release, that outlet.

So its purpose is to keep me sane. I've been doing it ever since I was three years old and it's seemingly the only thing that really allows me to release. Yoga will kind of do it but I've spent a long time this year not dancing because of various reasons. I was trying to make money to have an apartment that I could afford by myself, and then the absence of dance started getting really suffocating. When I came back to it, for the first three months I felt completely outside of myself and separated from my existence as a dancer. I love to move, I love movement, so I was frustrated that couldn't be at a place where I had been before, because I hadn't been in a consistent evolutionary

process. Dance really does a lot for my mental stability in life because it's something that has been consistent throughout.

Dance for me takes the place of a spiritual expression. It is my spiritual expression. Dance is the thing that grounds me, centers me, and allows me to express myself from a very deep place. It allows me to be connected to other people in a very meaningful way and to have an effect on their lives as a teacher. It's hard to separate myself from dance. I feel like that is who I am. I'm a dancer. There are many aspects to my life, I'm not limited, but I feel this commitment to constantly being in the studio and working. Working every day in a technique class, as you're dropping tension in the work and simplifying and finding anatomical clarity, I feel like you are often shedding emotional things and letting go of armor in the body. I've seen this happen in myself, I've seen it happen in my students. One day there's an enormous breakthrough and someone will burst in to tears because they've hit some kind of trapped emotional thing and through the letting go and the breathing process, that holding pattern in the body has just opened up, and they're able to move to another place and let go of something. I think that work is very important.

That comes together with the purpose of dance in my life: to console me, to be able to live in a way that I would like to live with the people around me who share the same passion.

It's an interest, a very strong interest, but it's not something I *have* to do. In terms of role, purpose, it depends on how you define dance. If I wouldn't dance I would still probably still do some sort of bodywork. But that's about the future. So *now*, the role, the purpose of dance? It's huge. Because of the time it takes. It's what I spend most of my time doing. It's what I spend most of my thoughts doing, actually, and what I spend most of my physicality doing. I just realized now that it's bigger than I thought.

Obviously it's important. Not only because it's my way to make a living, and a way to assert myself as a social worker (having a job in a society and in that way a position) but it's also important for my story. I started to dance and make dances very late but it corresponded to an existential urge. Existential because through it I created myself, and created my life by choosing the dance profession. Before that I was more of a passive spectator in my life, and dancing was a way to embody, to act, to be able to take or assert a position in life.

Also because I keep thinking about how to make dance, I keep thinking about representation, it's something like a lens that colors, alters all my relational action towards a lot of things. It defines a certain attitude, a certain concentration, a certain discipline, so it's something that affects all of my personality: the need or urge to be on stage and advance myself through dancing and through the spectators gaze. Then through the approbation of choreography a more narcissistic or mortified self disappeared and the question of dance in my life has evolved. I have discovered by getting older, that all the sides of myself and other interests have merged in dance. Dance was for me linked to a positive desire or energy, also anxiety and excitement, of being a dancer onstage. By making my own dances, my private life or other things I think about have taken a more important place and mingle more now with the thing called dance, which is basically about movement. I have almost a biological interest in it. How can I keep dancing is almost like how can I keep living. I see dance very much like an activity, in a very basic sense of the word. It's an activity of using my body in space and time, how to make it develop and exist. I'm interested now to incorporate my own maturity. Dance was for me linked to youth and energy and I think I'm interested to see, because of vital energy changes, how my dance can accompany my life. Either way, it's a contradiction. It still feels very vital and central, like I'm living through dance and through this activity, which is maybe not linked for me so much to a narcissistic activity

of being watched, but more now to very basic things like eating, drinking, sleeping and dancing, as a vital thing.

I'm interested when I make dances in moving through my own developmental phases. I don't want to make the dances now that I made 20 years ago and I think it's pretty safe to say that this is the case, I'm not making those dances. I want to keep changing as a choreographer and as a dancer. Certainly these things change with time, but when I say time I don't only mean with age, I mean with being alert to changes in dance and choreography that are going on in the dance community. It is very important to me to be part of the dance community both as a choreographer and performer and also as a person involved in the discussions that I see are really mattering. It is very important to me to function as an artist-scholar. I realize this sounds general but it's a big part of my identity and I experience myself in large part through that piece of my identity. One reason that that is important to me is that I think so many people, certainly in this culture, are uncomfortable with their bodies, are divorced from their bodies in so much of their lives. I love being in this professional world in which I get to love my own body and other bodies and explore what my body and other bodies can do. That's significant.

It's about pushing boundaries. Formal training served the purpose of putting myself through the challenge of pushing boundaries of what the body is comfortable doing or wants to do and performing has served the purpose of placing myself in that situation and sharing that with an audience. Now there are many different forms of dancing that I'm compelled to be involved with, and a major one is social dancing, Latin dancing. I find that I'm not so comfortable in social settings, necessarily talking to strangers, but I have a real openness towards being physical and enjoying that kind of tribal exchange that happens dancing socially. Social dance is a real way that I can connect to humankind on a very nice, social, personal level.

Dance helps me understand myself in relationship to people and things as best I can, as clearly as I can, as smoothly as I can. And I think if there is a purpose, it's a result of my need to pursue this act of engagement and reflection with the rest of the world, as actively, and with as much agency as I can.

Dance brought me to approach people in a certain way, to let go of certain barriers in communication, just from the relation to the body. So it's purpose is not about something that I want to express through dance, it's more personal. It brought me to a place that I am now, seeing things in a specific way, in communication, in relation with space, with myself and my body. But dance in my life right now is not so much to be shown. I can still enjoy dancing, and in front of others like in a party, but it's not a tool anymore to say something or to show something. Because then I have the feeling that I'm exhibiting technique or "virtuosity". And I don't connect to this abstraction of the body anymore. But then I have to ask which definition of dance do I assume? Because I am more talking now about dance as technique. If I think of dance more as a way of expressing or thinking through things — I'm not going to start now on a definition of contemporary dance — dance can be so many things, so it remains important to me because I am still busy with exposing the body. But it's about the body and transforming it to show something, more so that the audience will relate to their own body, so it's maybe also more now related to the image of the body than really dancing. When you're really busy with dance, you're always in relation to your body, and you always have to train, you're always pushing yourself towards these physical limits, and maybe this is something that I didn't want. I enjoy the fact that my body has the function of a normal body, like I'm using my body to get from one place to another.

It's something that I've renounced as a professional practice and it is still a burden to accept that with it I have severed associations to a certain public. But the role that dance has in my life is a

knowledge of what it is to access a really lived, happy, sense of being physical. And knowing, in this very expansive way, not detached but mastered way, that *doing is knowing*. I think dance is a lovely thing to do and I can't wait to roll around and flirt with people again.

"*Dance eats money*", I think that's a quote from Arnie Zane. I work for a foundation that gives money to art forms in New York City, dance being one of them, and I serve on boards, so I am a part of dance art ecology. The role that dance has on me, to go back to the question: I still get this visceral charge sometimes, increasingly rarely, from seeing human beings moving in time and space. There is this connection that happens — not so often — and when it happens it's a charge like no other. I started in theater, and very few of the theater works that I see touch me. The neuro-skeletal-muscular event of a person moving in space to express something of themselves or of the choreographer touches me like no other art form does, and when it happens it's magic and when it doesn't happen it's grossly disappointing. It's more often grossly disappointing but when it's magic it's like nothing else.

I realise I don't even social dance anymore and I'm not sure why that is. When I was making work most of my training was just going out to clubs, in my 20's and 30's I didn't take class as much as I went to punk clubs, or discos in the 70's, and just danced and danced for hours. I'd improvise and just jam-out to probably embarrassing music, not the music I listen to right now. I have a sort of nostalgia for that, so one of the roles of dance in my life right now is nostalgia. And it's not so much about youth but about a time, an exuberant time, when New York was funkier, and my life was funkier. When things were not so set, when there were more possibilities, when the drugs were better, the sex was freer. Some of it might be an outcome of aging, but for some of it, I feel that the society where I live has changed, and I have changed too, but I feel like the overall canvas has changed. Dance was an important part of that canvas and it's not

there anymore. So it's a reminder, a memory, a nostalgia I have for a different time.

What makes me enthusiastic about continuing is that we are constantly in pursuit of some kind of validation, whether our culture demands it of us or not, so the sense of self-achievement in doing it anyway is monumental in terms of the whole society that we live in. Dance is where I'm headed and what I am doing, so if no-one else appreciates it but me that's still fantastic, but what is great is that I am in a sense of belonging because other people do appreciate it.

In response to all the questions actually, there's of course the aspect of people that I meet when making and dancing. What kinds of meetings develop, what kinds of exchange, how people discover each other, what kind of intersubjective reality is created. It's just people, and it's a very tolerant — no, tolerant is not the word — it's very much alive.

I started dancing when I was 50, in 1995, so it's an extra. As a theater person I'm a tourist in dance, a little bit of a fanatic tourist: I visit this country often. Because of dance being something extra and because of my being a tourist, I feel completely free here. I'm not educated, I'm not contaminated or infected by the ideas of the others of what dance has to be. Dance can be everything. I don't give a shit. And I have another way to talk about the dispositive of performing. With an audience it's a pure enrichment, an extension of possibilities.

Being a professional dancer for seventeen years now, sometimes I think I'm not that passionate, and then when I go see dance I realize I get really cross with people mucking around with the art form that I love best, and not advancing it or not saying anything interesting at all. As I said before the thing I love most about dance is ambiguity and the fact that you *trust* in the *form*, that you *trust* that. The physi-

cality of weight shifting, of space changing, of rhythmical ideas within the body and within the space, its relationship to music, they are all solid. And so I'm less interested in — actually there's a lot of different kind of work that I like, but I like it when work has been made in the *right form*. If there's something that you need to say, then say it. If there's something you need to dance, then dance it. But don't dance something you need to say. Please, stop doing that. So that also has something to do with why I go see dance and something to do with what I would like to see change. I'm being your worst nightmare for not sticking with the question order, but there you go.

And I forgot to say this in why do I dance: it's that the dance world is very nice. Dance people are much nicer than theater people. Theater people talk and drink and are mean. Dance people are not so mean so often. Dance people are quite collaborative, are much easier looking, less competitive and ambitious for themselves than theater people. And I like their easiness with their bodies, the touching each other and hanging on the other bodies around, just for the sake of the body and not for something else. I think this is completely healthy. I wish our society could do this. Dancers have freed their bodies for a big part, at least in a social context, and that's pleasurable.



4

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE  
POSITION, ROLE OR PURPOSE  
OF YOUR DANCES OR YOUR  
DANCING IN THE LIVES  
OF OTHERS?

You place something into the world and how somebody else approaches that and how that affects them or doesn't, how it functions in relationship to them is pretty strongly out of your control. You can understand certain potential about it, but you can't really control it and make it function in one way and not in an other way, and that's interesting. Even though there is some kind of fantasy about clarity, or a strong desire to be clear, and to be articulate and that in making work you can define things, as much as you *can*, there's this whole other side of it which relates to the fact that each person coming to the work is different, brings a different context, a different frame of vision, a different experience and set of concerns. The interest is in that meeting, that collision. You can shape, define, or create certain kinds of invitations to view or understand in certain ways, and that meets up with all those things that you don't control at all. It's about a meeting of that person's experience with what you're doing. You don't control that, but I hope that there is an ability for people to think about *how* they think and see. That's the biggest thing that I want from my work: that there is a way in which I can shape some experience that can then shape how other people think or approach the world. That has to do with perception, because perception is about how we actively engage, how we understand, which determines how we approach everything around us. When the work catalyzes some kind of engagement or change or something in that basic perception, that's when it's been the most successful, and that extends into a much larger and broader context than just the moment of the performance.

Adaptation, I hope for adaptation of meaning: that I can give something, and that it grows.

