University of Alberta

CHASM: the spaces between

in Aesthetics and Practice

by

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“In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions. When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop finding comfort in the sweet territory of silence?”

Gabrielle Roth

Abstract

CHASM: the spaces between is a live performance that exposes physical, visual, and aural intersections of liminality. My solo dance, alongside the work of acoustic collaborators Shawn Pinchbeck and Ian Crutchley, projectionist Patrick Arès-Pilon, and scenographer Guido Tondino, delves within the spaces between sight and sound, silence and stillness, performance and life, and embodiment and technology. In the process, I improvise within a scored structure, attempting to unravel, through practice, current theories of reception, including somaesthetics, meditative states, kinaesthesia, and Japanese theories of mind-body and *ma*. The piece was presented at Timms' Second Playing Space at the University of Alberta on April 27th and 28th, 2012.

The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the process, intentions, and discoveries that I made as a dance practitioner, while demonstrating how *CHASM: the spaces between* relates to the larger art world and to cross-disciplinary literature that addresses the problem of the boundaries of knowledge. *Chasm* is the term I use for these edges, boundaries, and intersections, and I wish to show how important chasms are not only for creativity in contemporary performance, but also for thought in a non-linear, globalized world.

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All photos by Tracy Kolenchuk, except "Cone-head," by Ernest de Jesus.

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Introduction

CHASM: the spaces between is a presentation of performance-based research of interplay between sound, vision, and atmosphere. I have worked extensively as an experimental and collaborative dance artist in different cities, on projects situated in theatrical settings as well as in locations as diverse as swimming pools, staircases, hillsides, bridges, elevators, city squares, and even on dumpsters. I approach dance as a lifelong inquiry into what moves people physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. As a contemporary artistic medium, dance has the ability to transcend words while exposing fissures in meanings, relations, and states that occur primarily in and between bodies. To me, dance is also quite literally an expression of life, while containing its antithesis: death.

My pieces and process involve more than dance, however. They are conceived and developed collectively with composers, musicians, film and videographers, painters, sculptors, poets, and also mathematicians, teachers, and farmers. Interdisciplinarity is fundamental to my way of working, and through the resulting cross-pollination of ideas, it brings me to question many of my own assumptions about dance and corporeality in today's society. The blurring of boundaries of artistic discipline is nothing new to performers in the avant-garde, as the Surrealists, Dadaists, and Fluxus members all consciously worked to merge media with life while delving into the unconscious world of dreams as source material (Huyssen 195-7). Currently, the contemporary performing arts are being revitalized by new waves of artists and participants who wish to cross disciplines unfettered. In doing so, they highlight specific aspects such as place, body, or gender in ways that have been previously untouched or well beyond the arts,

including politics, erotica, popular culture manifestations, community-derived work, and work that consists of gathering diverse sets of data and reconfiguring it (Bishop 10-11). Many of these experiments and explorations serve the purpose of expanding the notions of what art is and who can make it, while the technological interconnectivity of our global society heightens the effect and magnitude of these innovations. We can now remotely see and consume artistic works with a reach that is unprecedented. As one who makes performance for live audiences, I am working in a form that is on the verge of obsolescence. Perhaps this is why I have chosen to use the aspects of live performance that I personally find indispensible and rich—the shared audience relationship, the shamanistic aspects of magic and play, and the continuous sense of discovery within the form.

In daily life, where McLuhan's "medium is the message," digital arts are flourishing, while live, embodied, time and space-based forms such as theatre or dance are at risk, both from decreasing audiences and from funding cuts. I write this with full realization that I am working within what entrepreneurs would term a *niche* market, and that numbers alone do not justify dance. Most people in today's society have little or no direct knowledge of contemporary dance, and are dismissive of work that uses the body in non-normative ways. For example, I no longer introduce myself as a dancer, because too many times people have assumed that I must mean "stripper," and I spent my last mammogram under a breast vice while the technician gave me her critical impressions of *Dancing with the Stars*. Even my undergraduate art theory professor posited that dance was an inferior medium, for it could only be about two themes: sex and fighting. While it is possible to have a career of making dances that are seen only by other dancers, I have chosen to position my work closer to the visual and performance art contexts, which allows for improved public discourse and placement of the work,

reflecting the “multicentredness” that is being advanced in the current discourse of place (Lippard 5). This notion also allows me to justify my work in a regional city like Edmonton, far removed from the larger centres of dance and interdisciplinary performance.

Chapter One

Summary of Performance

The title *CHASM: the spaces between* arose from thinking about the liminal[1] edges between artistic media, and also between art and life. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a chasm in the figurative sense as "a profound difference between people, viewpoints, feelings, etc.: *the chasm between rich and poor."* In modern English usage, *chasm* is used to define a negative space which must be precariously and quickly jumped over, bridged, or metaphorically avoided, especially when used in the context of personal or business growth. I am impressed by this stark contrast to my own artistic process and awareness, which is about approaching an unknown void, perhaps only with a small goal in sight, and willingly entering into the presumed negative space in order to find a new approach to reaching that goal. My initial impulse for the title was in reference to the temporal sense of music and dance, but as I became aware of the imagistic connotations, even more associations emerged. The term *chasm* became an overarching metaphor for how I approach collaboration, interdisciplinary work, improvisation, liminality, indeterminacy, Japanese *ma,* and audience engagement. I will be referring to *chasm* as both a noun and a verb, to encompass such aspects of borderlines between diverse elements.

In searching for ways to describe my aesthetic values, the ordinary terms for what happens in the dance are inadequate; I am also seeking dialogue of

[1] British Anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) uses the terms *liminality* or the *liminal phase* to describe "the betwixt and between" stage in rituals that is transitional and ambiguous. "Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (97).

social presentation, process methods, environmental engagement, and attitudes that influence reception. While some of these goals are not aesthetic—they fall into more moral or ethical grounds—I strive to assimilate them into my work and to ensure that these ideas are considered. According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, in today's theatre, "Aesthetic experience is defined by the interruption of the aesthetic experience" (2010). He proposes that the ethical, moral, and political moments of caesura that constantly interrupt the aesthetic experience are vitally important to contemporary work, which is what I am trying to achieve in *CHASM*. In this type of work, the aesthetic is not destroyed, but it is also not as persistently all-encompassing as in the classical and modernist periods.

These fissures in the aesthetic are also important in relation to reception. Today's viewers are not blank slates. They arrive at the theatrical event with their own narratives, experiences, and cell phones. Some people cannot bear to be without internet and phone usage for an hour of performance. This addiction to mediated technology creates barriers to live performance that were not present even a decade ago. Christian Vandendorpe analyses the emergence of hypertext as revolutionizing how people think, see, and rationalize, as we culturally move away from the "totalizing function" of books, to a more rhizome-like and multiple-authored, web-based hypertext (2). The implications of moving thought away from linear logocentrism and towards visual and interactive imagination are transferrable to dance, and I have been exploring this from within my process. Simultaneously, I trouble the dominance of ocularcentrism in my work, trying to give balance to other perceptive modes that the audience can use to experience the work.

Improvisation refers to the level of chaos present in performance and in training. I have been greatly influenced by working with Japanese artists Arai Hideo, Osanai Mari, Terauchi Daisuke, and Ochida Shinya for the past decade, studying techniques of aikido, Noguchi Michizo and Teshigawara Saburo. The layers of work that I engage in with Japanese artists are always improvised from early on in the process, using choreography as a formal method to control or limit the possibilities of chaos within the performance. Improvisation, from my perspective, is always present within choreography. In Japanese dance and martial arts forms, the learning period consists of an extended apprenticeship based on deep memorization of forms and vocabulary in *kata* (choreographed phrases). Once a person achieves high skill in a certain form, he or she is expected to improvise and to use the form to discover something new. This method is used in art as well: scholar Wakamatsu Miki describes the specific techniques of *manabu* (intense copying or mimesis) and *asobu* (play), which act in combination, informing Japanese innovations such as butoh (211). This perspective is an acquired one, but it offers richness and depth in training that has evolved through the somatic arts and become very important to contemporary choreographers such as Anne Teresa de Keersmaker, William Forsythe, and others.

Dancers who train in improvisation and open methods tend to be experienced and well versed in one or more methods that provide full movement facility while allowing the dancer to think while moving. I compare it to driving through unfamiliar territory, when so much energy is spent reading a map and road signs, as opposed to taking a familiar route, which might allow one to notice the scenery and sounds, or to even hold a conversation simultaneously. This kind of multifaceted awareness is more and more important to contemporary dancers,

who might be asked to speak, videorecord live, sing, or engage in awkward activities that they have never engaged in before. Western theatrical dance does not historically value maturity in a dancer. Instead, it favours youthful beauty and virtuosity over interpretive ability and nuance. I was impressed when a classical Indian choreographer once told me that a dancer only comes of age in traditional Indian forms at age thirty-five. Similar depth of maturity is also aesthetically valued in forms such as flamenco, tango, and butoh.

I also consider sound to be very important to dance performance, not merely as a soundtrack, but as ongoing evidence that the body moving is in fact live, making not only motions, but effortful sounds as well. I want audiences to be more aware of the sound and smell of the moving body, instead of only being 'spectators' of action. Gradually, I have become interested in more direct involvement in the soundmaking process on stage, even if it is very subtle. My studies inevitably led me to John Cage, and his influence not only on sound but also what happens between sounds, which Western music had traditionally devalued (Kelly 15). As early as 1944, Cage wrote, "The form of music-dance composition should be a necessary working together of all the materials used. The music will then be more than an accompaniment; it will be an integral part of the dance" (*Silence* 130). I am also drawn towards the art of Pauline Oliveros, whose soundwalks and focus on "Deep Listening" (1) approach a quasi-spiritual kind of experience.

Viewpoint

The performance of *CHASM* was intended to provide a unique experience for each viewer, demanding some effort in viewing and listening before ultimately receding into the memories of those who attended. My perspective, as one who

conceived and performed it along with others, is an additional viewpoint, and I do not hope to impress any particular reading of the work, as that lies in the realm of reception. I do, however, wish to articulate my score, process, performance text possibilities, intentions, and challenges within the different modules of the performance. This is to provide some insight into my working methodology, physical journey, and critical thinking as I was creating *CHASM*. My working method *is* my viewpoint, and it incorporates my mind, body, spirit, intelligence, awareness, and intuition. I hope that the following overview of the different fixed elements and variable modules of the performance allows the reader and/or viewer to more deeply comprehend and reflect upon chasms in performance as I describe them.

