

Physical States of Embodiment and Their Impact on the Performer

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Abstract

In this thesis research, dance artist Valerie Calam highlights the goals, creative processes, and results of three choreographic case studies, *Gotta Go Church*, *All My Colours*, and *Dull Roar*. In the three projects, Calam investigates the theme of embodiment in creation and performance of dance using a choreographic method she devised called *states of the body*. This method draws on postmodern contemporary choreographic devices such as Skinner Releasing Technique as well as the ancient somatic practice Qigong. This research reveals that by focussing on connection, a deeper physical awareness manifests and the performer will experience embodiment, the place where the body is leading, not the mind. Through this method, the performers are *working* on something as opposed to *demonstrating* something, and this change in approach exposes concepts and narratives within the choreography, and fuels the performer's transformation.

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Physical States of Embodiment and Their Impact on the Performer

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is the practice of embodiment in contemporary dance and the investigation of the effects of embodiment on the performer. Using three choreographic case studies, the theme of embodiment is explored in creation and performance by means of the choreographic method *states of the body*¹. Each case study offers a slightly different perspective on the use of *states of the body* as a somatic practice, and a tool for the performer's transformation. This research includes the practice of Qigong² as a preparation towards the performer's process of embodiment in dance choreography. The desire to research embodiment came as a response to the following questions; what is the line between choreography and improvisation? Is it possible to do both simultaneously? What does the shift between choreography and improvisation feel like to the performer? Choreography and improvisation are two very different entities, therefore the shift between the two requires a change in approach. In the book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, Stephen Nachmanovitch states "Feeling has its own structure. There are levels of feeling, and levels of thinking, and something deeper than both of them, something that is feeling and thought and both and neither. When we speak of "trusting your gut," it is to this activity, intuition, that we are referring our decisions" (40). I

¹ **States of the Body** is an image based method developed by Valerie Calam in order to generate movement vocabulary and deepen expression, artistry, and individuality in the performer.

²**Qigong** literally means "life energy cultivation" and is a practice of aligning breath, movement, and awareness for exercise, healing, and meditation. With roots in Chinese medicine, martial arts, and philosophy, qigong is traditionally viewed as a practice to cultivate and balance qi (chi) or what has been translated as "intrinsic life energy". ("Cultivate and Balance your Chi")

believe that choreography is based more in *thinking* and improvisation is based more in *feeling*. However, choreography can be a result of improvisation when the body and mind work together simultaneously to label, remember, and repeat movements while remaining open to change and personal freedom. In my experience, the shift between choreography and improvisation feels like a ‘release’ of being consciously aware of information. I am interested in the ways in which choreography changes when physicality (steps and movement sequences) is infused with *states of the body*. I am interested in the ways in which *states of the body* can produce a physical vocabulary leading to choreography. I am interested to discover what situations lead to embodiment and why.

In this case, embodiment is defined as the state of being where the performer is fully open to the process of awakening the body towards sensorial awareness. Embodiment is an action that the performer is insistent upon, an action based in authenticity and presence in the moment. This method is created to help guide the performer towards an increasing freedom from habitual movement patterns and to increase one’s awareness of new physical choices that arise. By focussing on connection, a deeper physical awareness manifests and the performer will experience embodiment, the place where the body is leading, not the mind. Through this method, the performers are *working* on something as opposed to *demonstrating* something, and this change in approach exposes concepts and narratives within the choreography. When performers are in an embodied state, they unveil the ways in which the movement expands and the choreography deepens.

A ‘group embodiment’ is developed when an ensemble of performers accomplishes tasks together using the same physical parameters and mental imagery. Collective and individual

behaviours are apparent and based in experience and personality, explored through the complex relationship between an internal process and the demands of ‘performance’. When an ensemble of dancers is working together in a present and connected way, they make decisions based on the experience of the whole group, in addition to (and sometimes juxtaposing) their personal experiences as individuals. In this case, the act of making decisions while acknowledging the other performers’ experiences is a parameter. Challenges occur during embodiment in an ensemble of dancers, where personality plays a role. However, with proper specialized training and practice, inter-ensemble communication through ‘group embodiment’ is possible.

The method investigated in this research is for the performer, in preparation and support of his or her process towards embodiment. It is only one aspect of a larger picture that is contemporary dance. This thesis highlights the goals, creative processes, and results of three case studies, (two solos and a quartet), using the same experimentation and theoretical methodology for each case study.

Case Study #1

“Self Produced” case study entitled *Gotta Go Church* was performed by Kate Franklin as part of *With a Trace*, DanceWorks 2013/14 MainStage Series, DW 202/*firstthingsfirst productions*.
September 19-21, 2013 at Enwave Theatre, Toronto.

Case Study #2

“I Am” solo case study entitled *All My Colours* performed by Valerie Calam as part of

Now h e r e, Department of Dance at York University's MFA in Contemporary Choreography and Dance Dramaturgy. October 24-26, 2013 at McLean Performance Studio, Toronto.

Case Study #3

"Proscenium Stage" case study entitled *Dull Roar* was performed by Amanda Davis, Christianne Ullmark, Kate Franklin and Luke Garwood as part of *Body of Minds*, Department of Dance at York University's MFA in Contemporary Choreography and Dance Dramaturgy. February 13-14, 2014 at Sandra Faire and Ivan Fecan Theatre, Toronto.

CONTEXT

The research is inspired by Skinner Releasing Technique³, Laban Movement Analysis⁴, and the influences of Experimental postmodern choreographer and author Deborah Hay and certified SRT teacher and choreographer Stephanie Skura. The experiences I've had that incorporate mind and body in this way have been during my practice of Skinner Release Technique with Stephanie Skura at Toronto Dance Theatre (2007-2008), Qigong workshop with Gavin Webber as part of Impulstanz International Contemporary Dance Festival in Vienna (Summer 2011), Qigong with Toronto-based practitioner Lisa Quaning (currently), workshop

³ **Skinner Releasing Technique** (SRT) is a training method developed by Joan Skinner in the early 1960s in which certified teachers employ imagery, voice and music as stimuli for unstructured, improvised movements in their students.

⁴ **Laban Movement Analysis** (LMA) is a method and language for describing, visualizing, interpreting, and documenting all varieties of human movement based on the teachings of Rudolf von Laban in the early 1900s.

with Benoit Lachambre based on research, improvisation and body awareness (2009), and choreographing pieces that use *states of the body* as a source, most notably *Children of the Triangle* (2011) and *Intricate Freedom* (2010).

Two artists who are currently working on embodiment in dance are Benoit Lachambre and Gavin Webber. Lachambre is a daring and innovative Canadian artist, working internationally as a choreographer, dancer, improviser, and teacher for thirty years. He explores image-based body awareness in dance, devoting himself to an exploratory approach to movement and its sources. Australian dancer and choreographer Gavin Webber utilizes Qigong and energy practices in his teaching and dance work. He was a dancer with Wim Vandekeybus and Ultima Vez in Belgium before focusing on his own choreographic quests. He moves with efficiency, stability, and great emotional depth. I am inspired by Lachambre and Webber and the work that they do. I value the experiences that I have had with them, and continue to be influenced by their work.

INSPIRATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH

Form without Formula by Patricia Beatty is a concise and poetic handbook for artists interested in choreography. The book is a beautiful contribution to Canadian dance with reference to the Toronto Dance Theatre in the 1980s. Beatty's voice is loud and clear, filling the pages with reflection, direction and experience. She is not interested in teaching craft without art, stressing the power within the collective fears, joys, aspirations and obsessions of humankind.

Beatty believes in a delicate balance between the mind and body when constructing a dance, stating "you must carve your dance out of your entire self" (23). In my own creative

process, I too try to respect both the power of the brain and the power of the body as each holds its own sets of experiences, knowledge and preferences. For me, the power of the mind is in the ability to remember and repeat sequences. The power of the body is to feel and communicate while having an experience. I am inspired to approach choreography with such clarity as Beatty, aiming to integrate and adapt both form and formula through emotion and spontaneity.

For me, the most resounding aspect of *Form without Formula* is that of subject matter and the importance of deep areas of exploration. I find that if I am not completely interested in the subject, the wealth of ideas and connections are not as easy to uncover. Ideally, choreographers would only choose to create work derived from subject matter that they find interesting, but that is not always the case. Perhaps those occasions require the choreographer to look beyond the obvious and find a meaningful way ‘inside’ the work, even if it requires breaking the rules.

Another work of literature that inspires this research is Stephen Nachmanovitch’s book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. Nachmanovitch (born in 1950) is a musician, author, computer artist, and educator. He is an improvisational violinist, and writes and teaches about improvisation, creativity, and systems approaches in many fields of activity. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* explores the subject of creativity by nurturing a release of impulse to flow freely from an inner source of inspiration. Nachmanovitch insists that a creative life is obtained by following your own path, and not the course determined by institutions, parents or others. However, it is important to have personal freedom and an openness to change while having a knowledge of tradition and history. Nachmanovitch’s questions are concerned with how

“inspiration of any kind, arises within us, how it may be blocked, derailed, or obscured by certain unavoidable facts of life, and how it is finally liberated—to speak or sing, write or paint, with our own authentic voice” (5). In my work, I find that asking questions about approach clarifies ideas and leads me closer to the meaning of the piece.

Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) lets us practice ‘letting go’ through guided image-based movement. The opportunity of ‘letting go’ can happen mentally and physically, gently nudging us to release preconceptions, beliefs, holding patterns and unnecessary fear, through a non-judgemental way that motivates trust, transformation and receptivity. For me, SRT sparked a desire to explore the vast qualities that a movement can have when accompanied with verbal imagery and personal imagination. It is not about production or innovation, although they can be side effects of the work, but reconnecting to a childlike curiosity, moving for the pleasure of moving.

While working as a company member of Toronto Dance Theatre, I had the fortunate experience to explore SRT with Stephanie Skura, a certified teacher trained by Joan Skinner herself. I completed the Introductory Level consisting of 12 morning classes on two separate occasions, as well as deepening the practice through guided composition and choreography. The work with Skura culminated in a full-evening performance, using elements of SRT through structured improvisation. I believe that the work with Stephanie evoked a curiosity about the relationship between choreography and improvisation that has become a landmark in my current research.

I found that SRT is a useful tool to access a transformative state of mind. It is satisfying when the exercises become, transition, melt, accept and produce choreography. There can be a strong image-based state that is (sometimes) specific to one body part, but also contains the potential to grow and expand into a full-bodied state. This growth has the potential to be exponential, although it requires focus and personal diligence to trust the 'directions'. Once I became 'in tune' with the flow of SRT, I was carried away by it, as if I was riding a wave. The creative space becomes sacred, time loses its importance, and distractions minimize. SRT demands a personal and independent approach, however the class also incorporates partner-assisted exercises called 'partner graphics' to complement the process. There is a cycling between internal core connections and the space outside of the body, reaching to recognize the others in the room without judgement or attachment. SRT can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be.

I first explored **Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)** in Fall 2012 during the MFA course **Methods and Materials of Movement Observation**. My aim was to find new ways to further inform myself on the natural ways in which I move, improvise, create, and choreograph. I had a breakthrough in viewing and moving the EFFORT modes. I was immediately 'at home' in MOBILE state because I could accurately and easily depict the movement. Although, I questioned whether MOBILE state is actually *my* natural way of moving, or whether I was comfortable moving in that state because I've practiced it. In past experiences as a dancer/interpreter, I feel that MOBILE state (particularly in the FREE and QUICK combination) has

been the choreographer's preference in working with me. The MOBILE state may have defined me aesthetically as an interpreter, but the question still remained, "What are *my* movement preferences?"

In an attempt to answer that question, I began to look at the other STATES that I felt empathetic towards and to analyze the movements that drew me in. I immediately was attracted to REMOTE state and DREAM state. When witnessing those states in others, I was emotionally touched and my imagination was mobilized. In looking at the EFFORTS behind those three STATES I discovered that they all use FLOW. This revealed a path that takes me down the road of LMA a bit further.

In an attempt to fully expose my preferences through choreography, I thought it was essential that I look at movement that I created without LMA in mind. The improvised movement I chose to analyze flowed through a series of changes that are common in many of my choreographic works. I was curious to look at the movement through the framework of LMA, and discover if I am *seeing* the changes in BODY, SHAPE, SPACE, and EFFORT but *naming* them something different. If I could expose this connection, I could link my past to the present, and carry LMA into my future. In my movement, there was a definite change in effort and exertion, through quality of tension, FLOW, WEIGHT, TIME, and focus in SPACE. I discovered that I primarily move in EFFORT MODE, creating an arc in intensity by shifting from REMOTE state to STABLE state. This revealed a connection between the development of my own research and that of LMA, confirming that further analysis will be productive, enriching and informing.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research guides the dancers through their unique and personal physical explorations, sharing their individual evolution towards embodiment through discussions (during the creative process) and interviews (after the performance week). The dancers are encouraged to combine awareness, alignment and energy flow to help create power and simplicity in movement by utilizing the inner force of energy in the body. The goal is to have increased self-awareness, mental clarity, and emotional depth through physical vitality. All the performers participated in a personal interview process which revealed their views and experiences in the creative process and performance of the work. Each was asked to explain the meaning of “embodiment.” Below are the answers of two of the performers.

Luke Garwood: To me, embodiment is the personal manifestation, however slight, of a concept or an idea in my body and in my thinking. It’s a feeling from the inside outward of what that concept or idea would be if it were one in the same with my body. Embodiment means asking the question: how does allowing priority to a train of thought, or imagery, affect me? How does it affect my physicality, my emotional state, my decision making? (Garwood, 2014)
(Appendix C.1.)