I'm thinking about and trying to produce new ways of communicating or sharing the types of knowledge that are produced through the work that I do and the work that other people do related to mine.

It's all about finding ways of exchanging knowledge and in that there's a large desire to create some sort of importance of the practice which is beyond the product, beyond the moment where we're actually in the theater presenting to the audience for one hour. I've had some disappointing experiences when the work that I've done has been going on for years, only with me of course, and basically the moment I present it, it gets objectified: the performance becomes a thing which people can, you could say consume, but you can also say experience, but they enter it for the time that it exists and after that they leave it behind. It comes down to a question of what is the capacity of art or performance today, and what are the possibilities of inducing change in the people who actually experience it. My strategy has been to try to come up with a different way to engage my work. One thing is of course the performance presentation, but I've also been busy with a kind of by-product production: how you can write about your work or make the work actually go beyond the theater stage itself. So for me it's interesting to try to see how we can analyze these mechanisms of either the capacity to change or the capacity to entertain. Of course I'm much more interested in the capacity to change, where what we do in performance actually means something.

In each project I am doing, the purpose is to give a certain reading to what dance is, or what choreography is. Inside all of my projects until now I am working with degrees of feeling, towards empathy and towards thinking. There is a moment where you *feel* while watching the dance, you *feel* dancing. I'm thinking about sensation and how to make people feel something bodily, and at the same time considering what people are thinking of this feeling. It should provoke.

The relation to the people I'm collaborating with is important. It's all about collaboration. Finding or negotiating a position within a project. I like to think of potentializing everyone, and not to have control over another body. To find a space, strategy, or methodology in order to make people enjoy or at least potentialize themselves.

If I have an idea or a vision that I have to push on the others, it's oppressive, and I think it is the same with the audience. I avoid oppression towards anyone: the audience or the people I'm working with. I think it's that's very valuable stuff.

I hope that the dancers with whom I've worked have found pleasure, engagement and stimulation. Sometimes I've made that part of the piece. For example by having conversations both during and before the making of a piece, these actually enter the piece itself more or less explicitly. I've become increasingly interested in fact in the experience of the dancers. That's something that hasn't always been a priority. I suppose it's becoming increasingly important to me as a matter of rethinking my relationship to the meaning of form and formalism in dance and the interaction of formalism and experience. That's also been something that has interested me, in dance history in particular, looking at avant-garde dance history from the late 19th century until now.

Both as a teacher and choreographer, I'm interested in working at a very high standard and asking people to reach for their very best work, but doing it in a form and manner that is gentle, thoughtful, constructive and supportive. I think that can change the way we work with each other in the art world and I'm hoping that within my circle, the people that I effect, that they understand that what I'm asking them to do is encouraging them to take responsibility for their own work so that they don't need to be beaten up or pushed in the work. They're being asked to come forward, to step forward and really make a commitment to their work. I think that's a way of living and being utterly respectful and deeply committed, involved, and present in your work. And I think that more of this kind of work ethic can go beyond our own little immediate circle and taken out to others. It's a constructive way of living and working with other people.

I like to help any dancer that comes into my life to *play* more with what they have, even if it's just simple dance steps, or really to have fun and enjoy the making of a dance piece. Through the process that I go through with my dancers, I wouldn't call them *my* dancers, but people that work with me very closely in the research, we arrive at a place or a depth that maybe some of them, including myself, are not accustomed to arrive at. Then we can pass through and get to know other worlds or possibilities for movement, other ways to approach movement, and I always hope that helps the creative process of the dancers that work with me. Many times also I work with non-dancers, so one of the purposes also is that that *person* who is not really a dancer can learn about their whole mind-body-spiritual expression of themselves in front of a public. And lately I love to work with dancers to help them become more powerful in their projection of their images. Especially images that are manifested *through* the body, beyond objects; it's more the body as an object, a media of information.

When I dance for other choreographers I'm definitely trying to think of the choreographer and fulfill their desires and their expectations of the piece. Right now I'm just working for one choreographer and when I'm in her work I'm trying to find out what that state is for her and how that state applies to me, my personal experiences in my life, what that is for me, and then hopefully explain that to the audience during the performance through my dancing, through my understanding and interpretation of the choreography. I try to make something powerful, to have a strong presence in her work, even more than in my own work I think. Using my virtuosity and technique, being very precise with the choreography and finding the different states in the choreography: is it quiet, is it subtle, is it explosive, aggressive? It's not quite that literal, but it's just trying to make for engaging experiences for the audience because at the end of the day the purpose is to make an

engaging experience in which the audience can have some real experiences, something real, and it's not about entertainment, it's not about giving them something but creating something that they can enter in to.

My dancing could be entertaining for others, it can be touching for others, or totally incomprehensible for others. My speaking about dance can be useful information for others, and maybe *how* I dance can be visually useful information for others. The way I move, my dancing onstage, so not my dancing in general, but specifically the *way* I move as a performer can be something for others.

I don't really know, I think I'm a little bit decorative, [*laughter*] in a weird way; not particularly beautiful, but I think there's something decorative about my dancing. It's like craft-work. There's people who I've worked with where I was able to manifest their imagination very clearly, but in the past five years I've mostly worked with people who have skills that I don't. So I'm working with them because I'm learning from them. That's funny. I don't think I'm being falsely humble about that.

The way I choose to pursue dance and an understanding of my body and of *the* body, is to share the insights that I find. When things click for me or when I feel like I've figured something out that has been a challenge to me, I like to be able to share that. So I like to think how to be helpful to other dancers if I can, if I'm able to do that in a way that is appropriate to our working relationship. I find that a lot of people come to me for that kind of thing. It's such a journey for me and I really value the process of figuring things out, and I like to be able to share if it's helpful to other people, so I've gotten some good feedback about that, about maybe helping people.

With teaching I think I probably bridge some gaps for people because of my own ambivalence about any one particular aesthetic

being the one. I think that I help people find their way through different techniques and different styles. As a teacher I try to talk to dancers about being artists. That's what I would really like my role to be in relation to my students. That I help them to find a way to think of themselves and to work as artists in dance. So that they're making authorial choices as dancers.

I was in a work recently by a big choreographer in a big venue and I the dancing wasn't very important for that show. I felt like the statement of the concept was really important for that show. And still, the kind of comments that I heard from people after the show were more like "*Oh you're so beautiful!*" I don't really know what that does for people. Is it important for them to see beauty or skill? Or did that totally refute or distract from the larger aims of the work? I don't know. I like to see that myself, I think it's amazing, but I'm confused about the role that dances have in the lives of others. I've been kind of worried about that recently because I've been really involved in teaching Pilates and doing body work and the way in which I work with people is not to work them out and make them beautiful but to bring them into their bodies and help them access something that maybe they're unconscious of or could be brought out to facilitate more ease or comfortability or confidence in their life. So in doing that kind of work with "normal" people, pregnant people, people who've been abused, what does dance give that couldn't be — I love to see art and I love to experience art and I think that it's important to have a performative discourse and a performative existence, but if I start thinking too much about what this is even important for, it kind of stops me from being able to do anything. If you think so seriously and blankly about things, if this has to fit in this place and this office work has to get done like this, you have to do your clothes, you have to do the dishes, you have to do all these things they all have a *purpose* but then you get so caught up in this living that — dance, is it another form that brings fullness to their life? I mean dance isn't

important to a lot of people and I can't tell if I like it just because I've been doing it forever.

When I'm performing in smaller contexts like daily life I think then it's more about what position do I want to give in the lives of others, as my dancing does not really exist for others. But it's about physical presence and maybe it can touch them in their own body perception. I know for example in a party, when you see someone that has pleasure dancing, it's communicative. So when I dance in a party, I'm doing it for myself, but also for others, so that there is a sharing of not caring. Just a kind of letting go of maybe conformity or norms, extending what the body can be in a social context.

I would like my dancing to be challenging, to be thought provoking. I would like that in terms of the work that I am participating in, and the work that I create, it provokes some kind of dialogue or discourse or makes people think, and that it has some relevance to the world, both in and outside of dance. That it's not just insular and pretty. I consider myself to be a political person and dance is my chosen form of expression so I want there to be a meeting of those two things: of dance and political and social awareness, and that somehow through my dancing that I'm keeping engaged in that, in the world, that it's not totally self-serving.

I wish that my dancing had more of an effect on other people's lives I guess. I have a lot of non-dance friends, they're always supportive and they come to see me dance when they can and they always enjoy it. When I talk to them about dance and try to get them to come and see things with me they often say that they love watching me or other people that they know dance, but when it's not someone that they know performing, they feel like it's not that accessible, that they don't *know* enough about dance for it to be worth going to and again it's that same frustration of people not thinking that dance is relevant to them. I personally think that

if your only reaction to work that's presented is, "*I didn't get it*", that's not your fault as the audience member. If it's not moving or thought provoking, if you don't have any emotional, intellectual, or instinctual response to it then I think, more often than not it's because of things lacking in the work itself.

I would like my dancing to serve some kind of higher purpose. [*wince*] And by that I guess I mean maybe a political purpose. I think that dance has as much potential as other art forms to be expressive and to be political and to be socially conscious, socially aware and to make people think, and to challenge what people believe or what they consider the norms are, and to challenge what those are and to ask why. *Why* they are what they are.

I would like my dance to suggest a direction or make people look at something in a way that they're not used to, to see something that maybe they're not looking at normally. To bring their attention to something that by themselves or in other works is not happening. My interests are concrete and specific and I'm hoping enough so to give a counterpoint, like when I tell you look at this in this way, hopefully you'll say "*Well, I never thought of it in this way*". So that's what I would like my dance to do to people. Whether or not that is happening I can't be sure.

There are many different ways that people react towards what they see when they look, but I have the feeling that often what is said is "*Wow, you must be very connected to your body*", or "*You must be very happy*". And there is another way to receive the work, in which it makes people wonder about what they are looking at. I hope that people perceive this very political stand about what beauty is. I have the feeling that the way I read things and the way I perceive things is very connected to this practice, either when I talk to people or when they see the work. I'm very curious about this idea of empathy. I hope they perceive something like a poetic document in my body.

Something that at the same time gives information and that's readable but at the same time is something that opens their free-association functions. Still, I think I'm a beginner in a way, I don't think my dancing has a lot of influence yet and I'm not sure it is aimed at changing things, but at the same time it is, because I think the dancing body is very political. I can feel that to attend, to be in front of a dancing body is something very scary, it's very mysterious, like a shape, something crystallized, but in perpetual motion. It's still questioning a lot what is good, what is bad, what is permanent and impermanent.

With my performances I have the goal that I opened up minds, possibilities. I give air, I think, with my performances. You can become lighter because I always try to do something that's not considered normal or possible and once you see that things are possible that you would not imagine before, that's giving space, in the minds and the lives of others. But that counts for every performance, not only for dance.

I hope that in my performances I can create an open, engaging space for thought and dialogue, even if the dialogue that an audience member may have with themselves while watching the performance has nothing to do with the dance in front of them. I'm looking to create a container of space in my performance that is productive for the audience. Maybe a challenging space. I hope to challenge some notions of what is choreography, what is dance, what's the expectation of going to see a dance performance. I think that contemporary dance is often burdened with expectation in a historical reference of entertainment, and people are going to see this performance for a certain amount of time with the expectation of being entertained. I'm not sure if I'm trying to create entertainment in that typical sense. I've gone to see a lot of movies and I've had this experience in seeing more experimental movies, specifically by Godard, where I totally zone out during the movie and lose the film, but the film creates a

context for me to have very productive thoughts and to have thoughts and ideas and associations that I don't normally have without being in that theatre or watching that specific film, and I guess I hope that my dances somehow do that for others.