Pre-show Journey

For the prelude to *CHASM,* I wanted the audience to enter the venue with a mood that differs from a typical theatre arrival, which is often scattered, social, commercial, and unfocussed. By collectively experiencing something strange and special, I hoped that the audience would enter with the group sense of having together witnessed an odd occurrence (that I in fact did not see, thereby privileging the audience as they entered the performance space). While I was initially inspired by the soundwalk idea, time and rehearsal limitations did not permit a proper and involved one, although that is something I will consider in future work. This element was not fully realized, but I was glad to have the opportunity to experiment with it and the concept of taking audiences away from the expected venue (fig. 1).

Depending on the weather, I had an alternate location planned within the parkade beneath the theatre, a site that was very dark and somewhat frightening,

compared with the sculpture garden location of the fair-weather site. I appreciated the difference in atmosphere between the two locations and how that affected the tone of the walkabout. On tour, for example, sites would differ for each performance. I see potential for a pre-show journey to be a collective excursion that can tune an audience. The important factor is for people to be able to abandon their daily lives and concerns as they walk together, so that by the time they arrive in the theatre, they have a change of focus required to watch and listen closely. The fact that the two performances differed greatly in tone was partly determined by the different mood of the opening and its site, as the audience's sounds as they entered the theatre was a part of my own impulse for movement, as a form of circular audience-performer feedback.

Fig. 1. Pre-show Journey

Opening Ritual

When the audience finally enters the space, I am stuck/in transition/in a liminal space. Revealed and silent, I do not look at people directly. Earphones restrict my personal space, and I am seated on an orange suitcase (fig. 2). There is no music, and the space has an aura of expectancy that borders on becoming uncomfortable. This places the audience into the realm of chasms that the rest of the show involves.

Score: Listen to the audience and 'tune' to them. Treat their jostling as a soundtrack that sets the tone. Approach the objects in the space and tune the space as it needs to be tuned on that day, making sounds, moving objects, placing things, occasionally going into movement. The pace should be leisurely, leaving things somewhat incomplete, some things untouched, some taken along, some left in a mess. Memorize the final arrangement of objects, as it influences subsequent spatial use.

Performance Text Possibilities: The actual movement content may include any of the following: swing or steal bell; tie up bell to another cord; swing, steal, move with, or spin wooden chunks; spill, throw, read, dance with stones; start, steal, swing, listen to, or relocate metronome; peer through, move, steal, spin magnifying glass; scratch, blow, listen to, swing piezo microphone; put earphones on objects, remove, or use to read things; and, blow, steal, or move tissue paper. On completion, which should require four to eight minutes, take the suitcase (or not) and exit space.

Intention: The point of this beginning is to introduce people to an inquisitive way of viewing that involves movement, objects, and sound. It is not

clear if the subject is the dancer or the objects, and they should be equally easy to read. I do not want the audience to feel passive, but to become accustomed to adjusting sightlines, choosing a focus, and free-associating. This is intended to bring them nearer to the perspective of the dancer to some degree. Since later images and occurrences require a certain amount of audience participation, my goal is to heighten audience perception so that reception is at an optimum. Inspired by Jacques Rancière's "Emancipated Spectator" (1), I am looking for public involvement that is not simply passive so that the work becomes more egalitarian, effective, and in accordance with the actual content of the piece. In addition to this, because my actions and score involve a high degree of concentration and improvised choice-making in a silent room, there is a heightened focus to the occasion that diverges from traditional dance performances in which effort is masked, decisions are all predetermined and rehearsed, and the audience is expected to objectify the dancer's body and actions in an aesthetically voyeuristic but more uninvolved manner.

Challenges: In creating this solo section, I was able to conceptualize it long before I was able to physicalize it. I resisted rehearsing, especially in front of others, and I withheld sharing it for as long as I could. It seemed to me that it was the final piece of the puzzle and needed to be formed once we were in the space—this proved to be the case, as when we were in the theatre and the objects were hung from the ceiling (instead of placed on the floor as I had been doing in studio), their positions and motions involved a great deal of geometry and trajectory which I used to my advantage. The pendulum action of the hanging objects in particular was important; it is one of the physical movements

accentuated in Noguchi Taiso[2] training because it uses gravity to create movement. Noguchi training often highlights the use of objects and props to demonstrate the movement in purely physical terms before the motion is attempted corporeally. By not over-determining much of my activity in rehearsal, I was able to adapt readily to the pendulum action in performance.

Another challenge I faced was that of sound: I had two sound collaborators working with me, but did not want to use them for the ritual. My goal was to start from a very minimal and naïve point sound-wise for the musicians to later contrast. I had also wanted this empty soundscape to create a state of *ma*[3] for a Western audience. *Ma* is commonly present in Japanese art and performance, but is less prevalent in Western arts. My own experience of it involves doing less and avoiding the inertia of continuous activity. In this way, it is a meditative process, which I have enjoyed both as an audience member and as a performer. There are some inherent difficulties in using the term *ma* from a Western perspective, and I acknowledge that my own position within describing it is highly subjective. This is one of the reasons I decided to embrace the term *chasm* in describing what I am trying to achieve; my personal readings of *ma* are then only a small part of the rhizomatic concept of *ma*.

[2] *Noguchi Taiso,* (gymnastics) was developed by Michizo Noguchi (1914-1998) of Japan, and is used to find new ways of creating human movement derived from sources as diverse as physics, fluid dynamics, evolutionary biology, Japanese writing systems, etymology, and geology. Many butoh artists study this method.

[3] *Ma* is a complex and deep-rooted Japanese term used in aesthetics and Buddhism that means space in time and time in space. It is a state of emptiness that is about bringing attention to the void of existence. Because it is so culturally specific, it is challenging to understand *ma* from outside of Japan.

Fig. 2. Opening Ritual

Audiences might not typically go to dance performances expecting to enter a meditative state, and that was another chasm I wanted to explore with this piece. I was nervous, however, about not meeting people's expectations or of making them work too hard. Marina Abramović also writes (from a contemporary performance perspective) about, "how afraid we are of doing little or nothing, and yet it is precisely that doing nothing that opens the door to different perceptions. The performer uses the public like a mirror and vice versa" (Conroy ix).

I had many things to consider and establish inside this ritual section, including the question, "what is its effect?" This made the ritual section very challenging and unknown to me, and I think that this tension translated on stage, along with any uncertainty I might have experienced. If I were to perform this section more, the ritual's tone would change over time and might even need continuous reinvention. Because of the unknown factors and the revealed nature of my solo improvisation, the opening ritual was certainly a chasm from my perspective.

Sound Playmates

There were three sections in which I performed with Ian Crutchley and his sound-producing objects and toys. We have been building this material and improvising relationship for over a year, beginning from a Cage score, our re-interpretation of that score, and finally our deconstruction of our relationship. Crutchley had played the very difficult *Ryoanji* score originally, while I had interpreted it with a dance score based on the shapes of the rocks of the rock garden that had inspired Cage's original score. This was then re-interpreted by graphic designer Gabe Wong, whose design I then used as my score for *Ryoanji*

Blind (see fig. 3), which we performed along with Guido Tondino's design, in October 2011 in Calgary. This time, we divided our interactions into three short and distinct sections that would allow character development and relationship to develop over time. Our relationship in fact was something like two children parallel-playing alongside one another in a sandbox, or a "non-tango". While we were a male-female couple, I saw our pairing as decidedly un-gendered and non-sexual. Our conflict was based in achieving the goals within our scores.

Score #1 is one minute of densely precise action, three minutes of sparseness (*ma*), and one minute of density again. We had rehearsed with people timing us, but in performance our challenge is to feel the change points intuitively and together. I am mostly limited to the screen area and Crutchley uses his sparse section to travel to his second location.

Score #2 is based upon short changes of ten to fifteen seconds in length, with a single idea, followed by a verbal yell that initiates an abrupt shift into the next state. The challenge is to remain sharp and keenly aware of the moments of change. This is the only section with words, which are very welcome by that point in performance, and content tends to follow Alberta's current politics and Dada-esque nonsense. This is all positioned in the central area (see fig. 8).

Score #3 is an open improvisation, within our established worlds of our vocabulary (mine include erosion, collapse, and rock shapes, and finally removing my shoes). This ends with Crutchley's relationship or inclusion of Arès-Pilon and my eventual exit.

Fig. 3. *Ryoanji Blind* score by Gabe Wong

Intention: My goals with Crutchley were to introduce randomness into the space, to directly trouble the relation between sight and sound/dance and music, and to contrast Shawn Pinchbeck's electroacoustic sounds with Crutchley's liveness and reactivity. Since we leave all remnants of our interactions behind, the traces of our events linger, and when I later revisit the objects, it forms a quotation of past events. The messiness is an important part of the piece as a whole, and seeing the detritus is intended to evoke memories of earlier moments.

Theoretically, I am interested in revisiting ideas from John Cage and the Dadaists in terms of collage, simultaneity of events, and use of materials, objects, and sounds from daily life. I am also attracted to the Gutai Manifesto's goal of creating something that has never been seen before (Yoshihara 695-698) or as Murakami Saburo said, "to stir the human senses and consciousness" (qtd. in Munroe 372). While many of the things I do have previously been seen and done, I want to assimilate them in a new way, relevant to my own experience within a contemporary context.

Historically, improvisation tends to focus on the scoring or translation of improvisation for others to perform. The structures, in turn, focus excessively on vocabulary development and timing. Since my work is on myself, it is more like an event score or open work, in which I must achieve certain steps, but can be relatively flexible in terms of what dance movements I choose to achieve them. Without trying to make ego-based or psychologically motivated decisions, I listen closely to Crutchley and use his sounds to inform my own choices, actually positioning myself internally as a musician, with the dance emerging as an effect of my own soundmaking activity.