Christianne Ullmark: In the context of contemporary dance practices, I would define ‘embodiment’ as a complete physical realization and manifestation of an integrated bodily and cerebral awareness, enabling the dancer to move freely in response to their instinctual impulses and ‘creative’ choices. However, as the act of embodying, for example, a set of proposed images and sensations undoubtedly requires a cognitive understanding of what these images look like — meaning an understanding from a personal perspective as well as from the

collective group of dancing individuals. It is the pure physicality drawn out of these sensations which brings meaning to the movement I am discovering through the practice of ‘embodiment’. (Ullmark, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

States of the body was first created in 2009 when I tried to understand what my movement preferences were. As a dancer, I was always labelled as ‘a unique mover’ with a signature way of moving. I realized that if I could uncover my movement preferences, I could magnify them through exploration. In addition, by assigning an image to each movement preference, I could verbally transfer them to other bodies. I discovered that I preferred to move in two specific ways, which are now labeled as Moon⁵ and Jupiter⁶. In Laban Movement Analysis, Moon would be comprised of INDIRECT SPACE, FREE FLOW, LIGHT WEIGHT and SUSTAINED TIME. The most accurate comparison would be that Moon is REMOTE state. In LMA, Jupiter would be comprised of DIRECT SPACE, BOUND FLOW, STRONG WEIGHT and SUSTAINED TIME. The most accurate comparison would be that Jupiter is PRESS. This became very useful when on several occasions, I was commissioned to work with large groups of dancers from The School of Toronto Dance Theatre and Ryerson University and I wanted a quick way to incorporate embodied movement into the steps and sequences. I was not interested in picking through each movement, cleaning, and constantly asking the dancers to change. I was looking to develop a non-judgmental way to draw out rich qualities from the dancers’ own imaginations and personal physical investments. Performer Kate Franklin said “I can easily let

⁵**Moon state** has the movement parameters of a hit, followed by a dissolve, followed by an upward movement.

⁶ **Jupiter state** has the movement parameters of heaviness, the body is solid, the body can move in chunks.

go of judgement and just be in the moment, literally going with the flow, maintaining a deep connection to my body and mind. Not judging is a key concept for *states of the body*. It is really important for the performer to be free to just move and make snap decisions without being self-conscious or judgemental about the results” (Franklin, 2014). (Appendix C.1.)

I found that *states of the body* is best practiced as an improvisation based on three or fewer parameters. In my choreography, I frequently use Moon, Jupiter, and Magnet⁷, however I find that new *states* emerge with each new piece and collaboration. More recent *states of the body* include Small Metal Ball⁸, No 4th Wall⁹, and No State¹⁰. No State was discovered in rehearsal for *Dull Roar* when the dancers moved out of a *state of the body* and returned to neutral. The resultant juxtaposition that occurred was very beautiful to witness because it highlighted a release from the rigorous work, and provided an opportunity for the dancers to reconnect with themselves in the moment. Montréal choreographer Mélanie Dumers speaks of a similar place in her creative process and labels it *checking-out*.¹¹ For her, it is when performers remove themselves from the process to witness what is happening in the space and then find a

⁷ **Magnet state** has the movement parameters of repulsion or attraction.

⁸ **Small Metal Ball state** is a metal ball inside a hollow body that has the movement parameters of rolling (sequential movement) or ricocheting (non-sequential movement).

⁹ **No 4th Wall state** allows the performer to *break* the imaginary 4th wall at the front of the stage in a traditional proscenium theatre, allowing him/her to relate directly to the audience.

¹⁰**No state** allows the performer to drop all previous *states of the body* and become as unaffected or neutral as possible.

¹¹Montréal choreographer **Mélanie Dumers** communicated this to Tina Fushell (performer) during the Series 8:08 ATC workshop entitled “Here and now or never”, February 16-17 2012 at Dovercourt House, Toronto.

place to re-enter into the work. I find that this reminds the performer to be aware of the present moment by doing nothing but seeing and listening.

States of the body can be practiced on a *dial system*¹² as a way to gain awareness of one's energy output. From day to day, energy levels change. I believe that with an increased awareness through the body, the percentages can become more accurate from one day to the next. The *dial system* is a format through which I can ask for more or less attack, and more or less speed by simply increasing the percentage on the dial. In LMA, the addition of the 'dial system' is actually the addition of another EFFORT FACTOR, pushing a STATE into a DRIVE. This creates an evolution in the movement as a new layer is added. Choreographically, this creates an arc in complexity and intensity. Dancers have days where they have more or less energy, so I can regulate what I wanted by increasing or decreasing the setting on the dial in the moment. It reminds each dancer to have awareness of his or her body and adapt in the moment. This new awareness leads the dancers toward the deep level of embodiment that I hoped they would experience.

Each of the three case studies for this research followed the same basic methodology which developed into an 11-step process as follows:

1. creation of movement phrases by choreographer
2. discussion and practice of *states of the body*
3. layering of movement phrases with *states of the body*

¹² **The Dial System** is a metaphorical measuring instrument, which allows me to increase and decrease movement elements by percentage from 0-100. I use the dial system as a choreographic tool for fine-tuning.

4. Qigong
5. development of a choreographic structure/order of events¹³
6. addition of music
7. ripening the piece
8. gathering feedback from others ('outside eyes')
9. making final adjustments
10. adapting to the performance space
11. performing for an audience

Creation of Movement Phrases

The choreographed **phrases** are initiated from physical impulses, feeling as if the movement falls out of the body in a free flowing manner. The phrases are deliberately raw and workable to allow space for the dancers to adapt them to their own bodies. The phrases are 'strung together' and rehearsed in a random sequence.

Discussion and Practice of *States of the Body*

The physical parameters for each *state of the body* are discussed, clarified, and practiced by the dancers. It is important to spend enough time at this stage of the process because there is great potential to generate an abundance of dynamic and integrated movement. This movement

¹³ **Events** is a term I use to describe physical tasks or 'moments of arrival' in the choreography that are pre-determined. Events can also be a means of transition.

becomes the root of the physicality used in the case studies. During this exploration time, patterns and physical preferences will start to emerge, as well as new *states* of the body.

Layering of Movement Phrases with *States of the Body*

To evolve the research, the **original choreographed movement phrases are layered with *states of the body*** to investigate how a non-improvised choreographic phrase changes when layered with an improvised *state*. The mixture of two events can create an entirely new event because new movement qualities, images, and objectives emerge. Furthermore, the dancers and I identified moments in the choreographed phrases where the *states of the body* were revealed, and made a conscious decision to initiate the movement from that *state*.

