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# *Capturing Dance:*

*The art of documentation*



*Kasey Lack*

*Bachelor of Arts Honours (Dance)*

*2012*

Edith Cowan University

**CAPTURING DANCE: THE ART OF DOCUMENTATION**  
(An exploration of distilling the body in motion)

Honours Exegesis

Kasey Lack

**BACHELOR OF ARTS HONOURS (DANCE)**  
Edith Cowan University - WAAPA

## Abstract

This research paper is an exploration of documenting and capturing live dance performance in regards to three artistic mediums, Notation, Photography and Film. This piece of writing discusses practitioners who have contributed to the development of these processes such as: Ann Hutchinson Guest, Rudolf von Laban, Eadweard Muybridge, Lois Greenfield, Ted Shawn, Norman McLaren and Sue Healey. In conjunction with historical and current day research the secondary document provided alongside this thesis describes the practical investigation undertaken. The reflections included define first-hand discoveries of how these three mediums of documenting interconnect to describe a contemporary dance solo. Thoughts, findings and results from the studio are provided and discussed to gain further understanding. The aim of this research is to distil and capture the body in motion, to see if it's possible to produce a document capable of communicating dance when a live body is absent.

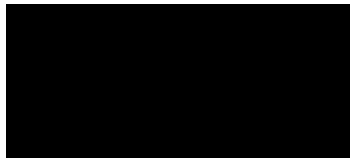
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I would like to acknowledge assistance given in my thesis from supervisor Maggi Phillips and photographer David Sutton, who helped film and document parts of my process as well as the support of my parents and family.

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- Photography documentation
- Video documentation DVD format

## *Introduction:*

The mechanism by which the style of dance is passed from generation to generation is fragile, even haphazard. The ballets of the past have no literal script; the only clues to form and content are vague descriptive notations and equally unreliable oral tradition. The choreographic imprint, like a magnificent sand castle, is washed away by time, leaving behind only the footprints of the architect and the musical score. (Kirkland and Lawrence 1986)

This research exploration is directed towards looking into the ways in which we as a society and members of the dance community document and aim to capture dance. An example from the quote above describes the difficulty we have had in the past of finding the right medium that best conveys dance in its purest form. This thesis researches historical and current arts practitioners, looking at three of the main methods that have previously documented dance, notation, photography and film. I am interested in these areas of documenting and how and why they have changed over time. Furthermore I wish to discuss the significance we place on documentation, what purpose these records may serve in relation to live performance and, in contrast, question whether documentations are art forms in their own.

Throughout my research I have uncovered many examples of effective and successful documentation and contemplated the reasons behind their effectiveness. With these observations in mind, I devised my own short solo work. Putting these thoughts into practice, I aimed to see if I was capable of discovering a successful method or combination of processes to document and capture my own choreography.

The accompanying materials provided with this thesis are the results of my experimentation and documentation and are to be viewed as supporting material throughout. My ultimate aim through the investigation of this thesis is to see if it is possible to truly distill a live experience.

## *Literature Review*

A large body of information exists on each of these three mediums for documenting but none claims that a particular method stands alone as the best form of documentation. I discuss each mode of documenting by focussing on its history, development and the prominent figures that have aided its improvement.

### *Notation, early beginnings*

A thinking tool, notation serves several purposes. It is often the process by which the dancer/ choreographer/ director works out the complex spatial patterning that the actual movement may take, arriving at elaborate conceptual progressions that would seem possible on the paper only. It serves as a teaching device - a means of communication between director and performer. It also provides a record for future reference – a historical link between one dance form and another, from generation to generation. (Schwartz 1982)

The first attempts at recording dance sequences before the invention of photographic media rely on the traditional meeting of ink and paper. The earliest trace of recorded dance was the discovery of two Catalonian manuscripts found in the municipal archives in Cervera, Spain from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. From these manuscripts historians were able to decipher the meaning of the symbols and translate them into early court dances. The dances were relatively simple to notate as the steps and gestures of the feet remained the same and were notated with a letter symbol, however the sequence in which they were performed differed from dance to dance.

### *Ann Hutchinson Guest*

Ann Hutchinson Guest has conducted extensive research on the changing nature of notation and the individuals who developed systems of writing down choreography. In '*Choreographics, A Comparison of Dance Notation Systems from the Fifteenth Century to the Present*,' Guest concludes that the Cervera manuscripts were the earliest form of a 'Word and Word Abbreviation' style of notation, a letter abbreviation method that lasted nearly two hundred years.



Figure 1. **Kellom Tomlinson, 1727** *Ground plan with figures*,  
Loupe, L, P. Virilio, et al. (1994). *Traces of Dance*. Marsat, Dis Voir

Guest also classified other systems into categories: Track Drawings, Stick Figure (visual) and Abstract Symbol Systems.

### *Track drawing Systems*

Track Drawings as a style of notation came to light during the 17<sup>th</sup> century at the time of King Louis XIV. The beginnings of ballet involved the development of complex footwork and floor patterning and tracings of these intricate pathways and choreographies became prominent. A new notation style which traced these pathways, soon to be known as the 'Feuillet or Beauchamp-Feuillet' system, started to spread.

Pierre Beauchamp, a French ballet master, musician and dancer recognized as the inventor of the five primary ballet positions of the feet, documented his discoveries and floor patterning but is not considered the sole developer of his notation system: "Beauchamp originated the system but it was first published by his student Raoul-Auger Feuillet in 1700 as '*Chorégraphie: ou, l'art de décrire la danse, (Choreography; or The Art of Describing Dance.)*'" (Watts 1998) This method of recording dance became extremely popular and in the following years additional arm gestures were developed.

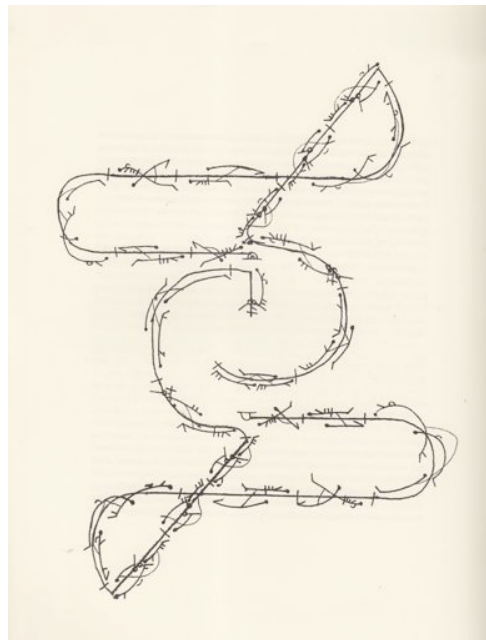


Figure 2. **John Weaver**, 1706  
*Orcheography in 4*, Louppe, L, P.  
Virilio, et al. (1994). Traces of Dance.  
Marsat, Dis Voir.

### *Stick Figure Visual Systems*

At the time of the French Revolution, aristocratic dance in royal courts declined as did the Beauchamp-Feuillet system. Over time it had become unsuitable to describe the increasing range of large movements beginning to appear in theatre dance. A new style of notating surfaced in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by Guest as Stick Figure (Visual) Systems.

These dance notations overlapped with musical notation and markings were placed underneath musical staves. Arthur Saint-Léon was a pioneer in this area, writing his book *'Sténochoréographie'* in 1852. As a child he grew up learning violin before turning to dance. He put on many ballets and died at the early age of forty nine after choreographing *'Coppélia.'* Knowledgeable in music and dance Saint-Leon was able to unite the two and pair them side-by-side. His ideas did not go unnoticed and many notation systems that followed also made use of the musical staff.



Figure 3. **Friedrich Albert Zorn**, *Example of Saint-Léon notation*  
[answers.com/topic/dance-notation](https://www.answers.com/topic/dance-notation)

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century as contemporary dance and ballet techniques became increasingly complex, the challenge of documenting them correctly became more valued and valid within society. The last of Ann Hutchinson Guest's notation categories is Abstract Symbol Systems, under which sits the most important dance notator, Rudolf von Laban. His notation system *'Labanotation'* has become the most recognised and utilised within the dance community.

Laban is to theory and dance notation what Freud is to psychoanalysis, both father and revolutionary, legislator and opponent. His notation brought about a considerable upheaval of concepts related to movement and his thinking deserves to be recognised as one of the most innovative of its kind developed during the twentieth century. (Weber)

## Rudolf von Laban

### *Abstract Symbol Systems*

Rudolf von Laban was born in 1879 in Bratislava and lived as an art student from 1900-1907 studying architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. During this time he experimented with abstract painting and figurative drawing. Laban spent time in Vienna concentrating on secession-style painting and movement theories and returned to Germany to open his first school. The first appearance of Rudolf von Laban's book '*Schrifttanz*' (*Written Dance*) was in 1928. Laban was not trained in any one particular style of dance and therefore based his movement ideas on his own classification of universal principles.