Challenges: We worked hard to maintain the spontaneity of improvisation throughout. Within these scores, the challenge is to maintain a clear and open focus, and to not get too comfortable as the score becomes familiar through practice. In performance, Crutchley brought different objects daily, deliberately adding unknown and unrehearsed elements to the work, while I had to do a lot of internal pattern-breaking all along the way to "go deep fast" as Lin Snelling, my advisor, advised. A major challenge was the space itself, its layout and lighting, and not knowing or assimilating these details well enough in advance due to lack of rehearsal time in the space. The long, narrow space tended to detach Crutchley and I from one another even more than our score did, making it challenging to stay connected. These sections were focus exercises, forcing the audience to choose which elements that they wished to listen to or to observe, with equality between my movement and sounds, those of Crutchley, and the remaining movements and sounds of objects such as the small, battery-powered bugs. This section of work was extremely challenging to shift into and out of. The pattern-breaking elements proved difficult for me to achieve in performance, as I tended to use whole-body, large, quick movements as a default, and resisted using more pedestrian and isolated elements that were not dependent on the rhythm or speed of Crutchley's sound effects. This is an example of performance energy (in the form of adrenalin) causing me-the-dancer to bypass simple, weighted, relaxed choices over habitual choices that are perceived to be more virtuosic or entertaining.

Magic of Dance and Technology

My focus is on the liveness and embodiment of performance, but I do not shy away from the use and integration of technology within my work, both as a

reflection of society, and as a way of discovering new ways of seeing and understanding movement. Within *CHASM*, the main elements of technology are: electroacoustic music, video feedback projection, motion-triggered audio, and the lighting components. Shawn Pinchbeck and I often work together to find subtle ways of linking sound to physical movement, using motion-sensing cameras or accelerometers to translate movement to sound. These devices can be hidden or not. In addition, film loops represent an anachronistic, tactile, and mechanistic variety of technology that is rapidly becoming obsolete, and this is used in theatrical ways, not like a formal movie-going session with single large, white screen.

In contrast to my relations with Crutchley, my interactions with both Pinchbeck (acousmatic[4] composer) and Patrick Arès-Pilon (projectionist of found and prepared film loops and reels) are more complex and troubled. With Arès-Pilon's projections, my role is often one of a conflicted screen. While I am being used as a surface for his imagery, I cannot actually see the whole effect and must rely on his aesthetic ability choices to complete the imagery, often as I move away from him or disturb the images. In relation to film visuals, I want to introduce a different and active feminist viewpoint. If film is guilty of only showing parts of women—objectified in pieces for the male gaze—I want to control which pieces are seen and how. This exchange of control of the image between Arès-Pilon and myself is an improvised state of awareness that we rehearse and creates another chasm within the performance.

In the glove section, we use black light at the beginning to create a perception of magical, floating, reactive hands that appear to be disembodied

[4] Acousmatic sound, pioneered by Pierre Schaeffer, refers to audio art in which the source of the soundmaking is not evident or visible, bringing about very focused listening.

until the film begins, and even then the body is mostly incidental in silhouette, while the hands glow white. I hope that this element of magic, along with sounds directly triggered by hand gestures, helps the audience to suspend their disbelief, allowing the hands to have mysterious control over the situation. In this way I wish to empower the disembodied woman.

This idea continues with the cone-head section, (see fig. 4) in which I wear a simple paper cone over my face, again accentuated in white. This very shocking and de-personalized image has been with me for a few years and I am intrigued by how the facelessness actually changes the gaze towards and over the body. My dance material is inspired by animal (not human) movements, and since my senses are so blocked, the impairment causes me to depend on light, smell, instinct, memory, and touch. While my task is very simple—to get to the centre of the space—the path is extremely disorienting and fraught with obstacles. From the outside, Arès-Pilon both provokes me and leads me with his film, while simultaneously using my unfortunate proboscis as a film surface area. This manipulation is then inverted when I simply remove the headpiece myself without difficulty, showing my own agency over the situation, and bringing myself into the position of voyeur along with everyone else. At this point, the cone becomes the object, not the woman, and anyone who perceives the woman as the object at that point has to shift their perspective a little. If I had not ended the piece this way, I would have created a more victimized and powerless character. This cone-head module is the one section in which I allowed Pinchbeck to do what he loves most and does very well: terrifying sounds. His soundtrack to this section creates a great deal of dynamic tension and expectation.

Fig. 4. Cone-head

Analog Duels

My other two collaborators were working deeply within elements of analog technology in contrast to Pinchbeck's more high-tech media. I use Arès-Pilon and Crutchley for crucial transitional points, since both of them were

active in the space, mostly in relation to the dance (see fig. 5). This chasm creates moments that resonate within very simple interactions, building tensions that I am then able to work within. Their interactions are absurd, since Arès-Pilon projects film and Crutchley makes sounds, although they do not communicate with words. To me, this is in fact a dance of one-upmanship as each displays his skills and the other tries to produce something better. Sometimes natural, non-trained bodies are more interesting for me to observe than dancers are, and I use everyday movement to contrast the physical extremity of dancing. Their sections also help to add energetic variation to the physical space, and the final moments of Arès-Pilon's rotating burlesque film add an edge of gender power and ownership over images in a way that questions how audiences view gender, representation, and sexuality, both in the past and present. I was satisfied with how Arès-Pilon and Crutchley managed to alter and degrade the space, almost in an act of vandalism, before I executed the rolling part that follows. Their actions were unimpeded, sometimes clumsy, and even innocent, and this presents a physical chasm between trained dance bodies and non-trained ones.

The fact that both men play with objects in a focused and somewhat archaic manner also appeals to me. Play is a universal element that is both primitive and contemporary and there is something very odd about watching two grown men *really* play with toys.

Fig. 5. Analog Duel with Crutchley and Arès-Pilon

Noguchi Taiso: The River Section

The section I most directly draw on Noguchi Taiso technique is the one in which I simply roll from one end of the performing space to the other, from screen to screen, before finally standing up and creating shapes behind the screen while Arès-Pilon burns film as it is being projected onto me (see fig. 6). This section received the most comments by audience members I spoke with. The long buildup of sustained movement along the floor, following the 'river' pathway (see fig. 8), begins with Ferrari sounds, some bubbling water effects, and then with Pinchbeck's string quartet. This is the one moment in the piece with familiar, classical-sounding music, providing a refreshing counterpoint after much dense sound and noise-related audio. I purposely allow this piece to build into the final standing position behind the screen so that the effort to do such a simple thing seems like an achievement. Most of the movements I use are derived from

Noguchi's water-based philosophy of movement. The white skirt and jacket I wear keep me purposefully feminized, but almost in a comical way, since my arms and legs are blacked out and my shoes are quite useless for rolling. I wanted the final moments to transcend those feminine markers, which act like many of the other objects in the space—as obstacles I had to deal with or overcome.

The big change in this section was initiated by scenographer Guido Tondino, who could not create the elevated effect that I had hoped for with the space and budget limitations we had. Out of this came the challenge to slide or roll along the 'river' pathway, thereby revisiting all of the objects and places previously used, and that became the blueprint of my score. Physically, I use the elongation of time that is a hallmark of Noguchi's work, as well as certain elements including 'the water body' as an initiation and way of moving. Because of the length of the river that I had to traverse, the speed is not near as slow and leisurely as it can be in Noguchi work, however. The same distance could have taken me at least half an hour instead of five minutes if I was doing focused, Noguchi Taiso, which does not lend itself to performance.

Arès-Pilon's use of the film in this section, which is introduced after I begin my journey, becomes prominent when I approach the light source in silhouette behind the screen. Here he burns the film cell, which melts away in an oval around my figure. This accentuates the temporality of both media, and of the experience of watching the event itself. While similar degradation effects are possible with video, the quality of light and the materiality of film have a special nostalgic effect, and watching film burn seems to be a fitting way to welcome in the digital age.

Fig. 6. The River Section

The Interactive Deer

The final section—in which I wear crude antlers made of twigs on my head—is the module that I feel the most emotionally connected to (see fig. 7). I carry an iPod Touch on my head that can trigger four possible sound events through an accelerometer that is wirelessly connected to Pinhbeck's computer using a Max MSP patch. I initiate audio by tilting my head in different directions in order to re-construct the soundscape in real time as I move to it. Most of my movement is therefore either the result of listening or of searching for sounds spatially with my head. This synaesthesia, aided by technology but not necessarily in evident ways, is of ongoing artistic interest to me. Programming can be used to find parallels between motion and audio, and as it gains sophistication, contrast and depth of variations can emerge in ways that are currently unimaginable. Because the antlers are not unlike radio antennae, the extensions bring awareness of space beyond my own head into the dance as well. My personal space in this piece is very circular and contained, with imagery assisted by overhead video feeding directly from my image by a digital camera and projector. High technology combined with the primitive ritual of enacting a deer is again full of inner contradictions, which I enjoy. Because this is the only module in which I exposed my arms and legs, the body and its bare flesh is also used to connect both with female-ness and animal-ness, hopefully in strange or even refreshing ways. The audio in this section is the only part of *CHASM* that carries words and literal narrative elements. I use two stories told by my daughter, both based on real dreams that she had had. These surreal tales, combined with police radio excerpts and a winter soundwalk that I recorded, resulted in a dislocated audio experience that complemented the inner experience of searching, condensing many of the piece's ideas into a single moving and audible image.

Challenges: The challenge with this section is to make it three-dimensional enough so that everyone has a decent view of it. This means that I have to physically rotate as I move along the path, making it quite unstable from the inside. A risk I took within this section is that I already had two audio collaborators and I did not want to infringe on the overall sound aesthetic too much with this piece. Fortunately, Pinchbeck liked it and was able to refine the programming of the Max patch to make the sound more subtle and continuous. Another challenge was to take enough time with it. On the first night, I rushed through this section for some reason, and this created probably the largest chasm of the entire production in which the audience sat for an extended period unsure if the performance was over or not.

Fig. 7. The Interactive Deer

Chapter Two

Chasms in Theory and Practice

Introduction

Chasm is the word I use to describe my process, content, and structure within this performance. With this term I am incorporating ideas of Otherness in the forms of animism and feminism, collaboration, Japanese *ma*, and liminality. Elements of chasm can also be found in the interdisciplinary studies of cross-cultural psychology, somatic aesthetics, and in the work of other contemporary artists. For the purposes of this paper, I will only expose fragments of this theoretical chasm of cross-disciplinary study that relate to my own work and process.