Qigong

In preparation for this research, the dancer must be in a place that is open and receptive in order to awaken the body towards sensorial awareness. To aid in this process, the dancers and I practiced **Qigong** as a warm-up before each rehearsal day. This consisted of a guided meditation and exercises designed to help develop energetic awareness, increase mental clarity, increase vitality, and enliven the space. The practice of Qigong offers “a way of unblocking the life energy, increasing and condensing it and encouraging it to flow freely and smoothly” (Webber). In a performance, this energy practice has the potential to change radically the energy body and the energy of the piece, therefore, the performers included Qigong as part of their personal preparation before each performance. I have found that, as the choreographer, I was able to *see* the movement more clearly, my decision-making was more confident, yet I remained open to

new ideas because of my practice of Qigong. Qigong helped the dancers to be clearly focused and connected to their bodies and breath in a deep way. The practice of Qigong established a tone for the day that was very relaxed, productive, grounded and efficient. The dancers were asked to share their impressions of Qigong as a warm-up leading into *states of the body*. Three of their responses are below.

Amanda Davis: The Qigong warm-up helped me to connect to my breath and feel a sense of balance and openness in both my body and mind. Qigong is conducive to *states of the body* because you are connecting the breath to movement, they happen simultaneously. For me, one is not initiating or leading the other. In practicing the *states*, I feel it is important to not let my thoughts lead the movement and to truly be immersed in whatever *state* I am exploring. (Davis, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

Kate Franklin: The Qigong warm-up makes me sensitive to the subtle movement of energy in my body. I become very aware of what is going on inside of me, in the body and in the mind. I become very calm, aware of my breath, and very open and receptive to what is happening right here and right now. It grounds me in the present moment. I am able to stay in the moment more easily after I practice Qigong. This makes it a very valuable practice for *states of the body*. To clear the mind with Qigong and just move from moment to moment without the residue of the previous moment makes embodiment easier. My body becomes a vessel to channel whatever is there to be found in the moment, without worrying about whether or not it is the “right” choice. (Franklin, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

Luke Garwood: For me it was extremely helpful for group embodiment in the early stages, to do Qigong together. It was something very simple that allowed

us, as a group, to practice being in consensus. After that, practicing the actual manifestation and then practicing doing it in front of an audience was also very helpful. In doing [Qigong] more often and in more challenging situations, I was able to enter [*states of the body*] more quickly and sustain it more while managing other tasks. (Garwood, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

Development of Choreographic Structure/Order of Events

I decided on a **structure/order of events** for each case study based on the development of a dramatic arc established through an intuitive sense of how the piece should progress. In my work, I gravitate towards the form; build, climax and resolution. “All things evolve via one of a series of forms or forming devices: cycles, progressions, stages of development. Such forming or sequencing is inherent in life, from the growth of a tree, to the water cycle, to the evolution of the species, to the structure of the stars and galaxies” (Blom and Chaplin 83).

I am inspired by the following questions that Stephen Nachmanovitch asks in his book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, “How does structure arise in improvisation? How are larger, composed art forms edited and shaped out of the raw material of momentary inspiration? As we examine these two related questions, we come to see free play as a self-organizing system, questioning and answering itself about its own identity” (102).

Addition of Music

The choice of **music** is a paramount decision in any choreography due to the potential for the music to control the piece, dictating the rhythmic pace and arc. However, the integration of music suggests many new possibilities. According to Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (authors of

The Viewpoints Book), “Introduced at the right moment, music becomes a portal: an inspiration, a boost and a challenge “ (95). The choice not to have music is a powerful option in choreography due to the enhancement of other audible aspects of the performance such as; the sounds of the movements, the rhythmic pulses in the movement phrases, the performers’ breath, the room sounds, and the sounds of the audience. A compelling example of the use of silence in choreography is Doris Humphrey’s¹⁴ piece *Water Study*, choreographed in 1928.

Ripening the Piece

It became imperative to **give the dancers time** to develop the movements independently and without too much feedback from me on the *outside*. However, I always remained focused on their process by being present and in the room in order to answer questions and discuss parameters of the work. In my experience as a dancer and performer, there is a difference between rushing the development of the piece and letting it ripen. A new choreography is like learning a new language in that it requires practice, motivation, an eagerness to learn, and proper information, so it is naive to think it can be achieved right away. During the 2011 conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS), keynote speaker Elizabeth Langley¹⁵ stated “a choreographer should give the dancer five rehearsal days to process movements without changing them” (Langley, “Dance Dramaturgy: Catalyst, Perspective and Memory”).

¹⁴ **Doris Humphrey** (born 1895) was a dancer, choreographer, teacher, and author recognized as one of the founders of American modern dance.

¹⁵ **Elizabeth Langley** has worked professionally in dance since 1953 as a performer, choreographer, teacher, dramaturge, and creation/rehearsal director. She designed the Contemporary Dance Degree at Concordia University in Montreal.

Gathering Feedback from Others

Early into each case study process, I **invited people to watch** rehearsal runs of the pieces in order to gather new perspectives from them about the work. The method of gathering these ‘outside eyes’ was through a personal, informal invitation to specific people via email. For me, it is beneficial and potent to hear different points of view and to have an open dialogue about their impressions and observations. The dancers and I would engage in a ‘talk-back’ with the invited viewers, as a way to answer questions that would force me to re-examine the reasons for my choices. Some of the types of comments heard referred to personal imagery, moments of a welcome change, moments of relief, emerging physical motifs, or developing relationships. For example, in a showing of *Gotta Go Church*, an invited viewer expressed that they found relief in moments of stillness and sustained movement. This feedback sparked the idea to have Kate take a few minutes to meditate onstage. For me, this moment was beautiful because it gave everyone in the room a chance to sit together in silence. It was very powerful. ‘Outside eyes’ for the case studies were; Brendan Jensen (long-time collaborator and friend), Tina Fushell (dancer), Paul Shepherd (composer and long-time collaborator), Sharon Moore (choreographer/director), Kate Holden (dancer), Mimi Beck (dance curator), Mélanie Demers (Montreal-based choreographer), as well as York University Faculty of Fine Arts Professors Holly Small, Susan Cash, Carol Anderson, Darcey Callison and William Mackwood.

Making Final Adjustments

I allowed myself permission to make adjustments to each of the pieces throughout the process, up until the week before the premieres. Obviously, I discovered that some events worked better than others, but instead of trying to make the less-successful events work, I focused on the things that did work. I reminded myself not to be afraid of cutting material. I changed the order of the choreographic events as a way to help the dancers remain focussed and alert. In my experience, when the structure of a piece is fixed and easily repeatable early in the process, I am at risk of becoming overly comfortable, which pulls me out of the moment. In my work, I prefer for the performers to experience a flexible structure (including new transitions) until it is essential to set the order.

Adapting to the Performance Space

Ideally, the piece is created in the space that it will be performed in. However, this is rarely the case. Whether the performance space is an intimate venue with audience members seated in-the-round, a small studio theatre, or a large proscenium stage, the performers adapted to their surroundings in a real way that is straightforward and non-imaginary. Seeing what makes a space unique and relating to those aspects can integrate and frame the performer into the space. As the choreographer, it is my job to help the performer recognize details and features of the performance space by offering suggestions, as well as allowing the performers enough time to inhabit the space and have their own discoveries.