A main feature of Laban's notation system is his invention of using the vertical staff; music notation and previous notation systems before him were set horizontally across the page. The vertical placement has a strong advantage in that it represents the human body from the dancer's point of view. Laban developed new ideas and encouraged future developments of his notation system to be made by dancers and movement analysts.

The fact that the Laban school continues to pursue research which has always remained open, both as far as philosophical and practical precepts are concerned, only serves to prove the tremendous interest shown in this work. Laban's notation is not merely a system, but an entire school of thought. (Weber)



Figure 4. *Pose with Labanotation beside* (1982). Tracking, Tracing, Marking, Pacing. New York, Grieco Printing Company Inc.



## Dance Notation Bureau

The main organisation responsible for preserving the art of notation in the modern day is the Dance Notation Bureau.

In 1940 the Dance Notation Bureau was established in New York City, dedicated to the furtherance of the art of dance through the system of notation, the Laban system being selected as the most appropriate with which to achieve this aim. Centres have been established, and textbooks have been published. (Schwartz 1982)

The Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) publishes many dance materials for choreography and provides teaching qualifications in Labanotation. Listed on their website are their aims: “Preserving the Past, Enriching the Present and Securing the Future.”(Weber) They are a non-profit organisation and their mission is to use Labanotation as a way to progress the creation of movement and preservation in the dance world, ensuring dances can be performed long after the lifetime of the artist.

The library at the DNB houses the world’s largest collection of Labanotated scores, not only for ballet and contemporary works but also historical, folk and cultural dances. Other important documents and archives needed to re stage the works are also collected such as, musical scores, audio/videotapes, production information and historical information. The library ensures the conservation of these documents in order for companies, teachers and scholars to access them. The DNB are an example of an organisation in the modern day that still recognises the importance of recording and documenting dance.

## Advanced Notation systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Labanwriter and Labandancer

The DNB at Ohio State University in 1984 played a major role in developing an entirely new form of notating, creating the Laban Writer Software program at their Department of Dance. ‘*Labanwriter*’ is the Labanotation editor developed for Macintosh computers that can be downloaded, enabling dance notations to be copied, edited and stored on a hard drive.



The *'Labanwriter'* uses over seven hundred of Laban's symbols to record the direction, levels and types of movement in the body.

Labanwriter does not claim to replace the writer of notation, whose kinaesthetic responses to movement are irreplaceable. This system does, however, greatly speed up the writing of scores, a prolonged and meticulous job which requires as long as six months from start to finish. This apparatus could put together scores such as those commissioned by recently formed companies, which are often put off by the cost of notation. It could also reduce the voluminous corpus of dance archives. (Loupe, Virilio et al. 1994)

The program allows the notation process to be faster and consistent to edit, print, preserve and also update. This new technology has allowed dance notation to become a malleable document form. Following the release of the *'Labanwriter'* the *'Laban Dancer Program'* was soon to follow, a program that reads the Labanwriter software to convert it to animation.

Even though technology has been a great aid in this area, there are still some difficulties regarding the endless possibilities of movement and choreography and the dilemma of matching diverse and idiosyncratic movements with various pre-configured Labandancer animation templates, in turn affecting the translation of a Labanotation score.

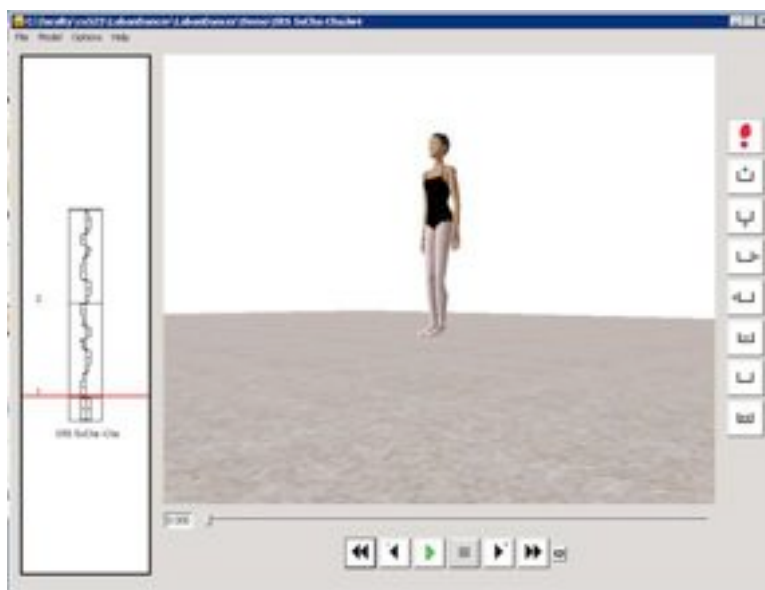


Figure 5. *Example of Laban Dancer*, Multimedia Computing and Communications [www.cs.uccs.edu](http://www.cs.uccs.edu)

### *Notation vs. Choreographic drawings*

There are many benefits to the notation process, especially now software like Labanwriter and Labandancer exist, however the initial recording and note taking of a full length work can be incredibly time consuming and costly. Notation systems rely heavily on a trained notator being present at all rehearsals in order to document additional notes such as corrections and imagery given to performers in order to sustain the original intentions of the work. On another note, once a notation document is produced not everyone is interested in learning how to read and write it or enter a score into a computer.

As an extension of research in my thesis I also considered other ways of recording dance on paper such as choreographic drawings. A wonderful book, *'Traces of Dance'* by Louppe, L, P. Virilio et al, strongly disagrees about using any form of 'system' to document dance and states:

It will be said that the notation of dance does treason to its' emotion and to the urgency of a present moment, to a real transferral of energy; it will be said that what comes about in danced movement – what is “torn” out there, far more than simply manifested – cannot be translated, cannot be brought back, is linked to its pure emotional and physical actualisation, which no sign can restore, which no sign has even the right to inscribe as a definitive event in the annals of human time. (Louppe, Virilio et al. 1994)

As much as I find Labanotation fascintaing in its creation of a universal dance language on paper, another aspect I enjoy about contemporary dance is its subjectiveness and openness for interpretation. Dance can stand alone without labels through the multiple understandings of each viewer. I can understand the resistance towards using a structure that, in some ways, simplifies and takes away from the individuality of the dancer, ignoring unique performative qualities.

In *Traces of Dance*, various drawings, sketches and diagrams by choreographers are included. These images do not employ universally understood systems. They are personalised, creative thoughts on dance. Choreographic drawings don't accurately capture dance or the correct sequence of steps but they can convey the essence and spirit of the choreographer and dance work, which, in relation to live performance and experience, can hold real value.