Structural Chasms

Structurally, by creating a performance around intentional fissures between events, and fluid, non-linear associations, I am trying to take this idea of chasm as far as I potentially can. This certain strictness of form makes it easy to collaborate since the sections are necessarily clearly distinguished. What separates this notion of chasm from previously known structures such as assemblage or collage is that it is a conversation between opposites: between black and white, noise and silence, motion and stillness, human and animal, and trained and untrained bodies. By building the structure around the play between dialectic opposites, the range of choices and behaviour between them emerges and grows over time, and that is what I want the audience to become aware of. I purposely chose to restrict the length of the sections to a seven or eight minute

maximum in order to discourage familiarity. The modules are interchangeable, but are built around specific ideas and feelings, and are not purely abstract.

Initially, I was content to arrange four independent pieces in one evening of short works, without any plans to arbitrarily link them together. I liked the ensemble sense that we had achieved over time, and thought that the pieces could be even arranged last minute—more like a band's set list instead of a theatrical event. Tondino encouraged me to find a through-line for the content so that he could visually work with a cohesive design concept. The actual order of the pieces is somewhat, but not completely, arbitrary.

I made a preliminary decision to break up ten minutes of material with Crutchley throughout the event, so that he would become a minor recurring person who I could reflect on and have relationships with. This really changed our material and also stretched our limitations as a duo in some promising ways.

I intentionally positioned the deer section at the end. I wanted it to cap the experience by bringing the audience back outdoors like they began, with fake, childlike people-animals and a ritualized notion of theatrical experience derived from the primitive past, but firmly encompassing contemporary popular culture.

My choice to work in the way that I finally did was built upon this notion of chasm. I decided to make a continuous piece that contained disparate elements and breaks or fissures in continuity. I wanted to bring awareness to things constantly in flux, and to things occurring which could be mistakes or not. I wanted to see if by creating this way, I could ease the audience into more of a subject position, shared with those onstage, and differing from other audience members' experiences. I am not certain if I achieved this, or if people were just

confused, but I did learn a lot in the process of creating fissures and chasms, and I will be continuing to explore this realm of shifting perception.

I chose to create no new material in this piece. All of the dances include aspects that I was revisiting, developing, or adapting to new situations. This minimized the stress of movement and image creation and allowed me to deepen my awareness within each movement state. Because I already had an awareness of the images I was working with early on, I was confident about the content while dancing, which freed up my time to think about the larger piece. My creative focus then changed towards concerns about structure, theory, and collaboration.

My choreographic work is achieved through structured improvisations, so I appreciate expanded definitions of choreography that are found in Europe, such as Hans-Thies Lehmann's "chora-graphy, the body text," which remains in opposition to *logos* (*Postdramatic* 145). I do not attempt to replicate the exact movements from one day to the next, but instead I form parameters for what happens so that the dancing can be executed with spontaneity and spatial precision. When I work with musicians, they often demand temporal precision, but this time we left the timing open and dependent on interrelated events. As an improviser, one thing I am concerned with is variation and unpredictability. This piece is not a comfortable and deepened experience of the moving body, as I had been encouraged to enjoy. Instead, the moments of *pure dance*[5] are few and hidden, and my work is a constant struggle to find those moments, which disappear as soon as I discover them.

[5] Pure dance is a constantly evolving definition of beauty in abstract movement, derived from ballet, typically using flow, speed, shape, and virtuosity. Today, William Forsythe and Crystal Pite are good examples of choreographers who create stunning pure dance.

If I had performed this entire piece for longer, I would have attempted to extend those moments of chasm, and to stay comfortable outside of them for longer periods without feeling pressured to constantly move. I would have tried to further extend the chasms of in-between moments.

Chasms in Liminality

I appreciate it most when art and performance lie in the realm of liminality. I desire my artistic encounters to move me towards an experience and an awareness that is well beyond the everyday (even if it is all about bringing new awareness to commonplace events and objects). I have long worked in productions that were transformative to do, but with this piece, I also wanted to think about reception and the position and experiences of the audience.

Otherness is tied into liminality as well, since both contain the converse or the mask of status quo reality. I want to use my work to question and to challenge the dominant forces within society, allowing audiences to enter the liminal space of internal imagination, with my work acting as a portal for them to do so.

In *CHASM* I explored the liminal in several ways:

1. Performance vocabulary on the edge of consciousness, through unknown variables, improvised methods, obstacles, and audience involvement.
2. Movement states and characterizations: female, object-focused and animal.
3. Structural ways to dislodge the viewer (challenging seating arrangement, pre-show journey, lack of narrative continuity).
4. Use of both play and ritual elements within the work.

The initial method I used for achieving a liminal state was to construct a personal ritual (opening in the stage with object-play) and a group ritual (walking excursion). I use rules of engagement for a contemporary, personal, Duchamp-inspired ritual. Like much of the movement vocabulary for the performance, I broadly outline the movements, depending on my own intentional decisions within the moment in order to achieve the dance. This means that many of the choices that I make as a dancer could be viewed as stock material. Part of my training in dance improvisation methods has been to continually pattern-break, while another focus is to embrace familiarity. The dance consists of this dialectic on the inside as a motivation for my movement. The sections with Crutchley, which are scored using timed methods, for example, are based on a vocabulary of pattern breaking, refusing flow, refusing repetition, and forcing stillness when I want to move, with abrupt shifts and changes, and arbitrary relationships between events and sounds. The River Section by contrast, is a very familiar movement style and vocabulary that I am able to fully indulge in.

There are also unknown variables within the score that keep me working towards the liminal. Crutchley is allowed to bring in new sounds and objects. Arès-Pilon is allowed to travel within and throughout the space that I dance in. By dishevelling the space at the start, I am leaving a permanent trail of new obstacles to later navigate throughout. As the dance progresses, traces of refuse remain. These take on a sculptural quality, adding another element to my score: I must make decisions about which objects to move, touch, or avoid as I revisit a particular spot. I enjoy this small reference to history and memory within the shared timeframe of performance.

In these ways, I am inviting failure, or as Lehmann says, “fissures” (*Position*), consciously asking the audience to anticipate and appreciate the difficulty I am undertaking in not tripping or making mistakes (which of course I do). The audience, with their near proximity, is another uncontrolled variable. At one point I found myself almost on top of somebody’s shoe. Later, when I have the cone on my head and can barely see, I risk colliding with people. Pinchbeck also is improvising his electroacoustic sounds, keeping them slightly different from day to day, giving him a live, yet not visible, voice to respond to.

Much of my process consists of allowing things to occur. Lighting proved to be the most resistant element to this way of working, since our timing (because of improvised events) and spacing (in terms of being able to focus light on a particular spot) were unpredictable, and we were only able to explore with lighting for a couple of days. My goal in working with light in the future involves using similar motion-triggered software that we use with the audio, perhaps even linking the two, so that the lighting can then be initiated by events on stage, as opposed to a linear order and timing of sequences.

The liminal is also present within the basic constructions that emerge around gender: I am a female on stage with a group of men, a scenario that can easily read as an exaltation of the male gaze. I purposely employ black and white colours and feminized garb: shoes, skirt, and long gloves, in very specific and gender-limited ways that I then try to transcend. The gloves for instance, begin as a graceful and floating image but then transform—as they initiate sounds we dubbed *scribble*, *monster*, and *breaking glass*—into flailing, out of control appendages. These are hardly the sort of gloves one would wear to a high society event! The two-piece skirt suit is another item that I use in ways other than how it

is intended, for this is the one that I wear for the extended rolling on the floor sequence, grossly mismatched with black underclothes. When I appear finally with bare arms and legs in the white suit with twig antlers, I want to unify the animal-fantasy side of performance with the visceral look of flesh that I purposely cover until that point.

My approach was to situate myself in the far future, in which animals are perhaps largely extinct, forgotten, deified, or otherwise framed as the Other. As someone who grew up on a farm and surrounded by animals, I already find the depiction and use of animals in today's urbanized society very disassociated and fantastical, so my work is exaggerating what I perceive. Movement-wise, I revel in the deer state, with its awareness to the peripheral edges of the antlers and careful stepping and stillness. I envision my deer solo as a hyper-modern shamanistic dance for a future world in which animals do not exist beyond museums and faulty memories of Disneyesque animals. I am not attempting to appropriate any culture's traditional dance. By the use of high tech elements with the deer imagery I wish to position myself firmly in the contemporary while showing a vague and purposely skewed memory of animals that might make one think of nature-amnesia.

I deconstructed the pieces within the performance and arranged them like beads that can form a necklace, using what composers would term an aleatoric structure. These individual bits can then be re-arranged in many other formations without changing the entire meaning of the performance to a great extent. Conversely, over time a random arrangement of these modular units could enhance the performance awareness of the players and be very positive. This method of treating the artistic substance as malleable material is nothing

new, but it is rare to see, particularly in dance and theatre. In retrospect, I would like to heighten the differences between the modular units to make them even more clearly separate, as opposed to trying to make a continuous journey through them. This would cause the scenes to appear more like songs in a band's set-list, as opposed to a linear narrative, and I enjoy that simple distinction. As a person who gets bored easily, I am curious to see if the changeability of this structure can hold attention or cause distraction. I think I might have taken this too far in performance, for some of the pieces ended up being a bit too choppy and shortened, and therefore predictable in their briefness.

The liminal time/space between play and ritual is a crucial aspect that I wanted to explore on stage. Crutchley in particular has a very childlike and playful exuberance to his soundmaking objects, which I really enjoy watching. Arès-Pilon also brings a particular, bizarre quality to his films, which are as much about the gaze of the person projecting and sharing them as they are about the film content or quality. For me, my journey is one of ritualized rules: remembering, self-correcting, progressing through time and a space in a specific, exaggerated manner, so that I can finally do the two things I really like to do: the River and the Deer. The restraint and focus that I use heightens my sensibilities from the performer's perspective, and when I reach my spaces of comfort, the physical shift of state is very abrupt, and I am able to go very 'deep' into the state.