My dances can provide people with a distinct experience of time. That's another reason I make dances, I think for myself, is that I really on a fundamental level cannot quite grasp or handle my own experience of time in the world, in living. And the lack of control that I have over that *really* confounds me. It gives me a feeling of terror a lot of the time. When I look at my dances I see a very intense control over the experience of time. And so, to be honest, I think that it's really sometimes an opportunity for me to exercise a kind of control over my own experience, at least for a certain duration.

The dances I do and make, I'm not making them to make somebody feel something. I'm not interested in making someone feel happier, sad or angry or whatever, it's something more subtle, perhaps more open, giving somebody the means to see things differently.

I think I hope that they recognize something, themselves or their experiences in it, I hope it can be a source of beauty, consolation, a source of, how do you say, it's a *décharge*, a source of bringing together, experiencing things together, sharing.

I try with my work to talk about things and evoke things that are about our lives with the hope that people will be able to bring their own life experiences to the work and have a response to it, whether it would be angry, tender, sad, frustrated. I hope that my choreography has an emotional impact on people. Often people come to me and express that it does. They also say that the work is very human.

I'm hoping that it affects them in a personal, human, emotional way, in a sensitive way, I'm interested in that link between performing and the people that I'm performing for. Being able to share many things on different levels with them, but make it personal.

I guess we're all doing things because we want to be reflected and we want other people to see themselves in us.

I don't know if I ever thought that my work impacted other people in their work. I'm not sure if that was even a goal of mine, with my own dancing. I was sure that people loved me for it sometimes. So that was good, that people felt love, appreciation or respect.

At home, the purpose of my dancing is that I earn a living with it and I support a family. In an artistic way I hope it inspires people to dance. I hope it inspires people to *make things* also. I hope it inspires people. I can only *hope* it means something to other people that I dance, otherwise it's really for nothing. *[laughing]* And then, I guess in a very humble way, to bring an evening of entertainment? I hope it's more than that but at least the people who pay to come and see you had a beautiful evening. It doesn't have to be the biggest event in their lives although that would be lovely. I know for some people my dancing was an inspiration. People said "*I saw you there and that's why I came to see the next piece*", or "*that's why I came to Brussels*", or "*that's why I came to do an audition*", so I know from some people that it was an inspiration. There must be more to say. *[silence]* I hope it opens people's minds somehow. But I cannot know what it means for other people, my dancing. I should ask the other people.

I never quite understand but I'm completely delighted by the idea of a dance audience who are not involved directly in the form. I want to know what they see, why they keep coming back. I kind of know from a dancer's perspective why I go and see dance. But spectators who don't dance themselves, that's great. I like going

to see friends dance and people I know dance so, I guess they like to come and see me too. But how can I say what my dancing has in the lives of others?

I could say something about groups, and it's something I wanted to say about why do I dance. There's something kind of fantastic in a society that is obsessed with money to step into an environment where you're at work and money is almost never talked about, that everyone wears the crappiest clothes they have because we're all rolling around on the floor and everybody's in bare feet, whoever you are. I feel so privileged to be spending my working life in an environment where money just doesn't fit at all. Maybe for smaller projects where you take on some of the administrative work and you know precisely the value of your own work, it's different, but still, it's very quick that you're outside of the nuts and bolts of finance somehow, and even if you aren't, that's not something that comes into the studio. We don't spend our lives negotiating. We negotiate material and we negotiate space, but we don't have to negotiate money which is kind of a relief. Mind you it's all because we work for two-pence and a penny anyway. The fact that it's a group situation so often where nothing exists, the roles within the group are very... In a dance studio there's one person who's vaguely in control but only to a certain extent. And then there's everybody else who can say, "*Who cares, who is really in control?*" Everybody is doing their thing but their thing is completely un-compartmentalized. It's bumping up against everybody else's thing all the time. And that comes down to the bare feet and crappy clothes too.

A lot of my friends and people that I'm very close to are dancers and choreographers and me being present in the dance community in rehearsals and in performances and in social situations with other dancers is like a family or something. My commitment to it is my commitment to them. They go hand in hand.

I can't really speak for the audience 'cause I don't talk to the audience. I don't talk to people outside of the field about the work at all, actually, come to think about it, except for when I go to family parties and they're like "What do you do, oh you're a dancer, that's great, what kind of dance do you do?" And then I have to explain what contemporary is, which is not ballet with running shoes on. So the position or role of my work is somehow only in the community and it's only to subsist the community. But it's not like the community wouldn't continue if I wasn't there. Nor does dancing not continue if I'm not there. But my dancing plays a role of course, because I've been in shows with other people and the ideas that I presented got put in those shows and made them good or bad, but I've never really thought about that until now — that I'm only doing it for me, or I'm only doing it to get better myself, to improve at it. When I say to improve, I'm wondering to improve on *what*, which makes me realize that actually there is some kind of an ideal in my head of what exactly I'm going for, as far as like being, doing, making. [silence] Funny. [silence] I'll think about that.

I think my teaching is really important, I think I'm a really important teacher if I may say so. It seems like puffing myself up, but there is a lot of really bad — especially in this country but probably also elsewhere — dance education happening where people are just taught to copy the master, or the copy of the master, or the 5th generation copy of the master, whoever the master is. Even if one is not going to choreograph I think it's important that dancers learn to tap in to their own, access their own creativity, expression, selves, and that's what I do. I give them the permission to fuck around. I don't dance with them unless I'm forced to, because I don't want them to copy me. But I show them my older work on tape. So I don't think it's an exact answer to the question but teaching is part of how my dances are transmitted. People have accessed my work on tape. A major thing happened in my life when I hired an intern who sent my work to the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center. It felt a

little like a funeral: "My life is over now, my work is now enshrined in a Performing Arts library". People hear about it, read about it. There is a quality to the work I've made and even the crappy work I'm sort of proud of, you know, like your younger challenged child. I was always trying to do something but not always succeeding. Last year I taught a repertory class in which I brought back work from the 80's and 90's to a group of kids. Times are very different, and the work was rooted in the time it was made, but there was some archetypal imagery that was really readable and spoke to the kids. It was probably like learning *Oklahoma* except that it was about death-row serial killers in my version. So that's my dancing in the lives of others right now.

Being part of the funding ecology, even though I don't personally make the selection of the artists, I do guide the foundation's thoughts about who they might fund. I try to steer it to more challenging work, work that is not so easy to categorize, not so easy to do, not so easy to pigeon-hole. I have impact in that way. That's not necessarily my dancing but what my dancing has evolved into. I evolved into a supporter of dance, also through my work on the boards of organizations I really believe in. It's not so much my dance that has a role or that is changing but my input into the dance ecology that is changing or having an effect on the next generation of dancers and dance makers.

I'm not sure if my dancing ever meant anything to anybody except to watch something that was engaged and clear and smart and beautiful, I hope. I don't know if it has inspired anything, other than just to watch ... that's all.



5

WHY DO YOU GO SEE DANCE?  
WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR?  
WHAT DO YOU SEE?

The performances that often leave the biggest mark are the ones where the most superficial level of the performance is very distinct from my own investigation. I can more easily dislocate my own process from my experience of looking, all of my own concerns and thoughts and questions don't come in quite so readily when the first layer of what I'm experiencing defines itself as separate from what I do. A lot of that is just materiality of the physical work or a stylistic thing that feels different or separate from the exploration that I'm involved in, but unfortunately when there are overlaps of investigation, it's impossible to not bring in all of my own history in the viewing, and sometimes that gets in the way of direct vision.

I'm seeking something that has a connection to me, something that gives me space. To go see dance is a way of seeing space, creating space for myself. There is so much media that I get bombarded with, or that I bombard and distract myself with, there is something about the physical human self dancing that gives me space from that bombardment of language.

Recently I've decided to try not to have expectation, not to try to look for anything specific, just to go there and be open to experience. Because I'm often working on or thinking about personal projects when I see performances, I get caught in the mind set of what would I have done if I was making this choreography, but I'm trying to step away from that because it does a disservice both to myself as an audience member and a disservice to the work. So when I go to see dance I try to be the audience member that I hope would come to see my performance.

I try to accept other ways of doing and being and I'm trying to find their values. I try to open my idea about choreography and dance. If don't go see things I have the sensation that I will have just one idea and repeat it forever. I will build up my old idea of dance and

I don't like that so I try to avoid it. Each time I'm starting a project or each time I'm going to see a project it's as if I don't know anything about dance. I'm a very curious person and I think we have to be. In order to do dance, we have to see dance.

I try to produce critical perspective on my own practice, so going to see other people's work is part of trying to open new directions, to articulate what my critique of other directions that I don't agree with are. It can be very productive to be in a boring show. Of course I can leave, but I decide to go somewhere to spend a certain amount of time and once I'm there, it's not a question of whether I like what I'm seeing or whether I'm engaged, but how actively I can produce sensation or thought while I'm there and sometimes I find it more productive to watch things that I disagree with because it provokes me. Other times it's just frustrating, but I'm interested in this productive provocation. I'm interested in how I'm either stimulated to think by what is proposed, or the opposite of not being able to relate to what I'm watching and in that way actually being forced to produce a counter-thought in on one way or another. So for me that's a good reason to go to see dance and also to go to see things that I might know before are not going to be a revelation.

I go see performances to get inspiration. Seeing the space of the stage gives me concrete interest, puts me closer to my own desires. It gives me urgency basically. When I feel the event of the performance, of being in the audience, I can think more concretely what is important or what is missing or what I want, what would be interesting, according to me obviously. I find it interesting to go see things that are not good or that I don't like as a whole and to manage to extract interesting thoughts about it. Why not this? Why do I react negatively to this? Why do I think this is not possible? Which helps to figure out what then I should do instead, what I should work on myself.

It's a constant feedback between what the others are doing and what stance I would like to take. I also go to see dance because the theater or the space of representation is not so easy to access. You don't go to a dance piece like you go to the movies. It's much more demanding, and it's happening now. It's a bit like Land Art, or site-specific work. If you never went to the spiral jetty you have no idea about what the spiral jetty is. There is a moment created by physical presence. It's a birth every time which is not like any other event. It's an intensification of life parameters.

I'm committed to time-based art, I enjoy the process of seeing the unfolding of an idea that happens in a complex and directed way in performance and dance. To see how somebody shapes and thinks about that unfolding is one of the things I'm most interested in.

I know there is a rehearsal process before the performance, but once you get to the stage, it's still happening in the moment. There are still things that could go off at any moment and everyone is working together and it's communal and exciting. It can be very exciting to experience that.

I go to see dance because I like to see what people can do with their bodies, the choices they made, how to move, which costumes they chose. I don't like to see dance when all of these options are not fulfilled. Maybe I like spectacle. Something intriguing. Virtuosity is also for sure why I go to see dance, it's amazing. I could be amazed by the performers or the complex structure. When I'm not amazed, it's boring. Mainly I'm attracted to the physicality. And it's really beautiful with a big B when I can be touched by dance. That's not the main parameter, but when it happens it's Beautiful. I go to see dance to bring my own mind to a different space, to open my mind in a different way than would happen from myself: it comes from outside.

It has to do with being in the field for a long time and it's very rare but sometimes I realize that dance performances, the performers, the dancers performing, can ... *touch me*. Aah, touch me, it's so vague. That was the reason that I started to go in the beginning and when I have it still now, it's very rare but it's a wonderful effect.

I'm interested in seeing other people try out ideas even if they fail. It doesn't mean that I'm always happy or pleased with what I'm seeing. Often I'm not, but I'm an enthusiastic dance-goer, I go to support.

I don't need to be isolated from the rest of the artistic community, and I want to see people from the dance field. So it's a social moment, and that's part of the game. There's so much going on here and I would love to see more but it's a lot to process. So sometimes a deciding factor is whether I know people who are performing. I go to support my friends and to support people's work that I appreciate, whether it's because I like their politics or their aesthetic choices or other things that they embody. Sometimes it's obligation, what I *should* see, tinged with anxiety about what I'll miss if I don't.