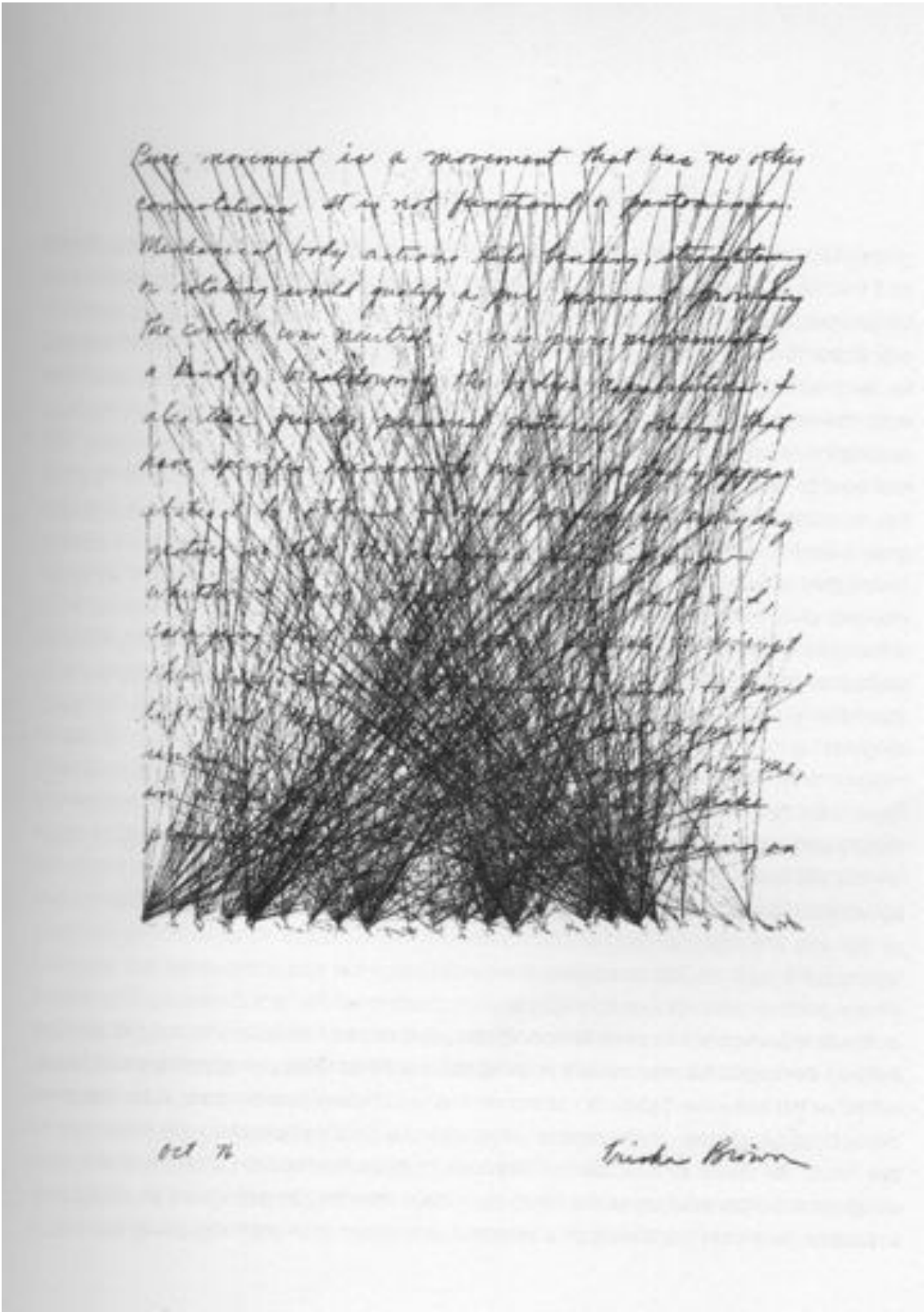


Figure 6. **Trisha Brown**, 1976. *Choreographic Drawing, Untitled pencil on paper*, Louppe, L. P. Virilio, et al. (1994). *Traces of Dance*. Marsat, Dis Voir.

## *Relationship of Photography & Dance*

“Since ancient times the visual arts, including painting, architecture, and sculpture, have tried to communicate the impression or perception of movement.”

(D'Amboise, Spain et al. 1998)

Photography, similar to traditional notation produces a tangible and physical document but is also capable of resembling an expressive art form on its own. In relation to art and dance there has always been a fine line that exists between the photographer as a ‘documenter,’ (depicting reality) and the photographer as ‘creator,’ (depicting beauty) and art for art’s sake. So where does photography sit in relation to dance? I questioned whether it’s possible to decipher and understand the way a dance is performed from a series of photographic images.

A close examination of the linkage between dance and photography suggests a paradox; for all the dance world’s dependency on photography to represent its accomplishments, photography is inherently the least suited medium to do the dance justice. After all dance is the controlled passage of bodies through time and space. The essence of dance – and our comprehension of it – stems from the seamless interconnectedness of its movements and gestures. But photography fragments time; a single image is a vision of one moment torn from its context. And while photography fragments time, it fractures space. Its absolute universe is the frame, outside which nothing exists. What once happened in the fullness of space is now brutally cordoned off, and what we are allowed to see is imprisoned in two dimensions. (Ewing 1992)

As an individual interested in visual arts I am drawn to photographic imagery as evidence of dance. Looking through books and recalling my favourite dance images I realised photography as dance documentation falls into two categories, static and moving. Whilst I enjoy static photos of dancers holding incredibly hard positions I have come to understand the different purposes these photos have in terms of archiving.



Figure 7. **Arnold Genthe**, 1915-1918 *Dancing in the Chequered Shade*, Ewing. W. A (1987). The Fugitive Gesture: Masterpieces of Dance Photography. London, Thames and Hudson.

There are some interesting quotes that exist in the foreword of '*Breaking Bounds the dance photography of Lois Greenfield*,' written by William A. Ewing. I feel these successfully describe some of the struggling points dance and photography have in terms of correctly depicting movement:

Photography is inherently biased towards certain aspects of dance irrespective of their significance vis-à-vis the whole; a spectacular leap, for example is more photogenic than a more subtle movement which may in fact be more essential choreographically. And because dance is fleeting and photography enduring, imperfect moments which are overlooked or forgiven in the rapid flux of stage performance are felt to be unacceptable in what, is after all, a lasting document.  
(Ewing 1992)

I find these concepts interesting in the way they describe the difficulty of capturing a whole or entire dance experience, similar to that which an audience member might have. Moments in dance performance are made up of many elements, such as interconnecting phrases and gestures to deliver the final work. If dance pieces only displayed large difficult turns and jumps without any transitions there would be little to appreciate in terms of a completed dance piece, it would merely be a display of physical feats disconnected from ideas or narrative.

Static shots of dance are layered with an incredible amount of information in regards to historical contexts, fashions, cultural movements and the developments of technique, which do us a great favour in the preservation of past dance works. However they fail to tell us very much about the actual dance choreography they came from. These thoughts led me to seek photography designed to capture the body in motion, images that truly document the dance happening in real time before the camera.

## Eadweard Muybridge

Eadweard Muybridge born in England 1830 immigrated to the United States in the early 50's. The beginning of his career as a photographer took place in 1867 in San Francisco where he became a highly regarded landscape photographer. In 1872 a former governor hired Muybridge to take photos to settle a debate about whether a moment exists in a horses gallop when all four hooves are off the ground. Muybridge accepted the challenge and by 1878 succeeded in taking a sequence of images with twelve cameras that captured the moment when a horse's hooves are contracted under its stomach. These photographs were published leading to Muybridge's celebrity status and brought him international fame. From 1878 onwards "he devoted himself entirely to devising ways to depict instantaneous, sequential views of motion that, when assembled together, could create what appear to us now as rudimentary movies." (Brookman 2010)

After his success he was awarded a contract at Pennsylvania University to continue his research in animal and human locomotion which resulted in over one hundred thousand images and the publication of '*Animal Locomotion.*' The two volumes of work he dedicated to his moving human subjects depicted men, women and children falling, jumping and running; carrying out everyday activities and athletic ones. The photographs were taken on a black backdrop with a white anthropometric grid in order to see the change in scale and movement from each photograph to the next.

The second photo below on the opposite page is an example of dance incorporated into Muybridge's movement series. The images placed side-by-side act as early stop motion films and whilst individually they may be viewed as static photography as a group in order they are viewed as a dance.



Figure 8. **Eadweard Muybridge**, 1879 *Horses, Cantering, Mahomet Plate 18*. Brookman, P. (2010). Helios:Eadweard Muybridge in a Time of Change. Germany, Corcoran Gallery of Art and Steidl Publishers.



Figure 9. **Eadweard Muybridge**, 1887 *Dancing (fancy) (Movements Female) Plate 188*. Brookman, P. (2010). Helios:Eadweard Muybridge in a Time of Change. Germany, Corcoran Gallery of Art and Steidl Publishers.



Muybridge's locomotion research can be considered an extremely successful example of how photographic documentation can capture dance. Not only are Muybridge's images interesting to look at they also serve a great scientific purpose in understanding and investigating movement.

"He radically reinvented the aesthetic and technical capabilities of the camera and in doing so gave us a new way to conceive of motion, time and space." (Brookman 2010)

Muybridge's motion images isolate dance frozen in time, but viewed in sequence side by side movements unfold before the eyes.

### Lois Greenfield

Modern day photographer Lois Greenfield also changed the way in which we view dance. Her published books are fuelled with the dynamic vitality of the human body.

Lois Greenfield's allegiance is first and foremost to photography. Dance is her subject matter, or, as she puts it, her "landscape." Dance however is not incidental; she needs the trained bodies with their athletic prowess, their acquired ability to previsualise themselves in space (able to chart their trajectories and land with pin point accuracy), and their ability to mould their bodies into expressive forms as required. Her fundamental concern is with kinetic energy: energy contained, constrained, and released. (Ewing 1992)

Lois Greenfield studied anthropology at university and at the same time delved into photography, becoming heavily involved in photojournalism. In 1973 she moved to New York, the same moment the events of the dance world were receiving considerable success with Russian superstars from the west such as Nureyev and Barishnikov. It was at this time she discovered dance photography, which she enjoyed due to its pure form and subject matter.

Gradually she became restless with performance and dress rehearsal situations, taking photos in theatres and studios where she felt reduced to a powerless observer. In 1982 she obtained her own studio and having become disenchanted with the norms of traditional dance photography she started experimenting with new angles.



Figures 10 & 11. **Lois Greenfield**, 1983 *Bill T. Jones/ Arnie Zane Dance Co.* Ewing, W. A. (1992). Breaking Bounds The Dance Photography of Lois Greenfield. London, Thames and Hudson.