Many artists exist at the margins of society, with perspectives that come from the liminal edges of culture and lead towards cross-cultural searching, intermingling, and re-adapting. While the politics of cultural appropriation by the dominant culture have been much discussed in post-colonial theory, artists do not all have the same intentions. Some wish to learn, others wish to make money

or to make friends. In my case, I want to share. What piques my curiosity the most is how audience reception changes from place to place, in effect forming the art from the point of the consumer. Four years in Japan made me appreciate a different way of understanding and viewing/listening to art, which demands more patience, analysis, appreciation of skill, and feedback than I was accustomed to in North America. My current interest lies in gradually fostering this sort of level of appreciation, without becoming inaccessible. As Jean-François Lyotard states, art is "not merely a cultural object, though it is that too. It harbours within it an excess, a potential of associations that overflows all the determinations of its 'reception' and 'production'" ("Critical Reflections" 92-3).

Chasms in Criticality

I undertook this process with hopes of creating a dance event built on notions of chasms that an audience can enter into as a witness without having to be overly concerned about conscious understanding. Lyotard holds that making art can become an event that "dismantles consciousness" (90), a revitalizing function amid our "postmodern condition," in which only knowledge that is information holds social currency, and all other forms of communication cease flourishing,

For me, dance remains a life-affirming act that works best in real time with live witnesses present, and the act of watching dance can be transformative and un-replicable. In order to create this piece, I developed elements of pieces that I had already worked on and still had some curiosity towards. The link between the sections was non-existent, as the contrast appealed to me, and I had wanted to create something modular that could be toured in excerpts if need be. I wanted the piece to come directly out of my own experience and my own practice,

and not to be a copy of something that has already been shown to work. I wanted the product side of the work to show much about my own process in terms of my own materiality and style.

The thinker who inspired me in creating the work in a very fragmented way was Hans Thies Lehmann, and in particular his lecture, "The Position of the Spectator." He problematizes contemporary performance, its viewing, and ways of looking at it. He states that the sensuality of the event of theatre is in opposition to sense and stresses the importance of *caesura* in contemporary European work, and he speaks of ways in which the artists can purposefully create fissures within their work as ways to shock and politically charge the audience. These notions are compatible with my way of working, while taking me further away from modernist ideas of a dance performance as a cohesive whole that has one ideal way of viewing. I took this as a challenge in creating this work, trying to keep in mind what he terms "dramaturgy of the spectator" within the work of Marianne van Kerkhoven (*Position*).

I also want to expand my own notions of feminism in performance. In my experience, the female body onstage in contemporary society is immediately and unavoidably a symbol of Otherness, and there is little a performer can do but acknowledge and work through that. My own self-perception has long been more of an androgynous figure, but now that I am not built as much like a fourteen-year old boy, I am trying to deal with what it actually means to move through space in a woman's body, and to find ways to transcend it. I wanted to acknowledge the barriers in place that prevent viewers from seeing female dance as a physical occurrence (subject) and instead structure it as a psychological or emotional state, or an aesthetic object. In *CHASM,* I chose to adopt certain

female signs, and to distort them through dance and active movement. I wanted to make the dancing body the subject, but to also share subject-hood with the audience while acknowledging their differences of viewpoints, proximities, personal memories, and sense of being part of a collective of spectators.

I wanted the objects in the space to be dancing almost as much as me, demonstrating common principles of movement physics (velocity, centrifugal force, gravity, reflection, electricity), which can be understood scientifically, while still making us think of those moving things as being animate, embodied, personified, or of having personality. I have a great willingness to believe and disbelieve in such shamanistic fundamentals simultaneously, and this is something I share in *CHASM*. From the very start to the end, objects were my dance partners, much in the same way we are all surrounded by moving, electric, and mechanical devices daily. This comes from my Japanese training, and is articulated beautifully in the Gutai Manifesto when Yoshihara Jiro states, "Let us take leave of these piles of counterfeit objects on their alters, in the palaces, in the salons and the antique shops…. In Gutai art the human spirit and the material reach out their hands to each other, even though they are not opposed to each other" (Yoshihara 697).

Foucault supports my own impressions that most Western ballet and modern dance are looking backwards with emphasis on forming the (mainly female) body into certain external mannerisms with militaristic training methods that lack creative thinking (Green 3). After studying Eastern and Western aesthetics of sound, art, and dance, I came to the conclusion that improvisation and its unpredictability, unrepeatability, and personal investment, needs to be used as a part of any creation I undertake.

This work also is made in response to John Cage's work, conceptual underpinnings, and legacy, which I still have mixed reactions towards. I remain conflicted about the man who introduced silence to the Western musical canon from the East, who exploited ideas of *ma* and emptiness from Asian philosophies, greatly influencing the visual arts, music, and dance scenes of the nineteen sixties and beyond. Japanese musicologist Tanaka Naoko writes what many Japanese sound artists repeat, "We should understand 'all sounds' as 'sounds of all things in nature'"(5), noting that listening to phenomena, such as the sound of the bloom of the lotus flower, which is inaudible to human ears, was a popular event in the early Showa period (1925-89). From a post-colonial standpoint, Cage is criticized for appropriation of only the elements of Asian culture that suited him, notably not including the physical aspects, which I will explain later. David J. Clarke includes him in the Oriental Thought generation, which "sought to pump meaning and profundity into abstract art by drawing on ideals which they associated with East Asian culture such as detachment, passivity to nature, spontaneity, the void, transiency, chance, and the rejection of nationalism" (Munroe 57).

Cage influenced neo-Dada, Gutai and sound artists of Japan, Merce Cunningham, Fluxus, the Judson Church group, and Japanese artists; across many borders he is an inspiration. My own problems with him lie in his resistance to improvisation, and the fact that, "throughout most of his career, Cage showed ambiguity and adversity toward improvisation and warned performers against improvisatory performances of his own scores" (Feist 1). For someone who is so strongly associated with indeterminacy, he approached it in a highly formulaic way, and his ideas, which I feel have come of age decades after

his insights, have remained within elite intellectual and artistic circles. Douglas Kahn's thorough criticism of Cage's power to silence other artists and viewpoints also rings true to me (559). Cage's desire to move "beyond control of the ego" and away from "expressing my feelings" (Feist 7) contrasts my own goals within artmaking/viewing. While I do not lean towards psychoanalysis in my work, I also do not wish to deny my own humanity and embodiment by making myself as a dancer appear more machine-like. Indeed, with so many machines of mass production at our disposal, aesthetic attempts to replicate machine behaviours in performance (accuracy, repeatability, remote control, or un-emotionality) do not appeal to me at all.

In the present day context, I have found Cage's instructions and scores to be eerily relevant to computer programming, which I use in the interactive elements of my work when audio and video is triggered by motion or sound. In programming, the technician must completely predetermine the global parameters of the effect beforehand. There is little room left to change things in the moment, because the actual program needs to be 'tweaked' to make any changes. The process is fraught with minutia, pre-planning, and detail, and does not embrace mistakes or wholeness readily. Here is my problem with technology in regards to Cage: I can imagine in the near future that there will be a downloadable application available on a phone or device that will create a Cage piece with parameters and sounds you choose, all pre-programmed from afar, and not requiring any human interaction except yours, the consumer. This fits into Baudrillard's model of endless replication that not only makes everyone an artist, but also in effect makes art and its copies so commonplace as to be null and ineffective. This model of art counteracts my own goals of community-building with artmaking. My interpretations of Cage-like structures, rules and impressions

still allow for human emotionality within the score and the performance. Rulemaking, after all, is still a conscious process and reflects the interests of the person who invents it as well as the one who interprets it. With so much machine-derived art, music, and design present in society, I see little use in a performance style that is emotionally detached to the extent that Cage seems to demand. In fact, my reactions to this kind of art have fed my inquiry, so I am working within Cage's chasm as well as my own, and it is one of improvisation versus structure, with various means and methods to control or to encourage unexpected moments in performance.

This brings me to Roland Barthes' 1967 essay, "Death of the Author," and its implications for the medium of contemporary dance. I have been imagining and observing different scenarios in which the public does indeed have an increased role and influence in the artworks that they experience, and I have tried to resolve this issue personally in dance. The problem that I have with many of the experimental works of the mid-twentieth century is that the omniscient composer/choreographer/author is still indeed present and presiding over the work. Performance, however, has always been a collaborative venture. A composer usually requires musicians, and at least one dancer is needed to execute choreography. A collective process assumes shared authorship and viewpoint. What Barthes suggests to me is that not only is more audience responsibility required to make art meaningful, but that the author's viewpoint is no longer the most important one in the artmaking process. Lehmann echoes this notion, noting the wide range of contemporary performance and art available to the contemporary spectator, demanding the spectator to adapt to an incredibly wide variety of performance methods, venues, intents, and levels of engagement (*Position*).

Barthes' "Death of the Author," seen from a viewpoint of performance, also includes space for both audience input and audience experience, which is valued as much as the position of the artist/author/choreographer who presents the work. This results in performance that is more rhizomatic[6] in its structure and interpretation than traditional or early modernist works tends to be. Umberto Eco reaches into trends that link cultural works to scientific developments and politics of different eras, stating that, "The notion of 'possibility' is a philosophical canon which reflects a widespread tendency in popular science; the discarding of a static, syllogistic view of order, and a corresponding devolution of intellectual authority to personal decision, choice and social context" (32). Christian Vandendorpe further proposes how the digital age and the structures that it makes available to us—specifically web-based hypertext—also tend to focus the contemporary mind into rhizome-like structures. A wiki, for example, contains multiple threads, which in turn lead to hundreds more. By reading in this manner, as opposed to reading a book or a papyrus scroll, the user's experience is utterly unique and self-directed. From this perspective, as we witness many more people becoming authors through blogging or content contribution, many others are losing their full-time writing jobs, as the job specialization of 'writer' forever changes. Vandendorpe leaves open many possibilities as to where this will lead, but concludes that, "by making it possible to combine writing, image, sound, and video, the new computer technologies are undermining the dominant position of language, stripping it of the aura with which it has been invested since ancient times when it was used to magically address the world, to express a relationship to reality, and to hold the tribe under its charm" (166). From my perspective, this

[6] Félix Guttari and Gilles Deleuze, inspired by Carl Jung, developed theory based on the rhizomatic structure of plants as a basis for culture, thought, and art, in contrast to the tree with its hierarchical root structure (Deleuze and Guttari).

is becoming true in other ways as well; as globalization achieves new levels of international audiences for cultural work, non-verbal pieces of sculpture or dance appear to be in an intriguing position of relevance. I think that dance, specifically a genre of dance that attempts to reconnect to the more spiritual and emotional sides of humanity (without resorting to the psychological symbolism of Martha Graham for example), has a niche to fill at this point in society. Not all of our experiences can be remote and filtered through digitized media or marketing machines. The human body itself has the power to connect us to nature and to an idea of what we might think about as *real*, and this is the impetus that brings me into a collaborative creative process in hopes that some of these thoughts translate through my medium to an observer who is not passive, yet who is also not actively dancing.