I wouldn't be engaged in this form if I wasn't interested in the form, but I see more dance than I'm really interested in because I know dancers and I'm engaged in that social community. But that's natural because I want to understand something more intimate about where my colleagues, peers, or people in this moment of time are, and where their thought process is going.

I go to keep track of what people are working on, what are the concerns of active artists, what theaters decide to show. I keep track of which places are programming what, and what's going on from the audience's perspective. Because each theater also has their own

preferences, direction, approach. I like to remember that they are different spheres and it's not only people thinking in the same way, homogeneously, so keeping track of different places of interest and reflection, cultural spheres, I guess.

I also like very much to see works in progress, things that are not perfect yet or that demand participation from the viewer. Because they're still full of content. As a spectator then I feel responsible for thinking in it and I also think of its form as one possible assemblage amongst a series. You are allowed to see other possibilities, and more potential than when you receive the perfect finished package which then you can only try to understand what wanted to come through and discuss it in past tense. I like to be in the position where I can still dismember, take it apart and think "*Ah, it looks like this because it's put together like this or because they perform it in this way*". I can still see the layers of the work and think almost as one of the people who worked on it, I think what's the goal and how to achieve it or what is it trying to do and if it is managing to do it.

I'm interested in seeing as many approaches as possible because it offers information on how to work, and on the state of the art or where the field is. I also try to relate it to a historical development of what dance has been through and what the different approaches have been, and how I relate myself to the approaches which are the most recent.

I go see dance because I want to know what other people are talking about. I consider dance as a form of talk. They create this discourse and through the discourse comes knowledge. I like to compare pieces and build up my knowledge so that I can develop my own ideas in regard to the pieces that I've seen. Perhaps that will help me create work that is comprehensive of a certain historical element that dance definitely has. Exposure to work, movement styles and dancers gives me a sense of validation, that what I'm doing is not purposeless.

There are other people that are pursuing the same type of aesthetic goal and artistic resonance.

What are these people making, who are these people, why are they making what they're making, how does it look, who's in the audience, what's going on, what's the thing? That's what I look for in the pieces that I'm seeing, that's the question that I'm answering.

The glib answer is that I have to go for my job as a funder, I have to see as much as possible. I have this history of dancing and being involved in the dance community and I still am involved in the dance community greatly. I do like to see which "*new*" ideas are happening, how people are beginning to think about and synthesize choreography with other art forms, how dance has progressed or not progressed in collaboration with other art forms. I just like to see how people are using this stuff, dance. I am more often disappointed then elated but you know sometimes you have these moments that are really magical or transformative moments or moments that really deeply touch and move me, in that collective experience of being. They're present at the time, not removed or separated by a screen, experiencing this sort of sweat and physicality, that's what I keep coming back too. I like seeing dance in smaller venues. I tend to lose focus when the venue is too large, or when I'm too far away, when it really feels like it could be on a computer screen.

Being in a dance performance is so outside of everything else in life, that it's always good, even if it's *terrible* work. It's always good just walking away from your life. It's like being on holiday for an hour somewhere really far. And no matter how bad a dance piece is, sitting in the dark is great because you can always put on stage what you would rather be seeing, unless the music is super loud.



I don't really look for anything when I go see dance. I try not to *expect* anything when I go to see a dance piece. Especially at the level of language, of how much the dance piece is gonna to be dance or it's gonna to be another medium, so I'm not looking for a dance performance to fulfill a certain expectation in terms of what it's supposed to be in its style, in its use of dance language.

I look for vividness. I look for people who inhabit the moment with nothing between them, the experience, the material, and the people who are there. I look for performers who read like verbs, embodiments of process rather than subjects or nouns engaging in material, in objective notions of execution. I look for performers who fully inhabit something. Awareness, that's what I look for.

I look for the relationships of weight, space and rhythm.

I'm especially delighted when I go to see dance that's technically challenging and invigorating but at the same time deeply moving. I look for that kind of technical expertise. We've trained all of our lives. We should see the results of our training. As an audience member I crave that level of rigor, but within that I want to see expression, I want to see qualifying movement that is about something. I am delighted when I walk away from a piece in an evening in the theater and I feel transformed by it. Either my beliefs shifted, my energy has been replenished, I've had a deep emotional response to something. I occasionally see those kinds of performances, however I don't think there's enough of them. I think that is the result of the world we're living in today. People are pushed and rushed in having to make work and get it out too fast. Dancers have to learn things quickly and get them on the stage quickly. Sometimes I see nice technique, but I don't see that investment in a thorough rehearsal process where I feel like those dancers have transformed their technique in to an artistic statement, where they're embodying the work, and I wonder if the choreographer had time to qualify his

movement for those dancers. Did he really talk to them about what he wants them to say through the work?

I need there to be something behind it, I need there to be some reason. It's a special art form because it's so human and there's so much dance that's so arbitrary and doesn't do anything other than having people rolling around, writhing on the floor. I want to see that these dancers know they're performing and there has got to be a reason behind it.

I look for performative investment. I'm really interested in the way in which one approaches movement. I'm interested in technical ability in a way that when I see someone who is really articulated and masterful in their body I love it. I like to see people do things that are hard to do because I know how hard it is to do them. It's beautiful to see the body in extreme places. I'm really interested in the way in which one invests themselves, their body, they're heart, their person, in to what they're doing. Can they fill their body out with all those things, can they be really articulate and yet have an experience of what they're doing, really have the experience of the performance and also give that to the audience? It's not about being theatrical. It's about investing yourself in your control of the space, of the time, of the theater. Because you can really make the room anything you want, you won't necessarily grab everyone in the audience but there's so much about imagination that goes in to being a performer that if you are so fully in a state of being or place, you can draw the audience in to where you are and so I look for that. I don't always see that, but I do sometimes.

I look for an experience and for risk. So I'm watching the performer. I can see the concept and I'm interested in the concept, but the truth is that I'm watching the people doing it and the way they do it. If they take risk, if they let it go, if they express themselves, their methods of being on stage.

If there are people onstage, I expect to see them. I expect to see them together, next to, and with the performance. I don't expect the people to be absent so that the performance can be clear. When people are put on stage I have a need to feel them connecting with who they are and what they individually are giving to the performance. When that aspect is not there, it's frustrating. I feel pity. I need that relation with the performers. There's something specific in each one of them and there's a reason why they're there, and I can taste what they gave to the performance. Not only what the choreographer wanted them to do or what the superstructure is.

This matters to me because when I go to the theatre I want to feel that something about humanity, in a very deep unifying way, that anybody from any country could tap into, is revealed.

Secretly I'm probably looking for the same ideas that I'm interested in but at the same time wanting to be surprised by other ideas. I'm looking for craft also, and passion about it. I'm looking for something different than what I do so that I can be opened. I can be surprised and my mind can be broadened by other people's, thoughts. Lately I feel like I want to be blown away in my experience of going to see performance. I really just want someone to shock or surprise me. It's not about shock-value, but lately I just have a strong desire to see something that I've never seen before.

I wouldn't say newness because there's not really any such thing as newness, it's more a sense of self and since I maybe don't know the person or maybe never seen the person dance before, having an intense sense of self makes me feel like I'm watching something new, even if it's something that I've seen a million times before in terms of actual physical movement.

I always love it when it's something I never thought of and it's done really well. I really believe in this as a form, it's a hard form

and I'm always hopeful when those lights go down. I'm hopeful that it's gonna be something that moves me, and my criterion now is, do I come out of the performance a better person than when I went in? That's really it. Is my mind working better, do I feel better, what? That's what I like about it, so that's why I go. To give myself that opportunity.

I look for the challenges that it provides for me. Some dance has really challenged the way I'm thinking about the world, about feelings, relationships.

It's very rare when I go see dance that I can get this very strong energy, but it happens, that it transforms my perception of my own body to see another body moving, so in this sense it's interesting and I enjoy it but it's still distant from me. I cannot distinguish my gaze anymore from this dance knowledge that I have learned. I see tools, I see tricks. I don't dive into the emotionality of it or the physicality of it. There a barrier of over-saturation or education that prohibits the physical sensation from the stage to reach me. I am looking to receive or perceive sensation from the body of the other when it's moving.

I look for work that moves me. I don't look from an intellectual, conceptual place normally, though I really get in to it, I like the dis-course of it. But if that's all there is then I'm not interested.

I'm looking for a complexity that I understand, not a complexity that I feel that there's something that I should understand and I don't. I'm looking for people that can involve a total stranger like me in their interests and fantasies. I'm looking for people, performers, choreographers, that can involve me as a watcher in what's happening on stage.

I really like to get it, know that it's happening now and that I am as an audience member somehow involved and that synthesis is making

it happen. I don't look so much for craft, I look for connections, "I look for expression, OK, I'm alive you're alive we're in this space together, we have two different roles but we're making the same thing." The audience and performer together are making something unique and ephemeral and something that won't be repeated in exactly the same way ever again. That's the magic of it, when it happens, when it clicks.

I look for something that questions what is real and what not. I think I look also for doubt. There are solutions, questions, formulas. I look for understanding in the performers: you treat a question, or a matter or a problem and I want to see, also in the performance, the process of that work. I look for things that I'm gonna be thinking about later, a type of accurate capturing of a purpose, of an idea that has the power to resonate with me later on.

I look for specific timing. In life we are caught inside many timings that create pressure or stress, synchronization, organization, we are always available to a certain flow of communication between people. I like to see this detailed utopia and to see that someone is doing a good job inside of it, and then I have the feeling that I attend to a specific timing. It is connected to the future, but processing in real-time. When you have a good teacher in school, the way he explains things is very much about *real* time. Going home after class, you don't have to go back to your notes, as you do in a more laborious way when you have a bad teacher. Because when you face a very good teacher you really have the feeling that this person is a bit further. It relates to the idea of reminiscence, that you've already felt this and that this person has a very accurate way to communicate it. I like this idea of Agamben, that in a way the dancing body has nothing to communicate but he is more busy with questioning *communicability* and communication. So I look for a specific timing that is precisely pointing out the difference between communication and communicability.

The craft of dancing to me is only interesting if it is framed in a way where it also relates to something other than a dance history or knowledge. I'm interested in where dance or movement is actually something which is closely connected to the world, what is going on, in society, the technological developments that we're dealing with, the idea of borders disappearing and a free-flow of information. These things are new, a new state of being, so I think that it's important that the work reflects this. I'm interested in how the work proposes positions in relation to the world.

Yesterday I was in this conference where an academic person articulated the difference between the histories of Art and Science. He said that in the history of Science, progress always cancels out what came before, and in Art that's not the case. In Art the value or the quality of a new Art movement does not cancel out an older one. Of course he's right that there are movements in Art History that are still considered extremely important and which cannot be canceled by a new development or counter-theory because there's no real right or wrong, but I do think as an artist working now it's important to still insist on looking for new models, because as the world is constantly developing and as Science is constantly developing, there is a constantly developing understanding of the world, and if you stay closely connected to these new developments in the world, you produce expression in a different way, so what is important to look for is how certain work relates to what is going on in the world and also the contemporariness of this relation.

I look for intellectual and kinesthetic stimulation. Because I've taught so much Dance history I've had to learn about other kinds of dance from the kinds that I automatically gravitate to. That has been very valuable for me so that I can actually now get a certain kind of pleasure in certain kinds of traditional Modern dances that I otherwise have largely found intolerable. I've had to open up my aesthetics and that's still really an ongoing process. I'm still working on that.