Lois asked performers to collaborate in her studio, initially only making slight adjustments to the poses supplied by the dancers before wanting total control over the event. Greenfield's choreographing of the dancers was specifically for the camera, creating 'dances' that could never be seen on stage.

Lois's fundamental way of working when encountering a dancer is described as a "mutually respectful collaboration in which "both parties risk abandoning their set notions, dancer and photographer are able to push limits of their understanding and boundaries of their respective arts." (Ewing 1992)

Through her experimentations she discovered the Hasselblad camera with its square picture format. The usual Greenfield image is characterized by this shape, bound on four sides with black borders defining the parameters of the composition. The backgrounds are kept purely white and each photo has an element of force which dancers are seen to respond to in a dynamic way. She does not use a dark room, cables or hidden supports and there is no editing process of inserting bodies after the fact. She claims she rarely crops any of the photos and never has dancers pose, "Instead she gets her dancers dancing, and, as dance critic Deborah Jowitt puts it, "snatches the image out of a field of motion." (Ewing 1992)

## *Relationship of Film & Dance*

In dance and choreography it is invaluable to have the opportunity to view what has been done in the past, what is being done in the present, and to give support and encouragement to those artists who are in the forefront of experimentation, especially with film and video. (D'Amboise, Spain et al. 1998)

Film and video appear to be the easiest forms of documenting dance. Due to advances in technology, equipment is easy to access, affordable and of a high quality, granting anyone the ability to be their own videographer, editor and producer. Dance has various relationships in its connection to film, for example recording full length dance works, visual media in live performance, commanding scenes in Hollywood musicals, motion capture, animation and as a choreographic tool in experimental film.

I focused on the advantages and difficulties film presents when capturing complete dance works and experimental dance films and have researched early pioneers who were the first to begin experimenting. These include Ted Shawn, Norman McLaren and modern day dance maker Sue Healey.

In the 1800s, Eadweard Muybridge's sequential photographs were the first perceived flip book format for viewing the illusion of motion. In 1887, H.W Goodwin invented celluloid film and in 1894 Louis Lumiere claimed exclusive rights for his machine combining the functions of a camera and a projector, the 'Cinematograph.' That same year it is recorded that Thomas A. Edison filmed Ruth St. Denis doing a skirt dance outdoors.

It is interesting that the connection of dance and film was made relatively quickly. "Early film pioneers were quick to recognize that dance was an ideal subject for demonstrating the magic of their new invention." (Mitoma, Zimmer et al. 2002) However it wasn't long before film technologies had a conflicting effect on dance. Many believed it threatened the essential significance of direct dance encounters of person to person.

Isadora Duncan for example rejected the notion of film and “insisted on mythologizing herself, because she longed to be noticed and remembered. That is why she refused to be filmed, because she wanted to become a legend: an absence rendered perpetually present.” (Daly 1995)

This has raised the question of the importance and impermanence of live dance performance. An element that makes live dance special is its ephemeral nature, allowing dance to be an individual experience by leaving its mark on the viewer to be recalled only from memory.

Choreographer and dancer Ted Shawn had a contrasting opinion to Isadora Duncan.. Living from 1891 – 1972, Shawn was a pioneer of early modern dance developments. He saw the value of film in the preservation of dance though “Ted was aware as anyone that his creative efforts were totally dependent upon the live bodies that executed his choreography” (Mitoma, Zimmer et al. 2002)

In 1913, the Thomas A. Edison Company accepted Shawn’s idea for a short dance film called ‘*Dances of the Ages*,’ a silent, black and white film exploring dance from primitive man through, Classical, Egyptian, Greek and French court dances to modern day social dance. In 1914, Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis created a partnership, which led to the forming of Denishawn in 1915. From their collaboration they experimented with what could be achieved on film, acknowledging St Denis’ great interest in the East they were able to bring dances and choreography they had seen whilst travelling back to Western civilisation.

In the early 1930’s, Denishawn deteriorated and Ted Shawn formed an all male company at Jacob’s Pillow. He aimed to preserve their entire repertoire and recorded over sixty dances on black and white silent film.

In 1938, one of his programs stated:

Friends have repeatedly asked us if we have recorded our dances on moving picture film. We are equipped now with a moving picture camera, which takes 16mm film, and with an electric light studio, using paper sensitive film, we can make very creditable records of our dances. The accidents of previous years, and the other possibilities that are ever present which might suddenly terminate the work of the group, have forcibly reminded us that if the group stops dancing the dances themselves are lost. (Mitoma, Zimmer et al. 2002)

This quotation is an example of Shawn's dedication to documenting his dances and the importance he placed on archiving and preserving them. He acknowledges how easily the choreographic imprint can be lost, viewing film as a valuable tool to assist in the preservation of dance.

### Norman McLaren

Another artist that successfully captured motion on film was Norman McLaren. Considered a great artist, animator, scientist and inventor, Norman McLaren's work stems from his obsession with the manipulation of motion. He was born 1914 in Scotland going on to study painting and interior design. Over time he became stifled and searched for new ways in which to create movement in his paintings and was lead to change his creative medium to film.

He started composing simple coloured animations before finally gaining access to better cameras to make black and white films and documentaries. Between 1936 and 1939, McLaren worked in London learning the basic elements of filmmaking and, after time in the United States, he immigrated to Canada, joining the National Film Board in 1941. It was not till later that dance featured in his films but as an artist obsessed with motion the connection was made. His three dance films gained him great acclaim. In the late sixties and early seventies McLaren created '*Pas de Deux*' 1967 and '*Ballet Adagio*' 1972, he went on to make a third dance film later in his career, '*Narcissus*' 1983.

*Pas de deux* is a black and white film with multiple imagery. Having been described as a film of technical brilliance it highlights the beauty of motion and transitions within ballet partner work, using up to ten multiple exposures per frame.

*Ballet Adagio* in contrast was filmed in colour, making the human figures less abstracted. McLaren reduced the frame speed by four to manipulate the dance and increase the viewer's perception of balletic movement to heighten aesthetic and emotional responses.



Figure 12. **Norman McLaren**, *Images from Pas de deux*, [body-pixel.com/](http://body-pixel.com/)

*Narcissus* was the last film McLaren made for the National Film Board of Canada. Shot in colour with frame speeds ranging from 2 to 48 per second (as opposed to the norm of 24.) McLaren intercut and reversed the actions of the dancers to communicate the narrative of the Greek myth. His editing is seamless against a black backdrop and he overlaps, mirrors and adjusts the opacity and definition of body to blur its actions when moving.

These three films out of McLaren's body of work are successful examples of how editing techniques can help communicate and allow the perception of moving dance in live performance to be accurately captured.

## Sue Healey

“As with my work in live performance, I am always seeking novel ways to question, unravel and expose meaning. I make films where movement is the primary language.”  
(Healey 2005)

Sue Healey was a founding member of Dance Works, artistic director of Vis-à-vis Dance Canberra and has been making dance films for over fifteen years. Her initial interest in film began as an investigation in how to solve the problem of documenting live performance. She became frustrated with views of dances filmed from far away at the back of the theatre, capturing bodies too small to see and using lenses unable to handle strong theatrical lighting. “It was my aim to capture more successfully on film the elusive nature of dance-to make the intangible slightly more tangible.” (Healey 2005)

Sue’s early film works grew from collaborating with both a director and cinematographer, Mark Pugh and Louise Curham. Together they filmed three of her adapted live works on 16mm film (*Knee deep in thin air*-1992, *Fugue*-1993 and *Slipped*-1997.) These early developments led her to expand her skills in directing her own film works. “I find it to be a medium that demands a distillation of ideas that assists my process. It fires my imagination in a particular way that leads me into new ways of visualising movement.” (Healey 2005)



Figure 13. Sue Healey *Fine Line Terrain*, [ausdance.org.au](http://ausdance.org.au)



Film as a medium has endless creative possibilities that are difficult to ignore. The technology of capturing dance on camera and editing has given choreographers a greater range of manipulation for their art form, inspiring ideas that cannot be physically realised in the studio or on stage. The pairing of dance and film can produce many outcomes: for instance, objective films captured from far away to archive dance performances or alternately film that has been altered through editing resulting in an artistic dance film. This second outcome produces an artwork that stands alone from the original dance. However, in archival terms a question remains about the best way to document a dance?