As a dancer who choreographs, my hypothesis is that the training of dancers needs to necessarily involve increased dramatic, political, and aesthetic awareness beyond the physical phrases and skeleto-muscular concerns which dominate most dance classes. Jill Green's Foucauldian analysis of a ballet and modern dance class brings the societal and political limits of such training to the forefront, as she demonstrates how dancers learn to self-correct, ignore pain, rely on outside commands, and to stop their own impulses (2-3). I have worked and trained in somatic and improvised forms for an extended period of time, and these training methods have not only allowed my own movement to develop without injury, but have caused me to desire dance work that is based on less rigid forms of movement with a more intentional or even philosophical movement basis. Belgium's P.A.R.T.S. is an excellent model of a training institution for dancers that grooms them to be artists, using deep improvisational methods within dance. Contact improvisation remains a vast and exploratory

form of dance that has not been formally franchised, but continues to offer many levels of investigation and inquiry (Stark-Smith). It is a form that continues to influence my physicality, approach to other dancers, and philosophy of continual change based on sharing weight with another person.

Cultural Chasms from Japan

The most impressive of the forms I have studied has been the relatively minor Japanese technique called Noguchi Taiso, which remains obscure outside of Japan, but is used by many butoh dancers. Professor Michizo Noguchi began each class with a lecture, using evolutionary biology, literature, geology, physics, and Japanese history to demonstrate the importance of particular aspects that he would later ask the class to explore through the body and movement. Noguchi Taiso as a physical technique harnesses the mover's imagination to broaden movement, with a very gentle, focused awareness that gradually increases the mover's facility and physical creativity over time. In one exercise, you might be asked to focus your use of the soles of your feet on the floor as a way to converse with your deceased ancestors who have returned to the ground. In another, you might use a bag filled with water to help you imagine that you are an amoebae, discovering a more fluid sense of movement in your limbs. Noguchi often stated in his classes that imagination is what makes humanity extraordinary, and that by harnessing strong images, great effects were possible. While a ballet or modern technique class might focus on shapes, defying gravity, and keeping time with a musical accompaniment together as a class, Noguchi Taiso workshops are conducted in solos, groups, or pairs in an exploratory fashion in which observation of phenomena is as valuable to learning as doing the movement is.

According to Noguchi,

> The vital energy is the weight of one's body, which in turn produces the energy for movements when it acts and reacts in its relation to the earth. One must not think [of] body movements as changes in the physical shape, but think how one perceives, transfers, processes, and responds to the above-mentioned energy with one's body. (*Gensho* 163)

Psychologists such as Richard Nesbitt at the University of Michigan have studied cultural differences in reasoning and perception between Westerners and East Asians, in support of the hypothesis that Westerners reason analytically while East Asians reason holistically. His years of evidence show that:

> Westerners focus their attention on objects, often fail to see covariations in the stimulus field, typically (and often mistakenly) explain objects' behavior with respect to their presumed dispositions. They also make substantial use of categories in inductive inference, learn categories readily, and reason using (and sometimes misusing) the rules of formal logic. East Asians focus their attention on the field, are sensitive to covariation, are likely to explain objects' behavior with respect to situations or conditions in the stimulus field (Nesbitt).

Japanese training methods, while presenting significant cultural and language barriers, were helpful in reconfiguring my own ideas about the body, dance, and meaning, partly because the practitioners take what they do very seriously in terms of the meaning of physical inquiry and research.

> Both Hijikata and Noguchi, as they have searched through new combinations with disconnected parts of the flesh and body, quest for the new meaning and possibility of language by means of reconsidering it at the site where it is forming. This method would not be that of dualistic thought by a 'superior' brain, but of 'thought by the flesh' or 'thought through image.' (Mikami 134)

The concept of the non-dualistic body reaches far back into Japanese history and aesthetics through Zen Buddhism (Fraleigh, *Dancing into* 51), and is

reflected in the richness of dance forms such as butoh, which acknowledges that the body *is* spirit, without boundaries, beyond rationalization. Hijikata Tatsumi, founder of butoh, writes,

> In silence I place one phenomen[on] in front of a concept. The material sweats and the material shrinks. I extend. But first of all I must, I think, wipe out all art and culture. This 'dance experience,' which fiercely took up the challenge for the sake of cultural material, has been for me a marvelous spiritual journey. There is, I always feel, an unfathomable ocean before my body." (41)

Noguchi Taiso, which I study, attempts to return the mover to a primordial state of being, and to remove muscular willfulness from movement as much as possible, instead harnessing natural forces such as gravity or momentum in a long exploration of what really constitutes power, imagination, and being. Japanese critical and academic writing supports this non-dualist approach to the body. Yuasa Yasou's approach to viewing the body and mind as a cohesive unity gathers ancient Japanese philosophy to demonstrate ways in which humans can consciously train and meditate in order to achieve harmony of mind and body (Boutry-Stadelmann 293). Psychologist Kasai Toshiharu, himself a butoh dancer, focuses on the deep distinctions between Western dance and butoh dance, positing that the mind-body conceptualization is so distinctly different in Japan, that, "In the long run, the westernized version of Butoh would lose all the fragrance of the original or classical Butoh, and it would not be called 'Butoh' but something like 'hyper dance'" (*Note* 3). Kasai details how the conscious control of the physical body without regard for the inner body or the environment around results in a sort of self-objectification, while the aims of Japanese dancers, martial artists, and religious practitioners are inclined to attempt a unification of all elements inside and outside of the mover, to reach a state of wholeness. Kasai offers Noguchi Taiso as a contemporary way to deconstruct this objectification, by

placing less emphasis on the visual elements of moving the body, and using psychosomatic methods of exploration ("Butoh Dance Method").

How does this non-dualistic way of conceptualizing the mind-body translate into reception? Kasai offers that in butoh,

> what the audience sees is not the performer's body but a non-materialized world as if the performer's body becomes a prism and allows the audience to see something latent behind the performer. What the performer experienced during the performance is like a dream during the night, and he/she gradually notices afterwards that there is spiritual calmness in the depth of his/her heart without clearly knowing why. It is an evidence of a return from pilgrimage through the dissociated parts of the self, and a recovery or creation of his/her own wholeness. (*Note* 6)

Discussing Japanese body-mind philosophy and performance presents cultural and theoretical chasms; I have encountered problems in reading Western accounts of Japanese performance that attribute this sense of wholeness or unity *only* to Zen or to Buddhist spiritual ideas. That is only a partial reading: while Zen permeates Japan on a philosophical and cultural level, just as the residue of Christianity affects us in Canada no matter where our spiritual concerns lie, most contemporary Japanese artists I know are atheists who maintain a spiritual sense within their work. The famous butoh dancer Ohno Kazuo was a Christian pacifist, while his contemporary, Hijikata, was once referred to by Tanaka Min as "the devil" (qtd. in Stein 151). Discussion could be more focused on aesthetics and philosophy, not religion, to promote understanding, and not a furthering of Otherness, since "orientalism exists as an omnipresent mist before the eyes of anyone attempting to study 'the Orient'" (Said, *Orientalism* 3*)*.

Ma is an important concept in connection to chasms that is deeply rooted in Japan, with Buddhist origins and long use in Noh theatre. In her excellent analysis of butoh, *ma*, and the crosscultural gaze, Judith Hamera notes that, "*ma*

describes a meaning-full interval in space, time, or space-time, an interval with both objective and subjective aspects, inherently relational, mostly apprehended in a religio-aesthetic context" (57). She goes on to articulate that *ma* bears resemblance to Turner's liminality, "in that both describe the boundary situations replete with meaning; they differ in that in the former, meaning is generated through gaps in action, whereas in the latter, meaning is generated largely through action" (57). This describes quite accurately what I encountered in the course of performance and research into chasm and fissures of dance and sound, and my next steps would be to try to extend the *ma* even more in time, allowing completed moments of movement to resonate for longer periods of time in stillness and aftereffect. *Ma* should not be interpreted as a sense of silence, emptiness or nothingness, but a state of attentive awareness and possibility. It is a key to dynamic engagement with time, space, other people, nature, or art.

More extensive translations of Japanese writers would go a long way towards enlightening English speakers on the very involved discourse that emerges from the Japanese and broader Eastern perspective. Yasua Yasuno's theory of the body draws greatly on the Eastern metaphysics of immanence, in which "individual, personalized experience is seen as authentic and sincere, and therefore meaningful and 'true'" (Boutry-Stadelmann 298). This type of statement is often repeated: "In Zen, one's experience is regarded as an absolute fact. It is stronger than anything with theoretical support" (Kojima 4). An important aspect of Zen-inspired art is the focus on active reception, in which one is encouraged to make efforts to understand natural and manmade things deeply and directly.

> The transcendence of ego necessary to accomplish this enlightened experience of 'entering into' an object is facilitated by what Basho calls 'slenderness.' With this stance one can attain 'the poetic

> spirit,' the spirit that leads one to follow the ways of the universe and to become a friend with the things of the seasons. (Saito 158)

This notion of slenderness also has parallels in current European contemporary dance discourse, and Brian Massumi's writings reinforce bodily-perceived knowledge as "semblance" or a "lived abstraction" in *Semblance and Event*, accentuating the bodily awareness that is a part of knowledge (15-24).

Spectator Chasms

As far as reception goes, I did not receive extended critical feedback from very many people, and I did not conduct any formal surveys. There would definitely be potential for a simple questionnaire to be included within a program, or available later through the internet, to answer specific questions relating to audience experience. My own questions would be:

1. Did you feel that this was a performance or a ritual?
2. How long do particular images or moments from a dance performance remain with you?
3. Was the activity and presence of the audience in the performance a distraction or an enhancement to your own experience?
4. What did this performance remind you of?
5. If you watched this again, what would you do differently What would you like me to do differently?