Performing for an Audience

In exploring the fundamental human act of connection in dance and performance, performers are aware of their own bodies in the present moment. They can evolve this connection to include others in the space, the audience, the space itself, and the music. With practice, performers can become aware of everything they are doing on stage, and therefore, be in control of what they are *saying* through their performance, trusting their choices. By focussing on connection, a deeper physical awareness manifests and the performer will experience embodiment, the place where the body, not the mind, is leading. Once the performer has reached this place in the process, they can share this with the viewer. Experimental postmodern choreographer Deborah Hay uses the prompt *invite being seen*¹⁶, while Canadian solo dancer and choreographer Margie Gillis uses the words *let it read*¹⁷. For me, the audience is not the most important part of the performance, yet they are integral to the performance of the piece. There is a unique and powerful energy that an audience possesses. The performers can feel this energy and use it to fuel their movement and decisions. It is undeniable that an audience fulfills the ritual of live performance, and without them, performance would cease to exist.

This research extended into the exploration of ‘transitioning’ between two events, overlapping and juxtaposing, creating a duality in the body resulting in an *in-between-ness*. This *in-between-ness* is symbolic within choreography, representing the space between birth and

¹⁶**Deborah Hay** communicated this to Valerie Calam during an intensive workshop at Toronto Dance Theatre, March 2008 at Winchester Street Theatre, Toronto.

¹⁷ Renowned Canadian solo dance artist **Margie Gillis** communicated this to Kate Franklin during the Series 8:08 ATC workshop entitled “Dancing From Inside Out”, February 16-17 2012 at Dovercourt House, Toronto.

death, knowing and not knowing, consciousness and unconsciousness, light and dark, performance and non performance. In anthropology, this phenomenon is known as liminality (meaning 'a threshold'), and it was first introduced in 1909 by Arnold Van Gennep in his book *Les Rites de Passage*. Van Gennep established a three-part structure in rites of passage that contain a separation, a liminal period, and a re-assimilation. In 1969, Victor Turner expanded on Van Gennep's concept of liminality in anthropology, as well as many additional fields. Turner states the following in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such; their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon (94).

In choreography, liminality can often be a time of discomfort, having a quality of ambiguity, disorientation or waiting. It is a space between letting go of something behind you and grabbing onto something in front of you.

CREATIVE PROCESS

The process of finding an embodied state is a very internal and personal exploration that can be challenging to share in a performance, coming across as too subdued when it actually requires very detailed focus and rigorous physicality. In my experience, I find there is an increased vulnerability compared to other dance practices because much of what I am doing is raw and impulsive; exposing my true nature, humanity and personality. Embodiment requires performers to access themselves as the inspiration for the work, as opposed to a pre-conceived theme or narrative layered onto the process by the choreographer or from an external instigator. Therefore, the concepts that arose in the case study choreographies were derived from the dancers' approach to the physicality and the decisions they made while accomplishing the events.

The success of *states of the body* is based upon the interpreter's personal investigation and imagination. However, as the performer moves deeper inside his or her own embodied experience, he or she may be at risk of becoming too self-indulgent, causing the channels between viewer and performer to shut down, disassociating the viewer from performer. Therefore, as the themes evolve, the entry points for the audience must also evolve. This can be done by adding theatrical events or relating to the performance space in the moment. All the while, the performer is *building* character through their own set of morals and principals, as opposed to *becoming* a character by altering their appearance and mannerisms to reflect someone else.

It is my quest to connect the circulation of energy into imagination. When the mind opens up, the energy expands and we are able to *speak*. This *speaking* takes the form of dance, with movement as the vocabulary. The *language* is directed by the choreographer and can be intricate

or simple, changing in patterns and structure, incorporating video, viewed in live performance or online. The dancer is then free to incorporate his/her unique spirit of improvisation. When a performer embodies what they are doing, they are in the present moment. The performer is aware of changes that are happening in themselves and outside of themselves, but not necessarily distracted. Embodiment can be a form of meditation. A relaxed, focused mind is a powerful place to work from. Embodiment is also about presence. An embodied performer can be passionate, enthusiastic, captivating, confident, or comfortable. In fact, a multiplicity of ways of being is possible. The opportunity to embody something dark and grotesque is also an option, taking performers somewhere that the rest of their life cannot. Bringing dark things to light in front of a live audience is a positive thing and becomes cathartic for the performer and the viewer. The potential of embodiment is to experience dance in a new way through the present moment with calm, focus and clarity in movement. That itself is a rarity to witness.

Off-Campus Self-Production/CASE STUDY #1

Gotta Go Church



Performer Kate Franklin in *Gotta Go Church* at The Enwawe Theatre, Toronto.



Sources

Gotta Go Church was first investigated in 2010 as a solo that I performed in a series of performances in Toronto at The Fringe Festival, The Bazaar, and Series 8:08 (with York Professor Susan Cash as Series 8:08 mentor). The theme and narrative reoccurred during “The Fabulous Beast Project” (1st year MFA). The music that I originally used was a mix of gospel music and heavy metal music, and therefore had many shifts in mood to trigger Kate’s transition from one event to the next, allowing the music to control her decision-making. In doing this I realized that the changes were too quick for Kate to fully embody each event and subsequent

transition. I decided to abandon the music entirely in order to support Kate in her process. She needed more time to truly work through the tasks, and in running the structure of the piece again in silence, it took twice as much time to accomplish. For me, it was compelling to watch her work with tenacity and commitment, fleshing out each event. It was clear that Kate was *working* on something as opposed to *demonstrating* something, and this change in approach began to expose concepts and narratives within the choreography. Therefore, Composer Paul Shepherd created an original sound score made specifically for *Gotta Go Church*, with a focus on allowing space for Kate to accomplish tasks, yet establishing clear audible landmarks (pre-selected sound cues) to inform her of where she was in the overall time frame.

Kate moved between Qigong exercises as source movement, the choreographed movement phrases, and ‘Small Metal Ball’ either ‘cross-fading’ or ‘jump-cutting’ from one event to the next. Qigong was obviously non-performative, the movement phrases were very performative, and the *states of the body* were richly in the moment. The transitions between the events became as important as the events themselves, containing information about Kate and the piece as a whole.

The book *Embodiment. Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art and Travel* by Robert Bosnak¹⁸ contained some useful words to help me formulate the program notes for *Gotta Go Church*, as well as give Kate feedback after each performance. (Appendix A.4.) Kate’s performance in the dress rehearsal was strongly successful because of the insight contained in the following passage from Bosnak’s book relating to ‘selves’ and embodiment.

¹⁸**Robert Bosnak** is a Dutch Jungian psychoanalyst with 40 years of clinical experience working with dreams, and diplomate of the C.G.Jung Institute, who trained in Zurich, Switzerland from 1971 to 1977.