When I first came to New York there was a lot of break-dancing in clubs, I never was a break dancer but I loved watching it, people were inventing and reinventing, taking ancient forms without even knowing they were doing it and changing it up. I've never seen Krumping live, the Lachapelle film was sort of amazing seeing this dance form happening in a community. I can fall for these really sappy things like African-American traditional forms, people drumming and dancing for the sheer joy of getting the sweat and blood going. I'm not purely a post-modernist or contemporary dance maiden. I think I look to be transported or changed, to see and recognize something about me in the performance. Sometimes it's an intellectual thing that made me think about stuff, about me, about the world at large. Sometimes it's very physical or emotional or just really personal. I like seeing solo's a lot, one person putting themselves and really *themselves*, out there for us to see. It's an incredibly brave thing if they're really doing it, this incredibly intimate physical act. I don't care a lot about dance techniques, traditional or codified, any of them. Recently I was on this anonymous panel, I saw someone I didn't know at all, he was this tap dancer and his artistry was amazing even on tape, not just his artistry, not just the technique, something way beyond that coming through a bad video tape, on a small monitor, through to me - quite touching.

I get excited about seeing someone whose body looks as though they have experienced a range of dance practices and styles so that they are not fluent in only one language but they have touched on pieces of multiple cultures in their practice and multiple perspectives in their training. I'm looking for dance that makes me say, "*Wow, I wish I could do that*", because I don't think it's something I'm currently capable of, or "*Wow I wish I was doing that*", because it's something I know I *am* capable of and would like to be a part of.

I think brevity is really underrated. I think self-editing is a really hard process and it seems like a lot of people who are creating

work have a hard time letting go of the things they've created. There's a preciousness of having an idea and wanting to explore every possible aspect of it and show them all and I find that unnecessary and not always a great choice. I appreciate stuff that's unpretentious and that doesn't try to be anything that it's not.

I really try not to look for anything and I think I mostly see a reflection of my own experience.

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I see a lot of craft, I see a lot of people who've learned to make dances, you know, how to move the pieces around, they've learned the trendiness, the fashion of it. Most often I don't see a lot of deep thinking or deep feeling.

I see a lot of blankness actually. I see a lot of hesitation that's not about letting go of the self. So I look for performers who pass through their notion of self in a way that allows them to attain something that I can describe as liveness, subjectivity, engaging in a process with the world.

I see people. Dance has the ability to be very abstract and even still there are always people doing something, making something together. I like to see that, the effort, the rigor, the connectivity of people. It just seems like a very human endeavor. And witnessing that is special.

I see materialized energy. I look at how people organize time and space in terms of how they channel energy.

Sometimes I have time to see how the thing is made, sometimes I have time to see the light change, and some other times I get more taken by the whole action and what it's doing to me. I can

enjoy abandoning myself to the feeling of a performance, and sometimes the performance puts me more in the position of analyzing what's happening and I enjoy that too. Sometimes I get bored. That's OK too.

Sometimes I see people who think they involve me but are just using the stage as a place to get over their own personal shit, and it's annoying. I see people that assume ideas in my place as a viewer that I don't have or I don't wanna have.

I went through a period where I was really critical and it was hard to find performances that would have a strong effect on me because I could only see the inside. I wouldn't let it work on me, and now it starts to work again. Maybe it's because I become more at ease with what I want that I can observe each work for a proposal and not for a statement, even though sometimes those are the same.

I think what I see now in the circles I am engaged in is a kind of shift from the politics or critique of representation towards a politics of perception, attention, and experience. Shifting from what the body onstage is doing towards what the body of the spectator is *doing*, and it's not a shift towards participation like interaction or interactivity with the audience, but it's a shift of focus of from where to work. There's been a lot of work done on the body and thinking about what the body is, how it can be represented differently, and what is this difference in how the body is represented, and I think now there's an interesting shift which goes towards which body are we talking about? Are we talking about the body that is actually onstage? Or are we talking about the bodily capacity or experience which is in the audience? This for the moment I think is extremely exciting and I see people being busy with this and it feels like something new.

I see people busy with what is already there: how they deal with their physicality, the movies they like, the philosophers they like, the

ideas that are circulating that they like, or they have a stance because they think that some ideas have a certain power and others should have more. I see also an attempt to question physical appropriation, and it's not only about processing references, or questioning how you work.

I see thoughts happening. I see a connection between the mentality of the dancer and the physique of the dancer. Sometimes it is less connected than other times. The dancers who I think are good have the ability to relate their presence to a continuous moment, something that can't just end when the dance ends.

I go see dance because it can be the impulse for a discovery. I look for Surprises. I see complications, unanswered questions, unfinished ends.

I go because that's part of making dance and doing dance and being in it, I look for interesting things, I see a lot of desire, and I'm mostly disappointed. But in a good way. I play hard to get just because it's more interesting for me that way. In actuality I go to see dance because I really like to see dance, *basta*.

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When you are in a certain profession it's very rare that you are really relieved or satisfied by what you see and it's interesting that you can be happy for many different reasons. Even if I would never make a dance-dance piece, it's possible that a dance-dance performance has a sharpness, a preciseness, and a clarity with which I am fully, completely happy. I go in order to get air and I look for the giving of air to come in areas that I did not know. It's not the same as *new*, it can also be combinations of things or the way people execute, it's also not just about surprising. I am happy when I see that there is thinking. I am happy when I know what is at stake, they who make the performance know what is at stake, and that they did not make a performance based

on inspiration and intuition. Because then they did not take the effort to think, to look. Then they were just masturbating themselves in the rehearsal process, or then they were under the roof of exercising in dances. A good performance is a performance where people sat together considering and reconsidering what they were working on, they face the weaknesses and try not to go around their doubts. I look for preciseness, clarity, and complexity. There is the pleasure of complexity with preciseness. There can be many preciseness-es if they stick to the core principle, so then you can discover what is at stake. Then whatever they do with their bodies, whatever they do with dance is not important, it's all okay. The body as such, the body exposing itself in dance and in dance positions is not what makes me happy. It's the piece. The structure, the way it's put together, the way it contradicts itself, but all from sharply knowing what's going on. I see structure, I see composition, I see elements that are combined or not combined, dealing with the *dispositif*, the whole thing, the dance onstage in front of an audience, I look at what they do with this. I am very disappointed when people think they know what dance is or has to be, this habit onstage of people that are sure of their principles. It means that they have opinions, and dance that is made out of opinions of "it has to be like this" is totally not interesting. Because that's repressive. I like when the thinking continues in the piece, that the thinking does not lead to answers, that the thinking leads to questions, that I can continue questioning because they continue questioning. And that the performance finally is not an answer but that the performance is continuing to question sharply after a thorough research. They already answered questions and the questions lead to questions and more questions and more, but they understood the need to limit themselves. In order to understand something as an audience, you need limitations onstage. If I make a dance with only my hand or my finger, then I know that this is the limitation, so then the question is, what did I find out within this limitation? And when you watch a performance and you understand the limitation, you see all the time a thousand possibilities within the

limitation and you are happy when they think of ways of presenting the whole thing when you think that there is a certain consistency. This is what I mean with what is at stake. It needs a limitation. It needs a language too, something that is shared with the people onstage and with the audience. I am looking then at what is happening between those and not just what is happening onstage, so performances that are there to express yourself are not interesting because I don't know what the sources of the expression are but yourself. Why you do this or why you do that, when I don't get the restrictions that the dancers or the performance puts on itself then I cannot read it, there is no language. I need this certain language, and the language is a limitation. Then I can find out what is at stake, and then I am happy. When I find out what the language is, it does not mean that I need to know exactly the principles, because then I am also unhappy. When I get a 100% answer about what is at stake here, then I am not happy. I am happy finally with a clear probe that is presented to me. The relation of a clear problem. It can be many things within *this* restriction, within this subject of a performance that what we share. So you want to talk about something, that is important. Do they address me or do they do it for themselves? As an audience member I want to be addressed otherwise I feel used. I don't want to be used, I don't want to be impressed, and I don't want to be seduced. That's forbidden. Then I am very unhappy. So I'm mostly unhappy. [laughter] And at the end of this question I answered the last question, "Is there anything you would like to see change?"



6

IS THERE ANYTHING  
YOU WOULD LIKE  
TO SEE CHANGE?

I think it's time to come back to dance. I've spend so much time being anti-movement, anti-frills, I think the frills are back. I think that fantasy is back. I think that there's no reason to not make dances. I'm totally interested in the investigation of the performer and the audience and what it means to create a spectacle, what it means to be making dances, but I also feel that all of that is really stifling and I'm tired of closing myself of in this way.

I would like to be less constantly confronted by style as a limitation. So that I can see what's happening in time and in space and in these people without struggling with the taste of it or the sort of superficial genre questions. I want to see demographics. I go to performances and it just seems incredibly bourgeois to me, Judson glam. I go to a performance and it looks limited by the community that it represents.

There's tons of stuff out there and in every little drawer there's something different. Here and in other parts of the dance world there's tons going on. So artistically I'm not sure if I need to see some kind of change but in terms of the way society sees dance and accepts it into our daily lives or in fact how it doesn't is something I would like to see change. Actually I have to take more responsibility for that.

I'd like to be able to see things that are happening all over the world instead of just locally where I am. I would like it to be not so competitive and so critical and self-critical. I would like it to be better paid and more respected. I would really like it to be a world where it didn't always have groups that are always cool and in. I wish there was more room for things that aren't cool to be produced and seen.

I'd really like to feel the medium was respected and valued more in the New York City community of people and maybe even beyond that. A lot of my experience as a dancer in this city can be

sorted in two extremes. When I'm with other dancers it's this very internal, exclusive relation, not because we're trying to be exclusive but just because it's familial, we're made of the same stuff. When I'm with people who are not part of the dance community I feel a really intense sense of alienation. I'm bored and frustrated by those two polar identities that I flip-flop between. I'd love not to experience that.

I would like to see a bigger audience of non-dance people. It's not so much that we have to make people come and keep them there with cattle prods, it's that people are so afraid. I think that's the whole *meaning* thing, which has come through too much talking probably. Everybody has a body and everybody knows that this person [*pull head in*] is a different person than this person [*elongate neck, lean forward*]. We know so much about physicality and the way that we inhabit our bodies, the way that we move through space. We know what gravity is and we know when somebody is pulling against gravity to extend a fall. We know what falling is, we know what tension is, we know all of those things. We don't need to frighten people with the idea that there's something they're not getting. We need to just explore the form in its own right. A few months ago Thierry de Mey said something to me about how he was in a market in Italy and the physicality of everybody there was so much bigger than the reality of being in a supermarket here where you can actually just barcode everything through and not speak to anybody. Our physical world is getting smaller and smaller, until we think that we just live here [*hands on head*]. But that's not true, because everything that happens to us happens through our bodies all the time and all of our experience is stored in the body. We've all got bodies, come on. How can we remove the fear of contemporary dance? So that there isn't anymore *getting* it but just reading it in the same way that we read people on the street *all* the time and we read physicality all the time. Somehow dance *can* be a beautifully refined version of what we already know, not some kind of clever, codified, tricky, tangled sort of elitist thing.

I'm trying to be less judgmental when I see things. Just see them, have a feeling about it. I'm too critical. It's not so hard actually, if I have that in mind I can just say, "*Wait, you're judging, you're thinking too much, you've gone away from what is happening in front of you, you're criticizing, you're even being negative maybe*". It's just a reflection of having expectations and it's not helpful or necessary all the time. It really gets in the way of enjoyment although it can be quite enjoyable watching people dance all kinds of dances. I mean, what a beautiful thing, really.

I hope people can still see that there is an absolute. There has been a lot of questioning whether you can really speak about essential things through movement, through dance and I find it a pity. The body carries all possible experiences, traces of that, and it's sad not to believe in that anymore.