Most audiences do not venture out, paying money for live performance, expecting to watch something fail. Or do they? I think that the element of risk has been quite firmly ironed out of most productions through strict over-rehearsal.

To me, much of the magic of creation occurs in the first two weeks of rehearsal, when discoveries seem potent and fatalistic. The goal of achieving perfect replication of the event then takes on increased importance over sharing something magical, and we are often left with stereotypes, stylized representations of reality, and formulae for performance and responses. This is a model that I seriously question. As an improviser, I place a great value in the spontaneity of the moment and also in the variations of repetition when something is repeated. I think that audiences can experience change and unknown variables and still be intrigued. Perfect multiple replicas of art, music, and video are so readily available on digital media and easy to transfer to others who can watch on handheld mobile devices. Why do performing artists insist on perfect replication of their performances? As the audience standard for synchronicity and perfection becomes even more machine-oriented and unattainable to human bodies with their imperfections, differences in structure, burps, and farts, why do dancers insist on becoming more machine-like? I make it my research to delve into these questions and to find ways to present and communicate lessons of transience, imperfection, and serendipity.

One of the most fascinating areas of audience involvement I have come across is the soundwalk.

> A soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are. Wherever we go we will give our ears priority. They have been neglected by us for a long time and, as a result, we have done little to develop an acoustic environment of good quality. (Westerkamp 1)

Practitioners such as Pauline Oliveros, Hildegaard Westerkamp, and R. Murray Schaeffer have articulated methods for increasing aural awareness of one's

surroundings, as practical exercises, as ways of tuning in to compositional awareness, or for aesthetic purposes. As Westerkamp explains, "Many soundwalks like this will eventually bring us closer to the ultimate goal of aural awareness on a wider scale. We begin to see that certain landscapes or environmental conditions provoke certain acoustics" (49). Japanese sound artists such as Suzuki Akio use subtle attention to sounds as well. Suzuki's *Oto Date* includes graphic elements to lead the listener to specific locations selected acoustically by the artist, making the solitary spatial experience of sound transformative (Suzuki). My impression is that a soundwalk can focus a group of people in a very particular way that could be called tuning. A true soundwalk requires focused rules and a long duration—up to an hour—and it would be an effective way to bring an audience through space to the theatre and to get them away from their normal reactions to entering the theatrical venue. Activities designed to heighten the senses other than sight can create different receptivity in an audience, and I would enjoy more experiences as an audience member which guide me into specific states of active viewership and involvement, as opposed to complete passivity.

Dancers are taught of the power of *kinaesthesia* in performance—the ability to transmit a parallel experience to passive viewers—and that by dancing and experiencing certain physical phenomena, the audience will proprioceptively understand the feeling, just as a viewer will instinctively mirror someone who yawns. Susan Leigh Foster makes an excellent study of the term and its political and cultural implications over time, as various writers have asserted that movement acts almost as a contagion or disease in its ability to infect others (46). The term is not only tied to early twentieth-century science's focus on the skeletomuscular system—the so-called machinery of the body (48)—but was also

"geared to rationalize the emergence of a new genre of concert dance, the modern dance, which deploys radically new presuppositions about movement and meaning" (49). In the era of Merce Cunningham and ever more abstracted movement presentations, kinaesthesia was still being used to transmit a universalist worldview (52). In particular, more recent neurological studies have actively tried to unravel the problem of kinaesthesia, establishing the presence of mirror neurons, which bring about physical mimicry in the viewer and appear to be related to our basis of learning and social bonding (Corness 23). The emotions connected to these physical sensations would logically vary between people, and this introduces a world view which poses more of a rhizome-like state of reception, since, "the brain's sense of movement established through the discovery of mirror neurons seems more to approximate the networked and hyperlinked world that has emerged with the advent of new digital technologies" (Foster 55).

I tested Foster's theory in my performance, not with my dancing, but with the dancing of the objects that I used. She claims that there are strong kinaesthetic connections to trajectory in particular (56). I found this idea compelling, since my own experiences of strong physical connection to outside stimuli has occurred in sports like high jump or baseball, and in contact improvisation in which large jumps and falls are being executed. I decided to use the pendulum-motion of the wooden chunks as an addition to my dance score, both because the swinging objects would enact Noguchi Taiso principles of pendulum motion, but also to see if people would follow the trajectory with their eyes, since "a key to the functioning of these neurons is that the action must be perceived as goal oriented" (Corness 23). Remarkably, many people did mention to me that they wished that I had done more with the wood and that they really

wanted the objects to collide. I will continue to explore trajectory in dance performance in different ways in the future.

In light of conflicting theories of kinaesthesia connected to the dancer, I chose to treat the entire space more as a mobile, moveable sculpture or a slowly evolving story instead of basing the impact of the work on the audience's ability to understand me emotionally as I dance. This in turn allowed me to make concrete choices about the space, its colour, the audience proximity, and allowed Tondino to construct the hanging fixtures and lighting in a playful and idiosyncratic manner. By bringing the work back to more rigid, ritualistic rules of engagement, I don't think that my actual feelings as I danced needed to match what people saw for them to transmit in the direction that I hoped. People's radically diverse viewpoints and inclusion of other audience members in their sight lines also was intended to add to the experience of a multi-focused event.

The chasms present in everyday life, and ways of understanding them, are many. The rhizome-like model is being used across disciplines—in describing web-based technologies, brain neurons, and areas of dance and music improvisation. This model allows for multiple levels of interpretation and experience based on the user. In art, the implication is that many viewpoints are valid and that one moment contains numerous possibilities. When combined with *ma*, liminality, and cross-cultural aspects, I find these chasms potent to work with in performance.

Chapter 3

Rebuilding a Practice Based on Chasming

In sharing the findings of my research with others, this exact performance is not replicable or transferable as a whole to another dancer or ensemble in the way that a composer might send a score off to another continent to be reproduced. The practice should be approached as an open work to be reconstituted by other dance artists and/or artists of other media who wish to engage in a similar trajectory of process. The chasms I chose to work with could be elaborated on or replaced by others.

The movement practice of *CHASM* is one of contrasts, defining the extreme limits of range. The dancer needs to move with, be aware of, create, and re-create sounds both as a part of moving and sometimes instead of moving. The mover must build a strong awareness of stillness and to have a very good sense of spatial awareness, particularly if the audience will be viewing from many sides at once. He or she needs to build an awareness of the entire space and sense the stillness and settled areas as well as the moving areas, and to approach the stage as a large sculpture garden with traces of events contained within it. In simple terms, the improvisations need to contrast between sparse/dense and between fast/slow.

All collaborators involved in this practice need to be able to improvise. While elements could be fixed, be aware that the fixed elements then become the score for the event. By being able to improvise, and rehearsing and practicing together, the ensemble is then able to discover together during the event. If some members are not able to improvise, they should still attend rehearsals and be a

part of the process of growing the work as a witness, so that they can become attuned to the chasms being used by others.

The work needs to be actualized in layers, with plenty of opportunity for friction and interaction between those layers. The work should feel like a personal ritual that becomes a public one, with the earmarks of ritual that I used: transformation, transportation, rhythm, special time, special space, and particular objects. The setting is an imaginative, futuristic place, not in the past or in the realistic present, and the lighting environment as well as the acoustic realm is drawn from contrasting opposites between dark and light, expansive and restricted, analog and high technology. As the work is formed in modules, the structure, as I discussed earlier, should be malleable and adaptable to different situations and venues. I found that by working with a graphic score containing the modules plotted onto a visual map of the space, all collaborators were able to conceptualize the event more readily. There are many styles for constructing graphic scores, and I encourage others to use them as a working tool (see fig. 8).

Philosophically, thinking about chasms in performance may seem counterintuitive, as performers and critics alike are trained to treat any upset in performance as a mistake and not a chance to reach a deeper level of engagement with the audience. The unpredictable elements within live work often contain potent meanings for the audience, such as when a dancer falls, a singer loses his voice, or an actress makes up something on the spot that takes her character to a new level on stage. These chasms are directly, physically, and intuitively sensed by the audience, and show tremendous potential for exploration and exploitation.