The embodied imagination I practice creates a network between Berthe's embodied self and the presence of the bull. Berthe is to stay in a dual consciousness, fully embodied by the bull, while being entirely aware that the bull is other, not self. This is a way to honour all phenomena. Now she can feel throughout her body the enormous thrusting power in the bull as he charges into the rock face. But her perspective has changed, she can look through the eyes of other, of bull-being, at the wall, and sees it porous with many openings and entries. She feels the bull run into the wall and then become part of it, all energy transforming into stasis, having run into the counter pole of ec-stasis. Together with the bull she knows that it fluctuates between ecstatic energetic charge and a static waiting as a picture on a wall (7).

The above reading inspired Kate's approach to the event entitled *departure and return*. She could try to depart from herself (and embody something 'other') while having a dual consciousness that this is happening, and return to her self. This concept could be applied to the entire piece. At any moment, Kate could decide to depart and return to and from the structure of the piece, the choreographed movements of the piece, her sense of 'self' in the piece, or the music.

Trusting the Performer

For me, it is very important to maintain the freedom and openness that has characterized the whole process as the performances draw near. My instinct is to control the piece and the performer, when actually I need to stop making changes, allow the piece to ripen, and give space

to the performer to take ownership of the work. I need to trust the performer and accept that they know the piece on the ‘inside’ in a way that I cannot. For example, it was a difficult decision to keep the event *departure and return* as a structured improvisation, but it was the only way to move the piece forward. I needed to grant Kate more freedom at that point in the choreography although I felt a huge desire to set the material. I reminded myself to trust the dancer’s understanding of the form and content of the work. In the end, the unpredictable nature of *departure and return* forced Kate to be truly present and in-the-moment. She was completely embodied during that time.

Relationship to the Audience and the Space

Gotta Go Church begins with Kate being the object in the space, to be viewed. As the piece progresses, Kate breaks the 4th wall by turning to face the audience and to gaze at them, placing herself in the space with the viewer. She then uses a Qigong movement called “balancing chi,” which is used to connect with the inhalation and exhalation of the breath, and to balance the energy or chi around the body by moving the hands upwards and downwards as if through water. Kate uses eye contact and physical closeness as she crosses from the stage into the house, to connect with people in the space. Kate chooses to connect with specific audience members based on her own impulses at that moment. For example, Mimi Beck¹⁹ is a strong supporter of Kate and her work, so she felt relaxed and calm when she connected with Mimi. A group of high school students were the first audience members to see the piece, and they were greatly affected

¹⁹ **Mimi Beck** is a Dance Curator at Danceworks, Toronto’s leading presenter of independent dance. Mimi has been the Executive Director of The CanDance Network since 1985.

by the event, shocked that she entered their viewing space. Once Kate returned to the stage after spending time in the audience, the high school students audibly breathed in with Kate as she raised her hands, and breathed out with Kate as she lowered her hands. They were completely 'with' her. The act of breaking the 4th wall in this way was a turning point in the piece because the audience was changed, refreshed, and invested. They felt as if they contributed to her energy and truly wanted her to succeed.

Autobiographical Solo/CASE STUDY #2*All My Colours*

Performer Valerie Calam in *All My Colours* at MacLean Performance Studio, York University, Toronto.



Sources

We can take any image or idea from our imagination and embody it. For example, in *All My Colours* I imagined a chameleon and then tried to become that creature. For me, seeing the image in my mind was accompanied by a feeling or sensation that was placed in the centre of my body. It felt like a *dropping* into my core, followed by an expansion outwards. This action is similar to a ripple effect, like when a stone is dropped into water. The state of the initial drop point can be followed outwards incrementally. Therefore, the initial drop is the image, the ripple effect is the embodiment of that image.

In *All My Colours*, I became curious as to how deeply a performer can feel embodied in a choreographed phrase of movement. I formed an exploration process that consisted of creating a phrase of movement; practicing the phrase so that it is repeatable, and *running* the phrase until it becomes organic to the body. I discovered that my mind was able to think less about the order of the steps, allowing other ideas to enter the mind. In my experience, the mind will begin to experience *nothingness* in terms of not having to think about the steps, transitions, or technique. The body and mind work together in a way that results in an unconscious competence. Robert Bosnak speaks of this state of *nothing* that occurs “when a system, balanced between order and chaos, has become too complex to remain in its current state, a *tipping point* occurs, at which instant, like an avalanche, a qualitatively different state emerges from the prior overly complex network of states. This new condition can encompass a higher level of complexity in the way the three dimensions of a cube can hold what a two-dimensional plane cannot” (33). In dance, I believe that the *tipping point* occurs when there is a letting go of the dependence of the mind that processes and judges the steps. There needs to be a moment where the body is released from the hostage situation of the mind thinking about the choreography. The body needs to lead. This action catapults the performer into an embodied experience.

Performing in your own Choreography

The main challenge in the process for *All My Colours* was that when performing a solo piece that you also choreographed, it is difficult to be objective about how the work reads from the ‘outside.’ I was at risk of becoming too close to the work, unable to see the whole situation clearly. Tools are set up by the choreographer in this scenario in order to help, such as

videotaping the work, having an outside eye, or teaching the piece to an understudy and watching them dance the work. The choreographer/performer in this situation needs to be able to ‘zoom-in’ and ‘zoom-out’ of the work, similar to a camera lens, grasping the macro view as well as the micro view. Yes, these are time-honoured choreographic methods, but because *states of the body* is an internal process, I decided not to rely on conventional methodology.

Therefore, due to the internal process of *states of the body* and creating and performing the solo, it became difficult to truly understand what I was presenting. The autobiographical nature of this scenario allowed for emotions to surface, both in rehearsal and performance. After each run of the solo, I felt vulnerable because of the rawness of what I expressed. I became aware that emotions are embodied, and I was getting lost in my emotional experience while dancing. The images and concepts that an audience sees in a piece may not be what the performer is trying to portray, so there needs to be a constant coming back to the physicality of the task or event. Never relying on ‘character,’ performers do not want to act or pre-conceive a version of themselves in order to hide or shy away from revealing themselves. Performers want to be themselves wholly in activity, even if they are in an extreme costume.

In *All My Colours*, I felt that the chameleon figure became a projection of *who* people want me to be as a performer. Dance has been in my life for as long as I can remember, and I have gone through many shifts in how I relate to dance. As a child, I trained in a very competitive dance school, equating dance with entertainment, excellence, competition, discipline and hard work. As I matured, I recognized that dance is a personal experience that is rooted in an inner emotional territory. Spending my life performing, there is a constant battle to protect that personal experience when also trying to please the director, choreographer, or audience.