Because dance has a background of stemming from a tradition of entertainment, a lot of times it's more "*experimental*" dance that's trying to challenge preconceived notions, it's easily misunderstood. I think that through dialogue, through words, through language this misunderstanding can be cleared up. In finding a way of talking about the work, I would like more of a dialogue between artists and curators, so that they can contextualize the work and also have a better understanding of the work. I feel like then they can potentially contextualize, frame, present it in a manner that than will again be better understood by the audience or give them some tools to access the work.

I would like dancers to be understood as more intelligent. I believe that we are still operating under a system of anxiety about dancers' intelligence and I think we need to push ourselves to make informal discussions and conversations about dance as part of our everyday experience. I would like to see dance criticism move forward and to have a critical community not only involving artists

that is better informed and more empathetic with the experience of dancing and making dance. To have less inclination towards judgment and also simply the capacity to acknowledge the problems that happen in dance, particularly in dance with a very small audience. To acknowledge that a rude, flippant or unknowledgeable review can really screw up the professional life of a dance maker.

I would like to work more. It's as simple as that: I would like more opportunities to present my work. I feel delight in seeing the work of the next generation but I also would like to feel more involved in current performance and to have less of a hard time bringing my work into the public eye. I would like more money to be available not only to me but to artists and in particular to individual dance artists.

I'd love there to be opportunities for us to dance more and not have to kill ourselves working six jobs. I think it's the biggest thing, to be able to dance and have that be the only thing. There're people who can do it, but those are the big companies.

I would love for the society to value dance in the same way it values pop records or fine arts, painting or sculpture. Dance always gets shorted. It usually takes more money to make a dance than to make a painting, especially if you use other people, collaborators.

I want to see the relationship between programmers and the choreographer change. No more commissions. The choreographer, the artist, should be responsible for what he does and not answer to any commission. I don't like when institutions are making concepts for the artists. There should be a transparent and human relation between artists and programmers, with more respect and curiosity. "*You risk as much as I risk.*" I want to talk with people who are passionate with their job but also patient.

Our lives have been so stressful, not enough opportunities, too many talented people competing for very few positions, very few grants, very few producers or opportunities to do your work, and not enough time. What has saddened me and frankly angered me a great deal in the last four or five years is that I feel that presenters are so sought after and have so much material to look at and so many people approaching them that there's become kind of a numbness to the artist and as a result I feel like a certain amount of curiosity or risk taking is not at the forefront of their decisions about who they produce and present.

What I would like to see change is that there would be constant change in the field, that people take choices and are informed and with all that information and all that history and all that intelligence go on further and change things in an interesting way.

I would like to see the dance world morph, not in a revolution but at least acknowledge that it is changing and that change is important for the artist. These moments are thoughtful. I like to see moments that are thoughtful and not moments that are vacant of thoughts.

When I think about what the form of dancing is or what it achieves as a cultural, social construct, I do have a desire for it to be more substantial in its impact in relationship to culture. A friend of mine recently said that the era of individual artists making performances and placing them into a venue and calling it *the work* had really ended. That something else was going to emerge in relationship to dance and performance, that the whole construct was going to shift or desperately needed to shift, although I don't know that she really knew or could articulate what that would be. I feel like people have been looking and longing for some thing like that. When we think about moments in dance history where everything shifted or changed, specifically like most recently maybe with Judson Dance Theater, things really went somewhere else. You can't dislocate

that from the time because the time was a moment of revolution and everything in society was changing. Now it feels like it just keeps getting thicker and deeper in this way and people are longing for some radical shift in the world and yet it seems like the problems that we face or the paradigm just gets more entrenched, so you see continuing examples of feelings like "*here we are in this place that we've been but now it's just a worse version of it*", it's an aggravation of intractable issues that haven't moved against an enormous desire on the part of people to see that move.

I'd like everyone to be more serious. I think a lot of people in the dance world are, I have a lot of respect for the dance world actually but I would like to see the dance crowd operate as a gifted and gifting economy, not as a commercial economy.

I want to see more acts of compassion in the world of dance, on stage. It doesn't mean it has to be pretty. It doesn't mean it has to be loving. It just means that it has to be aware of itself in relationship to its audience, people as well as performers. Life is way too short for dishonesty. I'm not saying that I don't want confrontation. I want challenge and I want things to be in-your-face, but I want those things to be self-aware and with compassion, because challenge and conflict and forcing the world to recognize darker truths can be done with compassion. There's all the socioeconomic things I could say but we'll leave those as glaring details that need to be addressed in the world of art in America and how Americans view art. Just warmth and honesty, that's what I'm hoping and looking for in the work that I see, in the community that I have chosen to be a part of. Humor. Fun. Love. Appreciation of others. Willingness to be constructively critical in the work which invites that, which invites being seen through that light.

*"Is there anything you would like to see change (dance related)?"*  
As opposed to is there anything you would like to see changed in your

hair, because I was thinking sometimes when I perform my hair looks really big, maybe I should change that. I would like to change my underwear because I danced in them today. You catch me in a really bad moment for this because I'm at the end of an epic week of working, but I don't want to cop out of this question. So here it goes: don't show me what I've seen before. It doesn't have to be brand spanking new every fucking time, we all know that's impossible. Don't show it to me again and pretend it's yours, that's even worse. Put in effort and work on it, something interesting will come out. I'm a little tired of uncreative solutions to problems that people impose on themselves in the first place. Don't put yourself in the situation and then say, "Oh my god what am I doing in this situation, I can't find a way out, I'd better do this thing that'll get me out of here!" That's a NO. Because you put yourself in that situation in the first place. That situation doesn't exist so there's no reason to use any solution.

There's a million things I'd like to see change. The most prominent is the idea that you belong to a medium and that funding goes to a medium or that you can divorce yourself from art as a pan-activity by calling yourself a sculptor or a choreographer, etc. Specifically for dance I'd just like to see more people incorporating different media without it necessarily staying in the realm of dance. The life of a dance-piece versus an installation that lasts one month, the problem is, of course your body, how can you do something for a month straight, people do it, but then it's called visual art or performance art, so I guess I'd like to see a little bit more cross-pollination which a lot of people are talking about right now. I'd like to see it really happen.

Sometimes I think it's easier to reach out to non-artists than other artists working in different fields. They have their shows and we have ours. We have our magazines and they have their publications of all sorts. It's all so very separate. That's important on some level but then I'd like that to change. Bring 'em in.

I would like to see an extraterrestrial. I mean, I would like to see dancers [*laughter*]. Recently I was reading ... (undecipherable) and he said Performing Art is like an eternal teenager. Sometimes I feel dizzy when I go to see a performance because I have the feeling we are still trapped in this romantic attachment towards a specific shape or a specific body to become. This will to produce, to *try try try* and to engage physically is very valuable but I don't go for this idea that everything is nice to do. As artists we have now to define very precise conditions for the work to exist. Why do I do this piece? Why do I go here? Why do I work in this way? I very much have the feeling that we live in an epoch of recipes: suddenly you improvise yourself as a singer for instance, and suddenly you improvise yourself as something else. It's very nice, it's great that everyone can try many things but sometimes it takes time and things should be dug into. I am very afraid of entertainment mixing with this. I would like a better evaluation of very simple things. Now that everybody can fictionalize his life very much, and we really swim in a very exciting sea of images and possibilities to stage the presence you have in the world, it's very important to choose instead of saying "Ok, everything is to take" and go.

No more acceptance of mediocrity, I wish some people would just stop. Maybe that's arrogant to say. I wish people would think, know, or feel why they're doing it. You're not doing it for the money, you spend hours rehearsing, you're taking class, why the fuck are you doing it? I hate that feeling when I see other people's work. It's not easy, you're not gonna be rewarded financially or by any of the other markers of reward in this society, why are you putting yourself and me through this?

I want dance education to ask harder questions, to get people to think about what they do, why they're doing it, why they aren't dentists. I want people to be educated better, I want dance and choreography education to be sharper and more focused, more probing.

I hope that people creating contemporary dance works would start to think on a larger scale that would encompass greater audience, greater numbers so that the richness of what we're all working on can start to be exposed to larger groups and have larger venues, and more financial support. I don't want to have to expand out of the dance world to make larger works. I would rather the dance world be able to evolve to support grandiose ideas without having to have a commercialness or thinking it's a sell-out. I definitely would like to see for my own work and my own dance life, venues that are a little more supportive of commenting on commerciality, and glossiness. Sometimes I find the spaces that I'm forced to perform in don't match my expectations of the visual aspect that I would like to work with.

I'm skeptical about works that are reproduced as a type of choreographic *"This is what we can do and it is based on history and we are reproducing these works in order to further establish a constant, persistent exclamation of our ability and strength!"* Dancers have strength but they are also weak in several ways and those weaknesses are not bad. Those weaknesses are important to art because flaws are not necessarily critical moments of failure. In my experience people have been told that they will or will not succeed if they do these things right and being the best is the ultimate goal but I don't think there is a best choreographer or a best dancer. There is the dancer who persistently has the ambition and the mentality to pursue a changing space, a changing environment and keep up with that, the chase in finding what dance is, more importantly then re-affirming what dance was.

I think I'm a sucker for change, completely. I think that change in itself is not a value, but change is neither about improvement. Change has to do with differentiating by understanding what we are really well, by being able to simply understand where the field is and being able to differentiate a slight shift or a slight change of

direction. For me this is extremely important. This includes change. So change is like a basic condition. We search for change and we produce change all the time through differentiating from what we know. I don't have anything particular that I would like see change in theater, I find it interesting for the moment to think about formats, to think about the conventional theater set up, which is fine and great, but there's also many other ways of setting up the stage and understanding what is a stage and what can be shown on the stage. The rethinking of what and where is the stage and how do we use it, relating to formats of presentation is quite an interesting thing for the moment. How to develop other models of performance presentation which would make it possible to get beyond this very simple reduction of the whole process of work into the moment of stage presentation. How can we change the models of presentation so that performance can be considered outside of the conventional theater?

Of course change is important. Actually now with a group, we are working on trying not to fall into the typical institutions that exist already and I really hope to meet new people and new activity. We're drawing outside of the lines, we don't fit into any mole, we're trying to fit a round peg into a square hole, without making compromises, just enjoying the work we do and letting it produce whatever it produces, not trying to give in to expectations and make shapes that don't push the borders of space. To make *shapes* that push the borders of shapes - that's a nice way of imagining a dance that I would like to do in the work that I'm currently busy with, actually. To make shapes that push the borders of space really far.

But I don't want to change what other people are doing. They should do their thing. What I want to see change is myself, to see me change, by dancing. I want it to be more about love. I want it to be more and more about all those reasons that answer the first question.



# EPILOGUE

*AT LARGE: An encounter*

At the early stages of the project, in the process of inventing our own social dance fad (later called *Scratching*), we had the notion that this fad should take place (or be staged and filmed taking place) on rooftops. Because of the implication that it should be happening “on the street” and the foresight that this would be an unnatural or forced progression, what a better place to wrest such a pretense? On an elevated platform that hovers above the *agora* and remains disconnected and isolated from it, the roof would serve as metaphor for our actual position in relation to “street” culture. We would use the urban environment merely as scenography, have only a visual relation to the public sphere, and thereby also secure the fiction, implausibility, and constructed nature of our “social” dance phenomenon.

After several very scenic video shoots and rehearsals on rooftops, this idea was discarded for its pessimism, weakness, resignation to representation, and total ineffectiveness. The roofs were a pretty stage with no audience, more aesthetically seductive than politically active, and prevented all possibility of actually trying to instigate any kind of event, action, movement, or change through the fabrication of a social dance phenomenon. So in favor of a more sincere experiment in making the fake real, and rather than just underlining the fake in the fake, we stopped dancing on rooftops and went for a more proactive approach. Eventually we invited others to join in the realization of *Scratching*, teaching it in workshops, on YouTube, and inviting others to continue developing and spreading it.