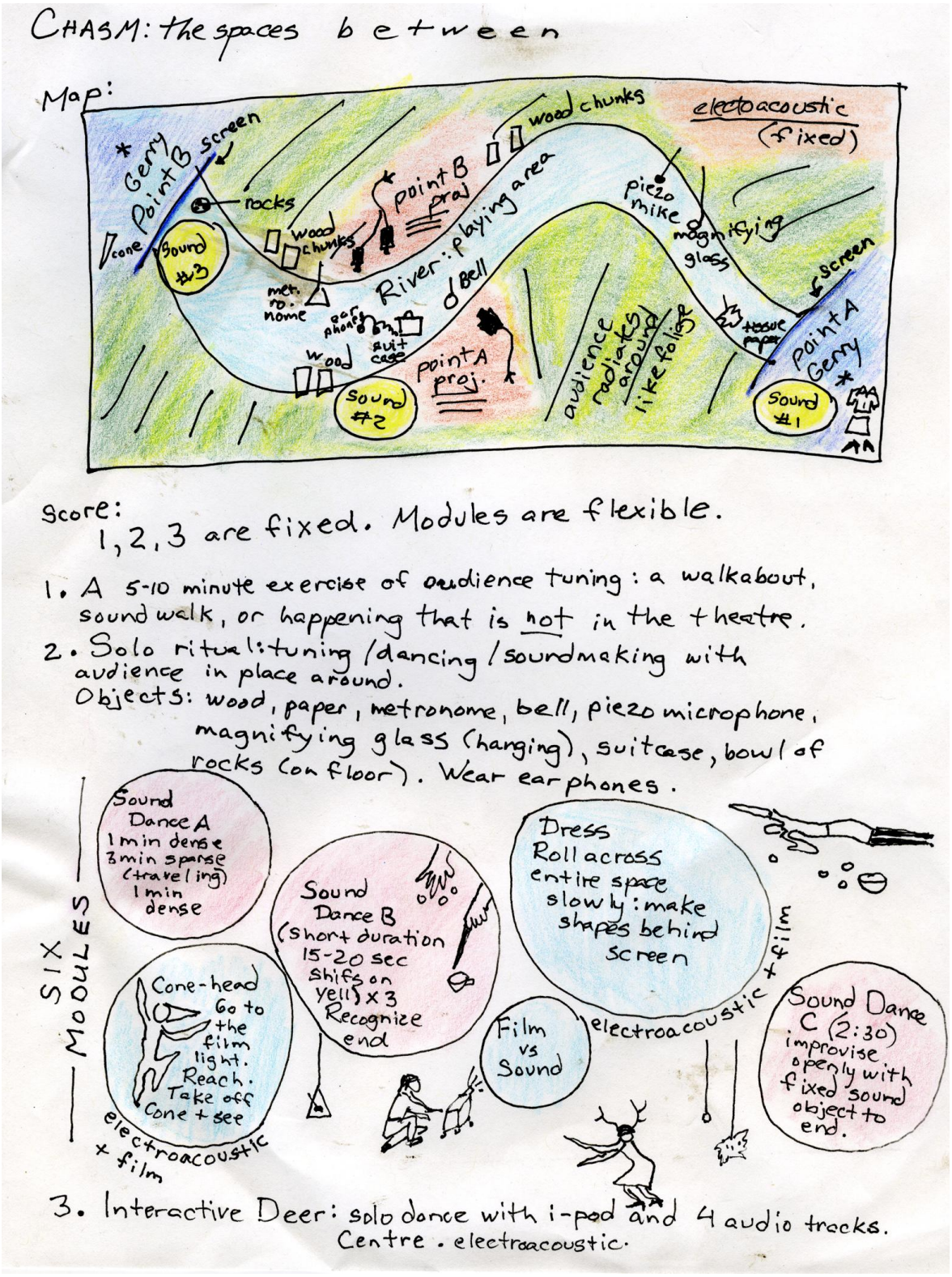

Fig. 8. Graphic Score for *CHASM: the spaces between*

Performance and daily life are sewn together to a large extent in this work. I am not thinking about developing a character, but allowing movement material to be actualized through myself, and dancing from within that shifted state. The objects that I used in *CHASM* are things that I was attracted to or curious about, that I had and wanted to play with and integrate—they were not last minute props bought or rented merely for appearance. In this way, performance becomes a process, in which the result just happens to be a day when there is a culmination with an audience. The fissures are allowed and encouraged to appear, but gradually through time.

Many chasms or fissures appear by working across disciplines, as I discussed previously. The great skill that a musician possesses at making sound is suddenly irrelevant in watching a musician move—all the artifice of training drops, and most musicians dance in a surprisingly free and natural manner. Similarly, the focus required for me to perform sounds takes me away from my practiced habits. Asking the projectionist to use his machinery as an instrument also changes his focus. These are some of the games or scores that we used in finding group chasms. Interdisciplinary groups can also work alongside, atop one another, or in conversation. The layering of activity can be as simple as "parallel play," in which the proximity of the different media creates a *frisson* without explicit relationships built in. It can be a complex score that controls all of the movements of the players both spatially and locally, in addition to the sounds they make and the relationships determined within. We used a variety of levels of involvement and rehearsed together, so our material was not in this case surprising to each other. An overarching score that we used was a map showing a bird's eye view of the entire space, with each module planned at a precise location

or pathway. A technique that we used in performance to cause the entire group to change focus was to make each member attempt to sense the endings instead of creating specific, task- or time-based endings for sections. This increased awareness is something palpable to an audience.

Thinking about *ma* or negative visual/acoustic space is much more challenging within a group than it is in solo form. In the end, there was not as much *ma* in the piece as I had intended, since the material was quite dense, the energy level quite high, and decisions to include negative space were not explicit enough or practiced enough as an ensemble. I also had the sense that the audience would not like the empty moments, so there are issues of cultural reception as well in my innate desire to entertain and not be perceived as boring.

The idea of using the liminal in theatrical performance has been much discussed. Victor Turner popularized the term with regards to ritual and performance in the sixties and throughout his career. Dadaist and Surrealist artists were purposely working between disciplines, beyond formal boundaries and goals of conscious understanding as early as the twenties, with techniques such as improvisation, automatic writing, cut-ups, collage, and other material ways of dealing with the artmaking process/product (Ono 736). Despite much experimentalism, particularly during the sixties, techniques and distribution methods have become fossilized in a way that discourages finding those edges and unknown fringes of art and performance. Ric Knowles goes into great detail in *Reading the Material Theatre* on the semiotics of meaning in the theatre from a cultural-materialist perspective, articulating the obvious juxtapositions between the content artists wish to communicate and the more conservative production methods, venues, and rituals of theatre-going. This poses problems for artists

who wish to work with chasms in performance—the theatre itself could be making that difficult to achieve with its focus on ticket sales, revenue generation, and public relations threatening to take time and energy away from creative experimentation and development. In replicating this practice, serious consideration should be given to the venue used.

Somaesthetics

In order for more artists to work in chasms of dance, we culturally need to be less rigid in our ideas of the body, its limits and meaning, as well as our interpretations of gender, race, ability, age, and so on. This gives rise to interdisciplinary academic study and potential to share results across disciplines much more than already occurs. The fragmentation and disassociation that I experience physically is currently mirrored in the discourse surrounding the body, which crosses neuroscience, psychology, education, drama, dance, kinesiology, sociology, and even linguistics to name a few areas of study where interesting research on the body occurs but is not necessarily accessible. A chasm is necessarily an intersection between such separate, discreet zones, so it is the interaction that needs to be encouraged. Of course, if everyone both watched and engaged in dance, it would be an excellent starting point for discussion and cross-fertilization of ideas and research.

Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics is an advancement in such a direction, demanding a new cultural framework for understanding the body as he claims that, "Our culture's general indifference to this cultivated form of somatic self-consciousness is also expressed in philosophy's continuous disregard of its importance, even in philosophers who champion the body's essential role in experience and cognition" (7). It seems self-evident that since the body is the

basis of human existence, serious philosophical attention should be given to it; such philosophical frameworks could then be employed by artists who wish to communicate more widely the somatic findings within their work.

Feminist philosophers such as Elizabeth Grosz point to a "profound somatophobia," reaching as far back as Plato's metaphor of the body as prison of the mind (5). Stephen Pinker, cognitive scientist and linguist, also argues in *The Blank Slate* against the limitations of Western ways of conceptualizing the body, showing how historically we remain tied to deep-rooted narratives, including the blank slate (empiricism), the ghost in the machine (mind/body dualism), and the noble savage (romanticism).

In the long-term, I hope for active involvement on behalf of audiences, but not necessarily in a participatory way, positioning my own work more on the ritual side of the spectrum according to Richard Schechner's braid of ritual and entertainment in performance (*Performance Theory* 133). This culturally shifts many aspects of performance, possibly increasing both the effect and the entertainment value overall. Perhaps this is what Jacques Rancière feels lacking in "The Emancipated Spectator," when he states,

> The spectator is usually disparaged because he does nothing, while the performers on the stage—or the workers outside—do something with their bodies. But it is easy to turn matters around by stating that those who act, those who work with their bodies, are obviously inferior to those who are able to look—that is, those who can contemplate ideas (277).

Rancière points to the inherent inequality in this situation as an obstacle to theatre's effectiveness, but a less dualistic philosophy of the mind and body could change the way of conceptualizing this situation, thereby facilitating spectator emancipation.

Passive spectatorship might have deep roots in the conceptual way that Westerners consider the body in general. Thomas Hanna calls for an end to the "fundamental misunderstandings in physiology, psychology, and medicine" (341) as a result of the failure to distinguish between first-person observations, which he calls *soma*, and third-party observation, which he calls the body (341). If the fundamental research surrounding issues of the body and reception is thus skewed, it does not bode well for performers and audiences. The job of dancers and theatre artists who perform is to acknowledge that there is a difference between the self-perception of what one is doing and the reception of the audience or spectators. Instead of relying on kinaesthesia to transmit information to viewers, we can harness viewer *soma* in other ways, acknowledging spectators' bodies and desires, in addition to their mental state, attending to these factors as details that communicate meaning, with at least as much importance as the colour scheme of the costumes. The audience members in turn, places themselves in a position of comfortable readiness, preparing all senses to experience fully and completely, while allowing the mental faculties to take an equal but not dominant role, claiming the final experience as one's own. This is what I try to foster and would like to encounter in the theatre of the future—more perceptive *chasming*.

Conclusion

This thesis is devoted to contemplation of theory and practice as demonstrated by the live event, *CHASM: the spaces between*. Through performance and the working process leading up to it, I became focused on negative space, various boundaries being negotiated as an interdisciplinary ensemble, and the power of shifting between contrasting modules of content as a structural method. I use the word chasm to convey what I experienced in working with concepts that included liminality and Japanese *ma*, but also feminism, Otherness, somatic work, and contemporary aesthetic philosophy.

In Chapter One I provide the background to this performance in terms of my own training, artistic background, focus on collaboration, and curiosity about performance reception that led me to want to engage in this research.

Chapter Two articulates the details of the live performance, describing its different modules, my difficulties, and the pathway of criticality being used in a practical sense. My purpose was to establish the context in which to understand the process and my intentions around audience reception, performance vocabulary and scores, improvisation, and meaning.

I discuss the chasms that occur between theory and practice in Chapter Three, including discussions of Lehmann, Cage, Barthes, Nesbitt, and Vandendorpe, as well as some particularly relevant Japanese writers such as Noguchi, Hijikata, Kasai, Yoshihara, and Yasuno. Some of the theories I use in performance include audience reception, kinaesthesia, and using chasms in creation of a multi-focused, rhizomatic event.

Chapter Four goes into more detail about how to replicate something similar to this performance, discussing the movement practice, philosophical

approaches to making interdisciplinary work, the cultural difficulties of working with *ma* and liminal ideas, and how chasms could be used as an antidote to the passive spectatorship lamented by Rancière.

Finally, for performance to be truly effective, the body-minds of the academics who write about art, aesthetics, philosophy, education, and other areas of mental persuasion, also need to be taken into account and reflected within writing, and disseminated across disciplines. I hope that by recounting my own inner experience as a theatre practitioner, I can open my research findings to those who are curious. Many areas of future study remain open to those who are willing to cross the chasms of academic disciplines and artistic genres, finally working towards uncovering the multitude of global viewpoints that can enlighten what we do and who we are.

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