One method refuses to alter the original dance and captures choreographic sequences correctly. However within the transferral of live performance to a two dimensional format, the dance can often lose its original performative essence. In contrast, an artistic dance film with movements chosen specifically for camera can engage the viewer and inject more of the original essence into the film, the disadvantage being that the depiction of the original movement sequence is inaccurate

In the modern day we are now able to reproduce dance works in DVD format, save files to computers and send them via the internet thus resulting in numerous hard copies to sustain the life of the work and choreographer. The dance world's circle has increasingly been broadened and can offer large quantities of information anywhere at anytime. Advances in technology may have replaced traditional methods of communicating dance, such as notation, but they remain working towards preserving the works of the past and current day to ensure access in the future. Technology has allowed dance choreographers and film artists to gain more exposure outside of the traditional theatre setting, allowing the presence and preservation of our art form to not go unnoticed.

## *Practical Thesis Investigation*



*\*At this point please glance through the secondary document whilst reading to view the results and outcomes of the thesis investigation.*

## Creating the solo

I established a small journal to use throughout the process of choreographing a short contemporary solo to document any thoughts, ideas, drawings or plans for movements. This served as a useful tool to help me visualize ideas on paper, revise and analyse movements and help me to solve problems and difficulties. My initial goal was to create a contemplative solo that would investigate the body in motion with attention on finding impetus in my movements and on documenting movement traces.

A primary source of inspiration came from an excerpt I had watched of Lucy Guerin performing in Sara Rudner's work *Eight Solos*. The solo was performed in a studio in silence and was quite playful and gestural. I particularly enjoyed watching Guerin's active thought processes within the dance and the way in which her movements incorporated accumulation, repetition and varying dynamics.

The positive aspect to making a solo is that it is completely personal and reliant on an individual performer's interpretation and timing within the space where there is no direct comparison to be made with other bodies or entities. While I usually prefer choreographing dances on multiple performers, I began to see how creating a solo might become quite challenging, especially in finding where to begin. I discovered setting certain boundaries and directions for the solo assisted in making the process more interesting and active for myself.

I took my journal on the LINK Dance Company international tour mid-year and planned to take notes and develop a large amount of the choreography at 'PAF' (the Performing Arts Forum in St Erme France). A few of us spent five days there and had unlimited access to studio space, dance books, videos and films.

Whilst there I spent time improvising, filming myself and documented potential movement phrases and ideas to use in the solo. I also came across a wonderful book in the PAF library entitled *A Choreographer's Score* by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Bojana Cvejic. My main interest in the book came from having just completed a choreographic workshop at the P.A.R.T.S Summer School in Brussels, which was established by De Keersmaecker and is closely linked to her dance company Rosas.

The book is accompanied by four DVDs of her earliest works: *Fase*, *Rosas Danst Rosas*, *Elena's Aria* and *Bartok*. The writing includes an in-depth interview with De Keersmaeker about her choreographic processes complete with thoughts, articles, program notes, choreographic drawings and clear notations of the structures which she uses, explaining the dances in full detail.

The book fascinated me and instantly connected to my thesis. After watching a number of De Keersmaeker's works I started to feel more inspired within my own choreographic process and the idea for a Rosas' inspired solo evolved. Reflecting on recent European works I had seen and reading about her choreographic processes, I felt my improvising style at the time had somehow become quite linear, vertically orientated and kept returning to repetition. I decided to draw on these physical themes and experimented further, incorporating different tracks of classical and percussive music in my creating process, all the while filming and writing down short phrases and ideas for music in my journal.

Once we returned to Australia, I had not finished a complete solo but the trip had helped me generate more ideas behind my investigation. I finally decided vertical movement physicality would be the basis for the solo. I didn't look to copy any Rosas' movements but rather had De Keersmaeker's ideas in mind using basic steps such as walking, running and swinging when making my work. I continued to improvise and film myself in the studios at WAAPA until a structure started to appear, this occurred after I began introducing different musical components.

Initially I had a strong desire to avoid choreographing straight to a piece of music. Matching choreography directly to the dynamics of a sound composition can appear boring. I started choreographing in silence and then videoed myself performing phrases to different musical compositions by J.S Bach and Steve Reich as well as to minimalist sound tracks sourced from the Internet. After looking I found a violin piece by Michael Galasso entitled *Scene Four* that I felt would be appropriate for the developed movement vocabulary. As the solo progressed and I began working closely with the music, I wanted to consolidate the choreography on paper through written notations.

At this point, I was suddenly challenged and overcome by the difficulty of not setting the movements to counts. Eventually I gave in and found that the only way I could make the choreography concrete was to take note of the order of my movements and how they related to each other through a 4/4 musical timing. I continued this way for some time and completed choreographing the solo.

Whilst viewing a rough video in the final week of rehearsing, I realised that placing the choreography so directly within musical counts had not quite produced the results I wanted. I returned to the list of music I'd used when first improvising and decided on a Steve Reich composition entitled *Violin Phase*, coincidentally the same piece used by De Keersmaeker in one of her works. For some reason this seemed a much better choice and made more sense since the choreography was somewhat inspired by her.

I made the decision to perform the solo at the same speed and timing as choreographed originally to Michael Galasso's *Scene Four*. The pauses within my movements instantly became more surprising and less predictable with the new piece of music. I also established more freedom within my timing and had fun drawing out movements and sections, which developed the choreography further. In addition I established that the solo would be documented with precise notations and movement descriptions but would permit a certain looseness when it came to the musicality and phrasing in relation to the music.

## *Notating the solo*

When I was half way through creating the solo I started to write a rough draft of my written notations to see how I could begin the process of developing a clear and concise system. I soon discovered it was going to be an extremely time consuming process after having written four pages of notes for the first minute of choreography. In addition I acknowledged the need to devise a set of instructions explaining the short hand I had habitually used when writing down the choreography.

I decided against incorporating any stick figured drawings or extreme abstract symbols and decided to keep my notations simplistic and based around a written word form to avoid confusion. For example I decided to write my notations within a simple two columned format on the page. One side designated to describing the movements of the lower body, legs and feet and the other for the upper body, torso and arms, including head and eye focus. I used colours to make diagrams easier to follow and have divided the choreography into boxes using horizontal lines to dictate where one count of 8 ends and the next begins. I have included a copy of my instructions and notation short hand on the following page.

In terms of describing directions and facings I referred back to the early Cecchetti ballet theory I learnt when I was young which labelled the directions of the room. Enrico Cecchetti the Italian ballet dancer (1850-1928) developed the Cecchetti method and labelled corners of the room in relation to numbers. Starting with the downstage right corner first and following around anticlockwise before labelling the walls. I have used diagrams and letters as well as numbers to assist with this in my own notations.

I have designed the notations to be read and followed in conjunction with watching the three accompanying videos on the DVD. There is a version filmed from a distance to decipher spacing and travelling, a version that pans and follows the choreography close up for details and a third version in slow motion to eliminate any doubts over coordination. I hope the notations will clarify and describe the movements successfully and assist in the learning process.

*Instructions for notation document:*

The notations are divided in two vertical columns; the right side displays the movements and counts of the lower body (feet, legs, pelvis) while the left column documents the movements of the upper body (head/ focus, torso and arms.)

Counts of eight are shown by the division of horizontal lines across the vertical columns to show where one count of eight ends and the next begins.

Within the columns I have placed the letters R and L in blue inside circles to note right and left body parts and directions.

The counts of the movements are represented with small numbers in red placed underneath these circles or besides movement descriptions.

If the count of the movement is accented, paused or performed strongly I have placed an underline underneath that count in red.

I have given each wall of the room/ dance space a letter (A,B,C, D) and each corner of the room a number (1,2,3,4.) This references the direction and facings of movements.

I have placed a star (\*) before sentences or notes that make particular comments about dynamics.

The “&” symbol notates pauses or movements that have overlapped timing.

The words “*forward*” and “*back*” are written in shorthand in blue as:

Movement descriptions incorporated inside long brackets ( { } ) indicate when multiple movements are grouped together and take place at the same time.

## Reflections on Notation

I learnt many things during the process of producing a final notation document of my solo, particularly of the strengths and weaknesses this medium possesses when it comes to capturing a dance work accurately on paper.

One negative aspect that became apparent was I could not entirely guarantee the process of planning to notate my solo did not effect the movements that were choreographed. The experimental purposes of creating seemed imprinted in what was made. I did however try not to over-think the complexity of the choreography or what was to be written later. I was fortunate that the final solo was based around repetition, and basic pedestrian like movements, which, coincidentally, made the notations easier to write down and repeat as opposed to a lot of difficult sections of choreography that required multiple actions in the body to be described all at once.

I discovered writing out the solo was extremely time-consuming considering the dance's duration (2:30 minutes). I now realise how notating multiple parts for a group dance composition would be far more difficult and would demand a greater attention to details of spatial patterning. As mentioned earlier in my literature review, the task and job description of professional notators can be described as “a prolonged and meticulous job, which requires as long as six months from start to finish” (Louppe, Virilio et al. 1994). My short solo demonstrated this eventuality and explains why choreographers and dancers may loath to try notating their own works in full detail themselves.