Before this shift in approach, on our very last rooftop rehearsal, all that time spent on rooftops finally payed off in an unexpected way. On the roof of P.S.1. in Queens, New York, we asked the security guard what he thought about the dances we were doing, and thus we met Blair, a serendipitous intercessor to our process. For the rest, I will let Blair speak for himself.

*Eleanor Bauer*

SCENE - ON A ROOFTOP IN QUEENS, NEW YORK.

CHARACTERS - ■ BLAIR ■ ELEANOR ■ FEMKE ■ MANON

■ Can you tell me about —

■ About the hustle?

■ First you said that what we were doing looked like the bump.

■ Yeah, the bump is is an old dance. From like the early sixties, something like that. They say what goes around comes around, and a lot of dances is coming back around now, but everybody's adding they own little flavor to it, you know? Dancing is like, you just follow the music, and you *feel* it. I don't know for anybody else, but I know that when I hear music, 'specially when I go out to a club, I can not stop dancing. I won't stop 'till they say party's over, last record. I dance through any dance, through any body, you know it's just feelin' the music. That's how I release a lot of my stress, alot of the tension. That's why I said, *music soothes the savage beast*, cuz alot of times, with a job like this I just be wantin' to *lose* it, but I go home and blast my music, and it'll be a good day after that.

Like my favorite artist now is Kanye West, that's my favorite artist *now*, cuz he makes sense out of his music. Music is the key to a lot of things. A lot of people don't know that now, but it really is. And if you can dance, it releases so much energy, it's like a workout. That's why alot of people, when they do aerobics, they actually doin' *dance* steps, movin' it in *as aerobics*. So dance has come a long way, from the Charleston, all the way up to the, what did they used to call it, the Camel Walk.

■ What's the Camel Walk?

‡ It's the old dance my grandma used to do, and and when you look at it now, it's a part of the Electric Boogie. I know you heard of the Electric Boogie, where you [*circular arm motion, fingers interlocked*] snap your body and you bring it around. It's somethin' like that. But I love to dance. If y'all had music, like live music where y'all could turn it up, I would probably show y'all somethin' cuz I would feel the music and I wouldn't be *able* to stand still.

‡ You have an iPod.

‡ Ah yeah I know but if I do that, then they gonna come up here and be like, "*What are you doin'!?!?*"

‡ I will take full responsibility [*laughter*].

‡ But it's so, it's so *finicky* here, you know I was helpin' somebody else out, an artist that worked here and they was like "*Yo, we can't do that, you gotta stand over there and be quiet*". That's why I really didn't say nuthin' to y'all when y'all first came up. I just introduced myself and that was it. But dancin' is everything. It is.

‡ What's your favorite dance now?

‡ My favorite dance now, I don't even — I make up my own dance as I go along. Whatever I'm feelin', that's what I'm a give you. It's like if I'm on the dance floor, and I'm feelin' a little, how do you call it, grimy, I'm gonna give you a *grimy* dance.

‡ What's a grimy dance?

‡ It's like, how can I put it to you? It's like, if I'm dancin' with somebody, or if I'm by myself, I make a real evil look, it all depends on the music. The artist I'm listenin' to. If I'm listenin' to Kanye West, I try to give you a educated dance. You know what I'm sayin' like

a proper dance. But if I'm listenin' to somebody like Jay-Z, I probably try to do a hustlin' style, a hustlin' dance. You know it's all the rhythm of the music that you hear, that's all it is, and you follow it. For me, the grimiest artist right now is the Onyx. They made a record called *Slam*. And it's like, where you just be in the room and you be pushin' everybody and everybody be pushin' you. I love that. But certain people they get too wild with it. They don't know how to control they elbows, the arms flyin' and the finger pokin'. So I try to stay away from that crowd.

‡ That's grimy.

‡ Yeah. They have so many names for dances now. They have a, they call it Wall Bumpin'. It's like when you're standing against a wall, and you're dancin' with a girl, and all she does is just bumpin' you, they call that Wall Bumpin'. They got so many dances. And now, as music comes out, they tryin' to make up music for they dances, to fit the dance. Like what's one that's out, they had one for the Cabbage Patch.

‡ What's that?

‡ It's a dance called the Cabbage Patch.

‡ It's the one with the arms? [*doing a circle with fists*]

‡ Yeah, yeah exactly. See, every time that somethin' comes up, they try to fit a dance in there because dancin' is everything. Especially if music is a part of your soul and it's a part of my soul. And I used to rap a loooooong time ago. You know but I gave it up so now there's music that just sits in my heart. I'm supposed to go out tonight, *Aww man* am I gonna dance tonight! I don't think I'm gonna stop tonight. As long as you enjoy yourself, I don't see no harm in dancin'.

‡ Where do you go out dancing?

‡ I go to clubs. There's this club, um, let's see where am I goin' tonight? Shadow. Club Shadow. You have to be, you know, an older crowd to get in, you can't be 18, 19, they not gonna let you in. You have to be *of age* to get in there. You can't wear jeans, you gotta wear slacks, shoes, button-up shirt. That's where I'm goin' out dancin' kinda like proper. You know, like "*I don't wanna get no sweat on you!*" Now, if I'm goin' to a *grimy* club, you know then I'll put on the jeans, dirty boots, turn my hat backwards. I get on the dance floor and I just [*stomping foot*] start stompin' it out, 'cuz it's just, you know, it's a grimy club, you know that's what you expected to do, I ain't gonna dance proper in a grimy club, it's not gonna be right at all.

‡ What about our dance?

‡ Yeah, what y'all was doin' was nice, but like I said, just a little music, aah, then y'all woulda went a *long way* with that. Music controls everything nowadays. But I keep tellin' people: rappers, or R&B singers, anybody that entertains is a *human being*. We make the people who they are. If we stop buyin' they records, they become regular people like us, they go to school, they gotta go out and get a job, or even go to the streets, rob and steal. But, *we* supply that *for* them, and it hurts me to the fact that if I see an artist and I be like, "*Hey, how you doin can I get your autograph?*" and they say "*No*", it hurts me because I just went out and spent \$2,000 on everything you made in your *life* and I can't get an *autograph*? It don't *take* long. You know it it hurts me when they do that. But I don't stop listenin' to they music, though, because they music, it *does* somethin' to me. And you know I wish artists could understand that. And take heed to the little people. Cuz I call myself a little person because if I vote now, it doesn't really matter, but if a *group* of us votes, it matters. So that's my aspect on it, but you know, without music, I don't know. Me personally, I don't think I would last that long. Because music is everything. I listen

to everything: jazz, rock, I listen to a little, little, little, *heavy metal* [*eyebrows raised*]. My favorite uh, my favorite group is uh, what is it? Greenday. Nobody *believe* me, but that's my favorite group *now*. I listen to all music. Country, you know, anything that has a beat to it, and it *sounds* good, I listen to it. I listen to it all day. But if it doesn't make no sense, how can I listen to it?

‡ You were going to tell us about the Bus Stop. What's that dance?

‡ Oh, the Bus Stop is like, well, a bunch of people get together, and the record tells you what to do. You know like, so, if it say [*start clapping*] "*Turn left, [clap, clap], now turn right [clap, clap], now two steps back, [pause], now two steps right*", you just follow the record but it be a *crowd* of y'all. How do I put it, it's somethin' like Simon Says: whoever messes up, gotta sit down. So the record tells you what to do. It' says, "*grab your partner to your left*", so I would grab my partner to my left, and then it say, "*now cha cha with her*", so you know, I cha cha with her. Then they say, "*spin her around grab the partner on your right*", and you know you gotta keep *that* going. And whoever messes up, they go sit down, it's somethin like Musical Chairs or like I said, Simon Says.

But there's alot *to* dancin' and you could turn one dance into another dance, into another dance, into another dance, really dance is just creatin' your own moves. As long as you're happy with what you're doin', I wouldn't care what the next person says. As long as I don't hit 'em with a wild elbow, 'cuz you got some people that, *man*, when they get on the floor, you need a *helmet* just to protect yourself from them swingin' wildly.

But I consider myself a *causal* dancer. Cuz, it's like, when you go somewhere, you have a tendency, or you must know how to act in certain places. Like, in here, I wouldn't come in here sayin' "*Yo what's good, my dude, what's poppin'? You comin' round da hood today?*"

Nah, I would come in here and be just like “*How y’all ladies?*” like when I first met you, “*Nice to meet you, nice to meet you*”. I ain’t gonna be like “*Yo, what’s good? Gimme five, aaight aaight, aaight!*” I can’t describe to you but it’s like, it’s like a mode that you get into, you know what I’m sayin’. I could be dancin’ around my block and they be like, “*Yo, Blair, you don’t feel good?*” and I’ll be like “*Nah. How you know?*” and they’ll be like “*I could tell by the way you movin’*”. For me it’s like dancin’ describes how I’m feelin’ right then and there.

I get by a speaker, I go to the bar and I get me a whole container of orange juice, and I sit there and I drink the whole container of orange juice and dance by the - you ever been to a club and seen how big them speakers are? When I leave out it be “*beeeeeeeeeeep*” and I don’t hear nothin’ but that in my ear but I had fun. Even though I danced with just me and the speaker you know I had fun. You know, that’s what dancin’ and music should be now, you know, fun. Just listenin’ to it, and lettin’ yourself go. That’s what I do, whenever I get on the dance floor I let it go. Sometimes it makes me stop and do a cartwheel. It all depends on how I’m feelin’ that day. It all depends.

‡ What is your favorite thing to see when you’re watching dance?

‡ When I’m watchin’ dance? Well, I like to watch other people dance, copy off a little bit of they steps, and then take it and add it in to my steps. That’s what I like to do. There’s alot *to* dancin’ though. You gotta have alot of wind, and you gotta know a couple of steps, cuz nobody wanna go on the dance floor lookin’ *stupid*, you don’t wanna look like you don’t know what you’re doin’ so, you know, me personally I take in that dancin’. I get in front of a mirror, I practice the move before I go out, then I go out. When you are dancin’ and you a real good dancer, a crowd starts to form around you. That’s how you know you a good dancer. I do it all the time, but, I’ll be so zoned out into what I’m doin’, that when I come-to and realize, I’ll be like “*Yo, you got a crowd around you!*” I’ll get shy and I’ll stop. But y’all had

some good moves, I liked some of that. And I wish y’all luck in your project. You guys should have it nailed.

‡ Are you gonna use some of the moves you saw for your own dance?

‡ What I was tellin’ her is, I’m startin’ to bring alot of old dances back, like the Bump, you know what I’m sayin’. It’s hard to describe the type of music that I listen to, have you ever heard of, there’s a record called, [*singing*] “*Doin’ the butt, haaaay, break day break day*” [*stop, look over shoulder towards door, lower voice*] and it’s like when you be dancin’, and all you doin’ is like this, and then like this, and then you turn around like this and then you turn around like that, and it’s called “*doing the butt*”. So like I said I’m goin’ out tonight, and I’m gonna try to move that step in, I’m a see if I can move that bump into this dance thing I’m doin’, cuz that’s a dance that was out a long time ago. And now, you know, it’s startin’ to slide back in.