Therefore, in *All My Colours*, the autobiographical inspiration for the piece was my history and relationship with performance. I used the shedding of the camouflage, zip-up, one-piece jumpsuit into a shimmery white, velvety outfit as a way to reveal something delicate that is hidden underneath. Showing my true self; using a chameleon's ability to change colour as a metaphor for that process.

Relationship to the Audience and the Space

I found that I could integrate myself into Maclean Performance Studio when I took the time to see and connect to the people and objects in the room. By noticing the architecture, I allowed the geometric lines to move into my body and affect me. Trying to imagine the room as something that it is not, doesn't place me in the moment. For example, during a performance of *All My Colours*, I was aware that with the five rows of seats only half full, the audience consisted mainly of students, with some members texting. That was the reality of the situation that I had to accept in order to be present in the moment. At that time, a feeling was produced that caused bodily reactions that I could magnify into movement, eventually merging with a *state of the body*. I call this process 'finding the truth in the space,' as if I was the author of the room in that moment, taking everything into consideration and using that energy to inform my movements and decisions.

Proscenium Group Work/CASE STUDY #3

Dull Roar



Performers Christianne Ullmark, Kate Franklin, Luke Garwood, and Amanda Davis in *Dull Roar* at Sandra Faire and Ivan Fecan Theatre, York University, Toronto.

Photo Credit: David Hou



Sources

The final Case Study, *Dull Roar*, is a quartet for performers Kate Franklin, Luke Garwood, Amanda Davis and Christianne Ullmark. The piece was performed at York University's Sandra Faire and Ivan Fecan Theatre, February 13-14, 2013. All strong and unique individuals, these dancers' personality traits, habitual decision-making preferences, and leader/follower dynamic became a clear influence on the choreography.

Dull Roar was created during a two-week residency in Canning, Nova Scotia at Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. The dancers, composer Paul Shepherd and I lived together in a farm house, ate every meal together and spent every evening together. Rehearsals took place in a converted barn, that now houses the arts centre. The piece was created for that space, inspired by

the atmosphere and environment that we were constantly surrounded by. I was not concerned with developing a literal narrative for the piece, however during a showing for the Canning community, many viewers saw their own story lines. For example, someone saw a family unit, and although the roles were not clearly identified in terms of father, mother and two sisters, the personalities of the performers showed in their movements. The choices they made through shifts in timing, approach, and dynamic revealed their individuality. So, the ‘family theme’ emerges through the diversity of personalities that are working together to achieve a common goal. The ensemble of dancers were all complicit in the tasks that I asked of them, not unlike a tribe, clan, or family unit.

Approach

For some performers, it is difficult to separate physicality from emotion. For example, a physical task of *opening the body towards the viewer and retracting away from*



the viewer can create an emotional response in the performer, possibly because of iconic associations with this image. This emotion is derived from the demands of the physicality and is not *put on* by request of the choreographer. Therefore, there is an organic purity that is carried from the physicality, into an emotional response and then into the choreography. During the

Q&A after a showing of *Dull Roar* in Canning, Nova Scotia, an audience member asked the dancers to share any ideas they had of what the movements resemble, even if they didn't choreograph them. Performer Luke Garwood stated "I try to commit to the physicality of it, and not so much what it may read as, or the intention of it. That's what's great for the audience to do, interpret. For us, it's more about the physicality of the task, so I'm not thinking 'intention-wise' but *stuff* does come up. There are definitely things that you cannot ignore, [for example] it's very supportive, or singled out. But, mostly we try to be as true to the task as we can" (Garwood, 2014). Performer Kate Franklin added "It's funny, because the body produces emotions, and I'm sure that a lot of you have that experience, where a movement can make you feel something. For example, being *spread wide apart*; I feel a little anxious, a little vulnerable. I get feelings all the time, but I am still just trying to do the move" (Franklin, 2014). Therefore, any emotions that are produced are bi-products of doing the physical task. In this method, the intention behind the movement is not the most important thing, yet there is an allowance for emotions to emerge and be felt.

A new physical event called Rabbit Hole emerged during the process for *Dull Roar* when the dancers were layering movement phrases with *states of the body* and at any point in the movement phrase the dancer could choose to go "down a rabbit hole" by inserting a physical exploration of the *state of the body* that was present in the movement. Dancer Christianne Ullmark remarked, "Rabbit Hole was more of a physical event, rather than an embodied experience. Although, from my perspective I would also consider it a "state of physical confusion" on the path towards finding my way back to an embodied experience of a given *state*" (Ullmark, 2014). Kate Franklin said "It's a game! It's a way to move between *states* and

set material” (Franklin, 2014). Rabbit Hole seems to be a metaphor for adventure into the unknown, where one must consider how to ‘get out’ and enter ‘back into’ the movement phrases. It becomes a cerebral process, as opposed to a purely physical act.

Individual Personalities in an Ensemble Piece

The personality of each performer is unique, and therefore, individual qualities or habitual ways of behaving became evident in the choreography. Due to the opportunity for decision-making in the work, individuals in *Dull Roar* naturally take on the roles of leader and follower. In this case, leadership is fluid and shifts throughout the piece. By allowing for a constant shift of leader, the piece remains open for the viewer to interpret and construct a personal narrative. The performers’ active decision-making in *Dull Roar* is what I believe made the piece compelling.

The attitudes, personalities, and histories of the performers are very important when trying to achieve an embodied state as a group. My expectation is that the roles need to be changeable and in-the-moment in order for deep interaction to occur. Therefore, the quest for embodiment has an influence on the behaviour of performers in an ensemble piece because the group adapts to one another and creates its own way of working and being together. The performers were asked to share their views on the role of individual personalities in creating *Dull Roar*. Below are two of the performers’ answers.

LG: Without a doubt. Our personalities and our differences and our personal choices within the group structure of the piece is what I believe coloured the

piece. By being so different, it then makes it that much more striking when we do get on the same page. (Garwood, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

KF: Yes, I did feel that the individual personalities of the performers played a role in the piece. We all had different ways of interpreting the rules of the physical *states*. The choreographer kept her directions just open enough to allow for these differences in interpretation. We had different comfort levels with leading and following. We all had slightly different priorities in performance of the work. We had different ways of letting the tasks read on our faces. Our choices were influenced by so many different variables – whether we were introverts or extroverts, our different levels of confidence and performance experience, our birth order in our families, how comfortable we each are with making mistakes and failing, whether we are naturally more interested in being part of a group or whether we are more “lone wolf” by nature, and many other aspects of our unique personalities. (Franklin, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

Shifting to a Proscenium Stage

In returning to Toronto, I was met with the challenge of adapting the piece to York University’s Sandra Faire and Ivan Fecan Theatre, a large proscenium stage theatre. This new space and atmosphere needed to be reflected in the piece, although there was very little time to be in the space itself. This was a massive disadvantage and I grew increasingly frustrated by having to make quick decisions based on how the piece will translate in the constraints of this new space. This type of performance space required an attention to theatricality, which is in juxtaposition to the internal process of *states of the body*. In time, I became interested in the exploration of this duality, questioning if it is possible to support both demands within the same

choreographic piece. The addition of rabbit ears to the costume was my way of acknowledging that theatricality was needed. I directed the performers not to pretend they were rabbits, but to use the ears as an extension of their physicality. To an audience, however, the incorporation of the rabbit ears established a clear narrative. The opportunity to adapt *Dull Roar* from the intimate space at Ross Creek Centre for the Arts to a new and very formal theatre space at York University was an exercise in scale and clarity. Specific events needed to be magnified in energy and physicality to read in the new space, while other events needed to remain intimate.