Despite discovering these difficulties, I also found many positive aspects throughout my notation process. In the earlier stages, I enjoyed using a journal to record pieces of choreography and thoughts, finding this very effective when recalling details later. Writing out the solo properly also assisted me to gain a much deeper understanding of movement complexity. Whilst the solo used a lot of pedestrian actions like walking, running, turning and jumping, I found that even simple movements can be quite challenging to describe and articulate what is actually occurring in the body.



I have been accustomed to learning choreography by watching and reproducing movements physically in rehearsals and realise that this way of teaching is faster and easier than reading notated scores. However occasionally dancers have the ability to learn movements incorrectly or forget details over time, particularly when remounting works. I believe written details and notations are superior in ensuring precise and correct coordination in learning situations. If more choreographers took care in writing down their choreography, they might potentially reduce the amount of shifting interpretations, which can occur when rehearsing a performance.

Another positive aspect of using notations as a teaching tool to learn dance is that there are an abundance of descriptive words to draw upon in the written language. I could have developed a pictorial way to describe my dance but I found using written words in my notations far simpler and much clearer in articulating my intentions. Occasionally I had moments of not knowing what word would best describe a feeling or sensation but, when I did come across the right one, I felt somewhat rewarded. I personally connect well with imagery and descriptions when choreographers describe a movement to me. Hopefully the descriptions I have used might effectively communicate these same sensations to someone else? Nevertheless I must emphasise that my notations are designed to be used and read by fellow dancers as I have included particular dance terms such as “plié” and have described some arm positions in relation to classical ballet terms. A non-dancer would probably have great difficulty in reading my notations.

If someone chose to remount my solo, I am unsure as to whether reading the notations alone would produce the exact same interpretation of movement. However, if this person read the notation document alongside watching the filmed versions of the solo, I feel confident the written version of the dance would be quite easy and successful to follow.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses discussed, I am unsure as to whether I would notate an entire dance again. The solo I created for my thesis was designed as a component of a short practical experiment. I do not feel as attached to the choreography as I may have if it had been part of a longer work or for a large public performance. As I created and notated the solo, I established a sense of openness in regards to the dynamics and interpretation but remained firmly set on specific coordination and counts. I never intended my notated score to be a strict guideline other dancers must follow: it is purely designed to help the dancer understand the sequencing of steps. One of the important aspects I will take away from this part of my thesis is the importance of documenting some part of your process in writing, whether that be using a journal to write ideas on paper or using a book to record drawings or movement sequences. The entire dance may not necessarily need to be written down in finite detail but having a tangible resource to come back to was extremely helpful to see how my ideas adapted and expanded. I now feel fortunate to have records of a dance concept that I might feel confident returning to at some stage, if I ever wanted revisit it later down the track.

## Photographing the Solo

In preparation for the film and photo documentation of my solo, I went to the studio a few weeks beforehand with photography student David Sutton. We looked at the natural lighting in the space and which angles would be best to shoot from. When I'd booked the studio and the solo was ready we used a Canon digital SLR camera, I completed the choreography in sections while he took photos. This was a relatively quick process, as I didn't want any posed or static shots, the idea being to capture the body in the height of movement. It took a few attempts before we found the right distance I had to be away from the camera and the majority of the photos required a short exposure time with a narrow aperture of f/2.8 and a very fast shutter speed of 1/1000.

We experimented capturing a few sections of movements quite close together using the sports setting on the camera because I planned to edit the photos into a stop motion, cartoon strip format later mirroring Muybridge. After I was happy with those results I performed the solo twice more, giving David free reign to take photos whenever he liked throughout the choreography to capture spontaneous shots and movement transitions.

## Editing & Presentation

When it came to presenting this part of my thesis I was overwhelmed with the amount of photos to choose from. David had taken four hundred and eighty all together and in addition given me different versions, having adjusted the lighting levels on a few of them. In order to achieve the Muybridge style format I was after I used Adobe Photoshop to crop and resize the images to be placed side by side, forming a grid. I looked at the appearance of Muybridge's locomotion photographs in the books I'd used whilst researching and resized my images accordingly, making each photo 3cm x 4.5cm.



I was extremely lucky that David had ensured all of the photographs were labelled and numbered correctly when he'd placed them in folders and extracted them from the camera. This made the process quite easy to navigate through sequences of photographs to find specific parts of the solo I wanted to present. Once I became used to ordering them on the page and placing them in alignment it was an efficient way to group the images and export them together as a picture file and print.

In addition to the stop motion sequences I also selected some individual shots to enlarge and display on a few pages. I tried to pick a variety of photographs that best captured motion and actions frozen in time and in contrast included some shots of movements that have been taken while the choreography was paused or stopped in specific body shapes and images.

### *Reflections on Photography*

When I planned to document my solo in three different mediums I had some uncertainty and assumed photography would probably be the most difficult form in terms of achieving successful results. However there were many benefits and I felt I uncovered some useful aspects within my experimentation.

First and foremost the invention of digital photography has opened many avenues in terms of documenting. The ability to be able to see what you have photographed instantly as well as the increased amount of storage on memory cards meant David and I could record as many photos as we liked, examine what wasn't working and change things accordingly. The calibre of cameras available now is quite extensive and digital photography also allows a higher quality photo to be taken with a variety of lenses. Memory cards and computer transfers also quicken the process and enable anyone to edit their own photos, change lighting, photo sizes and crop details post production. Within my process I was able to save as many versions as I liked. Had I been forced to use a film camera I wouldn't have been able to review my photographs throughout the process and developing the films would have been a time consuming process without guaranteed results.

I was surprised that there were very few photos that were extremely out of focus or blurry. I was very fortunate to have a knowledgeable photographer that knew what settings the camera required to capture the clarity of movement. This in comparison to Muybridge who needed twelve cameras to capture his horse series proves that photography has indeed come a very long way.

However despite these positives I don't think I can completely conclude that photography is one of the best ways to document dance movements and choreography. Even though digital photography is quick it was somewhat time consuming planning what was in the background /foreground and how close or far the camera needed to be in order to fit my extremities within the frame whilst moving. The process of sorting through all of the photos, resizing and re arranging them to create a freeze frame record of dance phrases was also time consuming and not at all a process worthy of documenting an entire dance. In addition the singular photographs I have included may be of interest but also don't translate a lot of information about the solo. Some of them capture adequate moments of shapes and technique, in times of elevation and turns whilst others show more of my body in transition but are slightly less aesthetically pleasing. Unfortunately photos aren't always attractive and these in between movements can appear awkward but for the purpose of my thesis I embraced this fact, acknowledging that these particular photos are what assist to give my stop motion series the actual appearance of movement.

## Filming the Solo

We had a discussion regarding the type of filmed shots I would eventually like to end up with. I decided a static long distance angle would be effective to capture the entire space, enabling spatial patterning and travelling sections to be documented. I also experimented with placing the camera tripod in various areas of the studio to see how much of the room could be seen in relation to where the solo travels. In addition, we experimented with close up, hand held shots in order to pan and follow movements throughout space, thus capturing details and actions invisible from far away. I completed specific sections of the choreography and we were able to figure out the correct proximity of the camera and establish how close it needed to be for me to remain in frame, particularly when I had outstretched limbs and jumps.

Originally I also wanted to film the solo from side and back views but faced a complication when it came to the studio space. I had chosen studio A at WAAPA as it has one large white wall, providing a clear backdrop for filming. However to keep a continuity in the film versions, I would be required to rotate the solo each time which, though not difficult, did prove a problem for camera placement. Additionally, I established that wearing dark dance clothing was a better choice for the camera and would allow my movements to be seen clearly.

Meanwhile, I experimented with some of the shorter test footage with Final Cut Pro editing software. I was quite happy with the appearance of the static footage but had another idea to adjust the speed of the close up panned shots. Altering the speed allowed me to create different rates of slow motion, enabling detailed coordination to be viewed. By including close ups manipulated through slow motion on the final DVD I made the decision to eliminate plans to film the side and back versions, as it seemed unnecessary.

## Filming & Editing Processes

When it came to the day of filming, I was glad I had taken time to do some prior research and experimentation as it made the process much quicker. I began by setting a tripod in the top right hand corner of the studio for the static diagonal camera shot. I made sure the entire space was in view and focused and pressed record. I performed the solo three times until I was happy that I had at least one version of a long distance shot I would be able to use.

The next section I required David's help to capture the close up moving version of my solo on film. We went through the choreography and marked out where and when I travelled in space and how far he needed to be in relation to me as I moved. After six takes, I felt we'd finally got one I could use. Small difficulties arose choreographically and technologically, quite similar to what a normal non-dance film process would be.