R Kelly, I know you heard of R Kelly, you know that “*Step, step, side to side*”, like that now, if you was up on the dance floor and you was doin’ it just the way that he said it, you would be doin’ a [*fingers in quotes*] “*Semi-Waltz*”, without you even *knowin’* it, the Waltz! Alot of people do it now, and don’t even know it. It’s like three or four parts that’s missin’ from the Waltz, but it’s just like the Waltz. “*Step, step, side to side, then you swing her round*”. In a waltz I think it’s, left left, right right, I’m not for sure but I know it’s similar to that kinda aspect, but it’s all in the same thing. R Kelly made a record called *Groove With Me*, everybody does that now. I seen my grandmother try to do it. My grandmother is like, what, she be like a hundred-and-two now? And she tries to do it. So rhythm is this and everybody, no matter what color you are, what nation you are, how big or how small you are, it’s in everybody. I know somebody who is 370 pounds, and when she get on the dance floor, they be like “*Wow! I didn’t know she could do that!*” Splittin’ everying. It’s just like when you feel it, you feel it. I learned how to dance from standing

on top of my motha's feet. She used to dance with me all day. That's how I knew things was in good spirit, when I came in from school and I heard music, I was like "Aaah yes. It's a good day today", run and go get my snack. But if I came home and I didn't hear no music? [eyebrows up, head lowered, looking side to side] I was lookin' around then, cuz I knew somethin' wasn't right! My motha - look, It goes back to what I was tellin' you before: "music calms the savage beast."

I know for instance, today I thought it was gonna be a real bad day because when I came in here, I didn't know who I was gonna be with or what they had me doin', but once I seen y'all I was like okay, aaaight, they up here doin' they thing, lemme mellow-out. Once I put my iPod on, I forgot where I was at for a minute, cuz the music took me someplace else. It took me where I really wanted to be on a day like today, on the dance floor probably just hangin' out, drinkin' my orange juice. But I don't mind being here, maybe I helped out, helped this out a little bit, who knows, but like I said, tonight, when I go out, I'm definitely gonna try to put that in, that dance step.

‡ You'll have the time to practice before you go?

‡ Oh yeah! Cuz like, when I leave from here, I'm a go home, eat, take my little shower, take a nap, get up, take another shower, then I'm a do a little dance step, cuz I always - It's like a habit, it's like before a basket ball player play a game, he practice. I gotta make sure that when I go on the floor that I don't mess up, cuz you got people, like I said, that dance *wild!* If somebody elbow you, you gotta be able to be like, "Oh aright", and still be on groove, you can't be "Aaaaah woo woo!" He hit me, I hit you, then this a chain reaction. You know there gotta be somebody that know what they doin', like "Oh aright aright, you touch me, let me slide out o' this". For instance, two nights ago I went out. I was dancin' with this girl, this irritating dancer. Every time I spin her she crack me with her forehead, *boop!* Like wow! So I said, "Cool, let me fix this". So when I was dancin' with her, I started

like, backin' up, every time she went around. [pause, lean forward] I looked around, I started lookin' around and I saw *everybody else* - See, when I go out to the club, we call it *deep* cuz when we go out it be like, fifteen deep, sixteen deep. We like to enjoy ourselves. I looked around, everybody else is doin' the *same thing* I'm doin'! Cuz it's like, I'm the dancer. There's three of us out of a good ten of us that go out, that really grind it out on the floor ... I dunno, I guess it's imbedded in me. Some people is *in*, some people is not *in*.

You know, like my son, I have a son, he can get up, he used to wake up to music and go to sleep with music so now anything I turn on the radio, he know the artist. All he gotta do is just hear the music, he know the artist. He's *in*. When we out there hearin' music, he'll be like "Aright, that's gonna be a hit!" Two weeks from now, it becomes a hit. You know like, when it's in your veins it's in your veins. You *know*.

I'm not the *best* but I'm *one* of the best dancers, out of the guys I hang out with. Each day I try to improve. Like I'm onna take y'all little move if y'all don't mind, and I'm a slide it right in my little dance tonight. And they be like "Yo, where'd you get that from?" *Yeeah*. If I see you copyin' that move I know where it came from!

‡ But the bump existed already. Why don't you take another one of our moves?

‡ Yeah but it haven't existed to this type of music. Nobody ever done it offa Jay-Z. Nobody ever done it offa Kanye West. Nobody ever done it offa Goody Mob or Naz. They've *never done it* offa that. And, how'm I gonna do the bump? I'm a make it where you *switch partners*. That little dosidoe, like what do they call it, Square dance? I'm gonna get into that too, cuz *that's* a cool dance. Square dancin'? Where you grab that partner, dosidoe, I'm gonna do all that. Anything that has anything to do with music, and movin' around, [clap] I'm there. I'm there. Anything to keep my mind occupied, my mind movin', is good

for me. Anything else, it's not gonna do me no good. I'll sit there and catch a attitude. And alot of people, especially with a person like me, attitude is not good to catch. Cuz then *other* things happen ...

I know some people, they don't listen to music, they don't dance. And every time I see them, they never in a happy mood. They go out to parties and they stand against the wall. Why the wall's gonna *be* there when they leave!

*"Come dance!"*

*"Naaah, naaah, I don't wanna dance,"*

And then once you say this to them - you say:

*"Is it because you don't know how?"*

*"No! I know how to dance!"*

*"So comeon then! Get on the floor!"*

*"No, not right now, next record."*

Thirty records done came on and you still standin' there. So you know, it's all about the individual. I know I like to have fun, and music is my next best thing. In life. So I'm a try that move when I go out tonight. I'm definitely gonna try that and see what happens. Because like I said, everybody copies off anotha person's moves. That's how things get out. Like with the sneakers you have on. Somebody come, *"Oh those are nice sneakers I never seen those before"*. Next thing you know eight people got those on, next thing you know thirty people got 'em on, next thing you know, everybody got 'em on, it's a trend. Once one person see one thing, *"Oh, I like those"*, they go out and get it. And the next person. That's how it is.

¶ You were saying that each album that is coming out now has a dance attached to the music.

¶ Yeah.

¶ Tell me about that.

¶ Aright. How can I put it to you. It's just, aright, have you ever heard of a artist called *Soulja Boy*?

*[silence]*

¶ You never heard of *Soulja Boy*?? Superman? Watch me superman? *[arms swing back]* Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaw!

¶ Uh oh.

¶ See when y'all *[Pointing towards B.Q.E.]*, there's a building when y'all come on over here, it has his name on it, he's got on white glasses, it says *"Soulja Boy"*. Dang if only I had it on my iPod for y'all to listen to, but, he describes a dance. *"Soulja boy wanna touch my left leg, Soulja boy wanna touch my right, then yoooooo [arms swing back] like I'm superman, then I yoooooo [arms swing back]"*, it's like that. If you look around, you'll see lil' kids doin' it all the time, like my son, *[laughing]* Ohohoh he yooooooos so hard, that it look like he gonna fall, but it's like, aright, *[singing]* *"Snap your fingers [snap], do your step [snap], you could do it all by yourself [snap, snap] Snap your fingers with it!"* Then you hear the music, *ta-ta-tantantaah, ta-ta-tantantaah, ta-ta-tanta*. Mostly down-South people do it, they add dances to they songs, and then, the people from New York, we come on to it, and what we do is, we add the finishing *touch*. They'll start it, but we finish it. Then when it go back down there it have the finishing touches on it. That's how we get they moves and they get our moves.

There's ah, I forgot what it's called, but it's a little thing going online, where for every record that has a dance to go with it, it's online, and as it comes on the little screen, you watch the person do the dance off of it. Like every record that's out now, especially when it's coming from Atlanta — Atlanta is the capital, they're rockin' us in the music

right now — everything you hear now, it has a down-South beat to it. And down South, they dances are *nice*, I love they dances, we copy off they dances. See, 'cause everything goes round in a circle. What we don't know, they show us, and what they don't know, we show them. But dancing, it goes farther than, it's deeper than me. I'm just one of the, how can I put it, one of the persons who love to *do* it so much. You know, like I wanted to enter this dance-contest, but I was too late, you know for the longest dancer? Shhh, I think they'd have to be open another *day* for *me*, cuz I can do it all day. So long as I just hear the music, I'm good, and when the music comes on and there's a song like *Soulja Boy*, I start doin' the *yoooooooo* to the *Soulja Boy*, just snappin' my fingers to it. There's so many songs that got dances that got names to them, I can't even begin to name all of them.

Like my iPod, I got *two* I-pods, this is the littliest one, my other, the biggest one, holds something like 40,000 songs, something like that, and it has a video in it. If I had that one out I'd let you all see some of the dances that they be doin'. What's another one? Let's see, what his name, Young Jock, oh man, I forgot the name of the record. But, it's so many like *Soulja Boy*, "*You've got to crank it to the left, and crank it ...*" and they crank dat *Soulja Boy*, and before you know it, they crankin' dat *Superman*, crankin' dat *Batman*, then they crank dat *Lion King*, they make a whole ...

There's so many dances you can just swap and get them into one movement. It's like *Break-dancing*, that's coming back like *crazy*. The *Electric Boogie*, everything is coming back, all the old clothes that used to be out, they're starting to come back now, you know, it's coming back and it's coming back heavier than it was before. Like you know, my ma passed away three years ago, and I just had enough heart to clean out her closet. I'm cleanin' out her closet and I'm lookin' at a lot of open-toe shoes. I took 'em downstairs and don't you know I seen like eight people walking by with the same shoes on. These shoes is like, what, mama's shoes is like

fifteen or sixteen years old!? Look, I'm sayin', "*Yo! These are the same exact shoes!*"

You remember the Lee's? L-E-E, the pants, Lee's? They're back out now. So it just goes to show, it may die out, but it never goes nowhere, it'll just be dormant. After a while, one person will put it on, like "*Ooh! I remember those, where'd you get those from?*" Two people put 'em on, next thing you know, everybody's got them on. It's just the same with dance. If I show you all a dance right now, you all get it down pat, and you're taking it back to wherever it is, your school or wherever it is you come from, and you go to a party and y'all hanging out witchyo friends, people will go like, "*Hey! Where y'all learn that from?*" and you be like "*Yo, don't worry anout it, we got it*", and they be like "*Show me how to do that!*" I guarantee you, you'll come outside one day, you'll see somebody that *you don't know* doin' your dance, cause it done spin around and came right back in a complete circle.

‡ You're sure you don't want to show us a dance?

‡ Don't you have a move you wanna give us?

‡ No, no, I really don't, because I'm not really like, in the *mood* right now? But if I wish you all was here the day after tomorrow. Then I would be able to hook y'all up with the music, everything. If they would have told me what I was really doin' up here today, then I would have been more prepared, but like I said, I thought I was gonna get a snobby old group, so I was like, "*Yeah well, I'm gonna come in on my ra-ra and I ain't sayin' nothing to nobody. I'm just gonna stand in the corner and chill*". But then - *dang*, I even got an iPod with little speakers to put in it. But I didn't know what I was gettin' into, if I should I bring the iPod or what.

‡ But you have your iPod no?

Ⓔ Yeah?

Ⓜ You can just put it in your ears and then you get to into the mood!

Ⓔ We gave you a move, you gotta give us a move. A move for a move?

Ⓔ Haha!

Ⓜ And then we'll bring it to Europe and do it on a stage.

Ⓔ We'll make a tribute to you.

Ⓔ In a theater? For real?

Ⓔ Yeah, I mean, that's what we do. We do dances onstage.

Ⓔ Ah yeah? That's cool, that's cool. But you see, my dances is so ...

Ⓔ Oh oh oh!

*[Laughter]*

Ⓔ But it's so, it's just so, *aaaaaah [stands up]* But you see, you see, once you get started it's not just one move! One move turn into six moves turn into thirty moves, and the next thing you'll be like, calm down, calm down!

Ⓔ I know. I have the same problem.

Ⓔ Tell us the song you listen to so we can add it later.

Ⓔ Aaight aaight. I gotta find it I gotta find it. *[sitting down with iPod]*

Ⓜ And then when we look at the video we can learn your dance.

Ⓔ OK, This is um, Kanye West, a song called *Stronger*. I wish y'all could *hear* it so you could *feel* what I'm feelin'!

Ⓔ We have it at home. We can add it later when we watch the video.

Ⓔ But you can sing it also.

Ⓔ Nah I ain't gonna sing it! *[press play on iPod, put in pocket, dance]*



# CREDITS

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## AT LARGE

*With Reasonable Doubt*

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