Looking back over the films, I decided which two versions I preferred, one long distance and one close up. I then took a day editing on the computer using iMovie, polishing the beginning and end transitions, adjusting volumes and making a second version of the close up footage which reduced the speed rate to 50%, producing a third slow motion version. With the three finished filmed versions of my solo, I then used iDVD to create a menu and burn my final thesis footage onto disk ready for viewing.

## *Reflections on Film*

Looking back on the process of creating and documenting this solo, film proved to be an invaluable medium. Throughout the choreographic process having a camera allowed me to record the development of phrases and movements, reflect on music choices and ultimately help me to select and refine the things I liked and did not like about my dance practice. Capturing my solo in real time offered an external eye to what was quite an individual and personal creative development.

That said, film is, of course, not without its faults as a documenting device. As previously mentioned, I was glad I had completed a few test runs before attempting to film the dance properly as it can be a frustrating process. Repeating movements over and over for different takes can lead to choreographic difficulties, such as a loss of balance, memory loss, or other simple human mistakes. In live performance dancing errors are forgivable, however, on film, perfection is the ultimate goal. Feeling confident and having the ability to approach the choreography correctly each time and be accepting of its appearance on camera were things I had to manage.

Another difficulty was controlling technical aspects and problems that arose, particularly when filming close up sections. If I moved too quickly when David wasn't ready it resulted in versions with feet or hands cut off or out of frame. The close up panning action of the camera was hard to control along with the zoom functions. Technical difficulties throughout the process proved disappointing if the take was an otherwise good performance. It took patience and practice to get it right.

The studio space also posed a large factor on how the camera was placed in the room. While it is quite big there were still obstacles that obstructed certain viewpoints to be used as the tripod was unable to be set up in certain places. Video cameras can capture a lot through a small perspective but great consideration is still required to achieve the best results.

Taking these negatives into account I still believe my choreographic practice may have been changed from this experiment with film. I previously had not used cameras very much but feel in future that a lot can be gained from the process.



Incorporating film to capture my solo almost gave me too many possibilities. I had lots of options and aspects to contemplate, such as slow motion, and was able to consider if I actually needed so much footage from different angles. Digital technology allowed me to gather new movement material by watching back short improvisations as well as giving me the opportunity to see the choreography when it was finished and observe what was lacking. Having a visual representation of what just happened in space enabled more insights to be made, for example, if I'd focused too much on one body part than the other. Moreover, these snippets were all on file and saved for me to refer to at a later date.

I was fortunate I had made the solo quite short and that the cameras we have these days save instantly. When it came to our day of filming, I was able to produce a number of different takes to choose from by viewing them and adjusting respectively on the spot.

It is fair to conclude that film has indeed changed the way we practice and view dance but I feel it is mainly in a most positive light and can only lead to more experimentation and discoveries.

## Conclusion

The act of writing down dance and note taking is crucial and very important to the choreographic dance process. Despite the time consuming nature of full notations it is still important to retain some documentation of thoughts and ideas. Whether this be plans for spatial patterns, drawings of positions, or distinct diagrams explaining the synchronization of movements and timings. I have found that notation practices have changed significantly over time and predict they will continue to transform in years to come, however the ability to describe dance and record it on paper is valuable, necessary and an important process for preserving choreographies for future dancers.

Photography provides us with a lasting document, an image of the dancing body suspended in time and space. I am contemplative over the success of my own dance images and feel that on their own they don't describe the fullness of dance happening before the camera but as a collection they are closer to achieving this goal. The nature of photography is exciting and similar to live performance in many ways. Whilst performing dancers strive for excellence and the satisfying feeling of a great performance, there's always opportunity for a moment of brilliance to shine through and be noticed. In the same way photography requires many trials, tests and repetitive practice to produce a series of documents from which the best parts can be selected and highlighted. Both art forms require trial and error, hard work and can recognise brilliance when it appears. Photography can document moments in dance but to use it as a resource to reconstruct choreography is far too difficult. It serves as an important secondary layer, providing valuable information as a historical archive and will continue to be linked in close relationship with dance.

Live performance and the idea of ephemeral dance will remain a continued point of debate in relation to film. Live performances produce intangible memories only accessible for a present audience member and the performer themselves, heavily contrasted to a filmed record that can be watched over and over by those not originally present. I believe dance can be appreciated equally in both forms and each has something special to offer.

Film has and will continue to alter how dance is perceived and is an exciting experimental tool. We should hold onto our history of dance long passed but feel encouraged to explore where it is going. Film grants us the power and enables us to have another platform to view our dance practices and to also share this with others.

Dance is an art form unlike any other. We will continue to struggle, debate and experiment with all of the aspects discussed but these challenges are what make dance the exciting mystery it is. I disagree that dance is an illiterate art form and have learnt through these processes that it's important to keep documenting and reflecting on ideas in order to share them with others. Remaining inquisitive and descriptive is what drives dance creation and stimulates ideas for movement in the body, I hope it will continue to do so for many years to come.

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# ***Capturing Dance:***

***Secondary Booklet***  
***Practical Thesis Investigation***

***Kasey Lack***

***Bachelor of Arts Honours (Dance)***

***2012***

**Edith Cowan University**

## Contents

### *Instructions for notation document*

- How to decipher notation symbols.

### *Formal notation document*

- Choreography of the solo in complete notation.

### *Photography documentation*

- Certain sections of the choreography represented in Edward Muybridge's stop motion style followed by static and dynamic singular images.

### *Additional Material:*

#### *Capturing Dance Video Documentation - DVD format*

##### *Includes:*

*Solo from a distance*

*Solo close up*

*Solo slow motion*



*Instructions for notation document:*

The notations are divided in two vertical columns; the right side displays the movements and counts of the lower body (feet, legs, pelvis) while the left column documents the movements of the upper body (head/ focus, torso and arms.)

Counts of eight are shown by the division of horizontal lines across the vertical columns to show where one count of eight ends and the next begins.

Within the columns I have placed the letters R and L in blue inside circles to note right and left body parts and directions.

The counts of the movements are represented with small numbers in red placed underneath these circles or besides movement descriptions.

If the count of the movement is accented, paused or performed strongly I have placed an underline underneath that count in red.

I have given each wall of the room/ dance space a letter (A,B,C, D) and each corner of the room a number (1,2,3,4.) This references the direction and facings of movements.

I have placed a star (\*) before sentences or notes that make particular comments about dynamics.

The "&" symbol notates pauses or movements that have overlapped timing.

The words "**forward**" and "**back**" are written in shorthand in blue as:

Movement descriptions incorporated inside long brackets ( { } ) indicate when multiple movements are grouped together and take place at the same time.

## Lower Body

## Upper Body

### Beginning:

Stand in parallel facing wall B  
upstage in space  
wait for music to establish, begin

Arms by sides, head relaxed

walk 4 steps (L) (R) (L) (R)  
1 2 3 4  
repeat 5 6 7 8

no arm movement

swing (R) arm bk fwd bk fwd  
5 6 7 8

(look down & focus on (R) hand as it swings)

walk 7 steps  
(L) (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) pause  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(R) arm circles backwards overhead (anticlockwise pathway)

Eye gaze necks hand

\* movement is slow & controlled over the walk

On step 7 catch (R) hand/wrist in (L) hand pause 7 (body curved over slightly)

legs remain still in wide 4<sup>th</sup> parallel position mid stride

Body & head complete upper body arch leading into backward motion

fall & catch 3 steps backwards

(L) (R) (L)  
1 2 3

\* travel bent legs in lunges

swivel & close (R) leg in to face wall D as step 4

(R) arm releases & swings: bk fwd bk  
head looks at ceiling 1 2 3

arm continues to shoulder height parallel to floor head looks straight at wall D 4

(R) leg swivels round again to bring body back to face wall B 5  
hold & pause 6

swing (R) arm down to complete  $\frac{1}{2}$  circle 5

swing & drop back down to behind the body 6

walk 4 steps (R) (L) (R) (L) pause  
1 2 3 4  
remain mid walk, slowly bend knees  
5 6 7

swing (R) arm fwd bk fwd bk  
1 2 3 4  
(gaze follows hands)  
sharp & accented  
fingers of (R) hand slowly  
curl into body, followed by bending  
& curving of the torso & head  
5 6 7  
release everything into a high  
upper back arch on count (8)

repeat slow lunge backwards  
walks (travelling)  
step (L) (R) (L) (R) (L)  
1 2 3 4 5  
(R) leg closes to swivel to face wall  
D on count 6  
swivel back to face wall B (R) hold  
7 8

curve body over & swing both  
arms back & forwards in a table  
top position  
bk fwd bk fwd bk  
1 2 3 4 5  
On count 6 (R) arm swings behind,  
down & up vertically to then  
complete  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a circle  
swinging fwd & down 7  
Hold arms parallel in front 8

stride  
(R) 1 (L) 2 (R) 3 (L) 4 (pauses)  
walk  
(R) 5 (L) 6 (R) 7

(R) arm in front feeds in & unfolds  
back.  
1 2  
(arm swings down to complete  $\frac{1}{2}$   
circle  
repeat 3 & 4

stop on walk (L)  
8  
drop to low crouch

quickly bring (R) arm in, hold (L)  
wrist 5  
release wrist back to trace a small  
circle around (R) thigh 6  
pause 7  
(head follows hand)  
{ body, head, torso drops catch (R)  
forearm in (L) hand, eyes look  
into palm  
all on count 8



Pivot around (L) leg using (R) to step forward

rise up out of crouch

step fwd (R) as pelvis twists to switch lunged crouch change

repeat 3 change 4

(to complete full circle & return to original position)

legs recover out of lunge to stand slowly

5 6 7 8

hold wrist as body rises

draw an arc from (L) shoulder, overhead & down (R) side to re catch

repeat 3 arc 4

\* these arcs are combined with with a slow then whip like dynamic

upper body arches & contracts & head circles in combination with arcs

\* keep small & close to head & body

Body slowly unravels out of curve spine then head

5 6 7 8

remain & pause mid walk

1 2 3

(L) leg steps in fwd & side direction to a large open legged diagonal lunge 4

ball change in lunge  
back leg (L) fwd leg (R)

(shifting diagonally sideways)

coming upright step (L) leg over (R) as body faces wall 6

(R) leg swivels underneath continuing circle 7  
pause 8

(R) arm swings low

fwd or fwd - continue back

1 2 3

(circle up & behind completing full 180° catch (R) forearm in (L) hand, palm facing up 4)

release & catch again

(keep body on inclined angle)  
loop arms to sides 6

(R) arm unfolds through chest, behind parallel to floor in direction of wall 7

hold outstretched 8

legs in parallel slowly bend

1 2 3 4

shift 5 to face corner [A]  
recover out of plié to stretched  
legged, tipped forward position

5 6

plié 7

recover to standing 8

(R) arm does slow deep & curve with  
body 1 2 3 4

(L) hand traces up past (R)  
shoulder around & over head 5  
Release both hands out with  
torso bent forward 6

Hands & arms slowly deep to  
gently recover to sides as  
body unravels through spinal  
roll to upright 7 8

keep feet parallel standing

1 &

on count 2 step (L) foot over  
(R) to make a crossed sideways  
lunge (towards corner [A])  
quickly recover (R) straight leg  
to parallel to repeat all

3 & 4

from lunge 2<sup>nd</sup> time step to wall  
C (R) (L) step back on (R)

5 6

7

turn to face front 8 (wall  
A)

Place (L) hand over (R) & bring  
palms<sup>to</sup> (R) hip bone 1 change to (L)  
hip bone & straighten elbows on  
(L) diagonal of body  
(arms straight wrists bent down,  
hands still connected) 2  
repeat all

3 & 4

(R) arm reaches to ceiling recovers  
in bent 5 6 arms relax by  
sides 7 8

(R) leg steps to the right in a  
sideways 2<sup>nd</sup> parallel lunge 1  
Pivot to repeat to back wall C 2  
step through to parallel 4<sup>th</sup> lunge  
facing wall D 3 recover  
parallel front 4  
repeat

(R) arm unfolds sideways past  
chest 1  
swing down half circle 2  
(now torso is facing back)  
arm quickly swings down &  
completes full anticlockwise  
circle 3  
recover to sides 4  
repeat



Step fwd on (L) leg 1 2 3  
(R) back heel slowly lifts  
step (L) foot back & replace (R) leg  
behind in lunge 4

(R) leg behind steps through to front  
5 pivot & repeat to back 6  
repeat again to return to front  
7 & pause 8

(L) hand reaches for (R) elbow  
(R) arm is bent & hand relaxed on  
(R) shoulder, elbow slowly points  
up to ceiling 1 2 3

(head lifts & tilts to follow arms &  
look at ceiling)

(R) arm releases & completes  $1\frac{1}{2}$   
circles (fwd & bk) to align with  
(R) leg in lunge at back, all on  
count 4

(R) arm swings down & up pointing  
front 5  
repeat to back 6 repeat to front 7  
melt with head & body  
backwards 8

Run to back wall C fwd

(R) (L) (R) pause 3 4  
1 & 2

Run backwards repeat parallel

(R) (L) (R) (L) 7 pause 8  
5 & 6 &

stop facing back wall C

arms swing as you would in a  
normal marching motion

Repeat side stepping phase once  
facing back wall 1 2 3 4

standing in parallel tap (R) arm with  
(L) hand. (R) arm remains straight  
& trails

turn & walk to wall D

(R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L)  
5 6 7 8 1 2

Lunge (R) brush (R) leg back into  
temps levé arabesque in planked  
position 5 6

recover standing 7 8

with same arms as previously used

(R) arm trails around on horizon  
wrap (R) arm onto (L) torso/waist  
wrap (L) arm onto (R) torso/waist  
2

Drop body & head to prepare 3 ↑

(R) arm lifts above head pointing  
to wall D & (L) arm out straight  
to side on 5 6 on temps levé  
recover arms by sides  
7 8

(5)



Facing corner [2] on diagonal with parallel feet

Step (L) leg out on diagonal  
(once a straight leg) 1

Bend at (L) knee as lower body drops  
& melts (R) leg steps over (L) 2

repeat (L) 3 (R) 4

repeat (L) 5 (R) 6

repeat (L) 7 (R) 8

(L) arm raises above head vertical to ceiling in straight line at the same time (R) arm stretches straight out in front of body on diagonal (creating an 'L' shape) 1

On count 2 (R) arm feeds through & back across chest as body moves fwd

(L) arm drops to a low bra bas position as (R) arm does a ballet 4<sup>th</sup> position port de bras fwd to the left & then back.

Torso & head tilt & follow arm counts 3 4

Repeat whole sequence

5 6 (straight arms fwd)

7 8 (4<sup>th</sup> port de bras)

(R) leg prepares in crossed position as (L) leg plies 1

(Begin slow rond de jambe turning jump sequence starting low to the ground & getting bigger)

small jump turn 2

prepare 3 medium jump 4

prepare 5 large jump 6

walk out of sequence continuing circle on self

(R) (L) (R) together 8  
5 6 7

face wall D

Arms cross body in preparation low to the ground 1

Release 2

(arms hang loose by sides, head follows jump & rond de jambe motion circling)

Repeat 3 4

On 5 & 6 arms lift & circle across body & around head & continue trailing around in out stretched / coddle position to fall down besides sides

\* Strong cross action in the body as you spiral around (L) leg.

Facing wall D parallel hold

1 & 2

Walk towards wall D

(R) (L) (R) (L) (R) drop to (L)  
1 2 3 4 5 couch 6

[repeat short sequence from beginning]

rise out of couch 7, pivot on (R)  
foot to change body to wall B &  
return to couch position 8

(R) arm completes slow sharp swings  
fwd bk fwd  
1 2 3

(R) arm completes slow circle behind,  
over head & down  
1 2 3 4 5

drop to catch (R) arm in (L) hand  
6

release (R) arm to circle overhead  
7

As catch as body & head follow hand  
& curve back in 8

Turn & walk towards back (wall C)

(R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) (R)  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

fwd to front (R) bring leg in on count 1  
pivot

Arms by sides (R) arm reaches out  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 towards back  
wall

then reaches to front (wall A) 8  
drop by sides 1

Stand still parallel facing front

Arms sequence:

(R) thumb & index finger pinch together  
to draw vertical line in space up centre  
of the body

(L) hand pinches the same but remains  
at wrist height 1

(R) hand flops down 2

(head follows hand sharp 1 then relaxes)  
2

repeat 3 down 4

Both palms go to (R) hip then (L) hip on  
& count. On count 5 elbows straight  
arms stretch out on (L) diagonal  
hold 6 7 8

On count 8 arms draw centre line  
again.

Over counts 1 2 3 (R) arm swings  
bk fwd bk soft

On count 4 (R) arm swings up to  
reach forward, horizontal to floor  
sharply to melt back into body  
5 6 7 8

Repeat whole arm phrase &  
sequence whilst walking &  
exiting space

On count 4 (R) foot stretches fwd  
to transfer weight & then  
recovers back to parallel slowly  
over 5 6 7 8

On repeat walk fwd &  
then turn (L) towards wall  
B to exit.

(casual walks whilst completing)  
arm phrase



Initial walk sequence



*Travelling forwards in profile*



Lunge and arm gesture phrases



*Walk phrase with temps levé and diagonal arm pathway*



*Circular jump phrase with rond de jambe moving backwards*