OUTCOMES

Findings

The result of this thesis process is a deeper understanding of embodiment in dance through exploratory creative processes, and the subsequent impact on the performer in three different case studies. Each case study offered a slightly different perspective on the use of *states of the body* as a somatic practice, and a tool for the performer's transformation. The process of 'transforming' placed the performer in a state of constant change, being repeatedly challenged to adapt to new situations. Every performer in this research agreed that the embodiment of a concept, image or idea takes practice. Luke Garwood stated "I'm not sure that there is one method of training that could help facilitate this, as embodiment is a personal experience and may require different preparation for different people" (Garwood, 2014). (Appendix C.1.) Amanda Davis said "Having the time to feel as though a *state* has been fully explored or "accomplished" before moving into the next or adding layers of *states* is also helpful in working

towards reaching embodiment” (Davis, 2014). (Appendix C.1.) Kate Franklin added “Training in improvisation and composition is helpful. It helps to have some kind of meditative practice to train the mind and the body to be responsive to being in the moment and sensitive to sensations in the body” (Franklin, 2014). (Appendix C.1.) Therefore, the research reveals that each performer developed a unique pathway leading towards embodiment. However, finding that pathway takes time, commitment, and personal exploration. Conventional methods of training do not apply to this type of work, therefore specialized training (such as the method in this research) needs to be in place, tailored to the individual performer’s needs.

In terms of group embodiment, the process expanded to include an awareness of the other performers and their interpretations and choices. Performer Christianne Ullmark explained this as follows.

For me, I feel that attempting to perform an embodied idea with other individuals requires an on-going, in-depth collective somatic practice. As somatic practices are usually for the benefit of the individual to develop a way of working with their body from a ‘first-person’ perspective, a collective somatic practice is necessary in order for these ‘first-person’ sensations to manifest in relation to another person. Due to time restrictions in the creation of *Dull Roar*, this form of on-going practice was not realized. Perhaps this is why I felt more embodied during the individualized sections. However, this is not to say that I did not feel that as a collective, I felt a sense of ‘togetherness’

moving towards a similar goal and with the same ‘performative’ intent. But I do believe, therefore, that because collective ‘embodiment’ requires an extremely heightened awareness for your movement in relation to others, a serious and specific approach to cultivating this awareness is very necessary. (Ullmark, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

It is useful to recognize that the practice of *states of the body* as the physical root of the movement is an internal and personal exploration. Therefore, when placed in a large performance space, the movement can read as too subtle. At times, the inward focus of the performers can seem to exclude the viewer, even though it is impossible to accurately measure what the audience is really feeling or thinking. For that reason, the experience of the viewer is not the most important thing, yet there must be consideration since dance is a performing art, reliant on the audience to fulfill the ritual of live performance. Performer Amanda Davis stated the following.

There were definitely challenges in performing the *states of the body* on a large stage. I think that because the exploration of the states is a process that begins very internally and is so connected to individual feelings and interpretations it can be difficult to transfer into performance. I felt like a question that was discussed frequently in relation to performing on a large stage was; how much of the exploration of the *states* is for the individual who is exploring them and how much is

for the audience watching? I think that connecting more honestly to the stage and allowing for the greater amount of space, the audience, lighting, etc. to change and impact the *states of the body* helped to overcome the challenges. (Davis, 2014) (Appendix C.1.)

Theatricality was not the main focus in any of the case studies, however theatrical elements were layered onto the piece when the performance space demanded them. The layering of theatricality onto an internal somatic practice creates a compelling tension. This tension poses a new question. How can a performer show an internal process in a large performance space? Is there a way to understand and amplify what the work looks like on the outside while having an embodied experience on the inside? In an intimate space where the viewer can clearly see the small movements of the dancer, the exploration is *seen* as well as *felt*. The movement in *states of the body* is highly detailed and important, but not always obvious. From the outside, deeply focussed work can read as too subtle. However, I believe that not everything needs to be *seen* in order to be *felt*. There is an intrigue to something that has the quality of being difficult to detect or analyze. There is an irresistible mystery to those things, such as a perfumed scent in the air that you cannot recognize, yet it conjures images, feelings and memories.

Further Development

Moving forward with this research, I intend to re-examine the type of training that is needed to do this work. In addition to a deeper understanding and practice of Qigong, I will explore the method The Neutral Mask, created by the famous French actor, mime and acting

instructor Jacques Lecoq. It originated at his school L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, but is now taught world-wide. A former student and teacher at the school, Giovanni Fusetti²⁰ stated the following about The Neutral Mask.

The Neutral Mask discovers a state of physical presence, calm and openness to space. It is said to be challenging because in terms of movement, no-body is neutral, and every-body carries themes that are profoundly expressive in everything that they do. There is a web of "non-neutral attitudes" and physical and emotional "background noises" within each person's movement and physical presence. If observed through the reference of the Neutral State, this web appears like painting/ markings on a white sheet. The Neutral Mask doesn't have any dramatic expression, and allows the actor to explore a state of pure presence, in the here and now of space. With this mask the actor explores the state of neutrality that exists before the action. The Neutral Mask has no memory and no projects, it lives in the present, and allows the actor to explore the most efficient movement state: the economy of movement.

(Fusetti, "The Neutral Mask: The Silence Before the Drama")

In light of the above statement, The Neutral Mask would seem to be an intriguing and logical next direction for me to take my creative investigations, furthering my exploration of movement that remains in the present moment.

²⁰ **Giovanni Fusetti** was a student, pedagogic assistant and teacher at Ecole International de Theatre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, before being co-founder of Kiklos Teatro in Padua, Italy.

My research on *states of the body* first began with groups of student dancers, followed by groups of professional dancers. Emerging from these two years of MFA thesis research, I am inspired to consider the possibility of further research in a more scientific vein, conducted in collaboration with social scientists and psychologists. For example, I am interested to apply my *states of the body* method to work with dancers who fall into specific personality categories, such as one group of “Type A” people and another group of “Type B” people to investigate how different personalities change the creative process and the choreography. Similarly, one could tailor the research to dancers of specific birth order in their family. Various other limitations and parameters could be devised to deepen my understanding of the applications of my *states of the body* methodology on dance creation and performance.

In recent years, the study of improvisation in the field of neuroscience has yielded some interesting results. Dr. Charles Limb, an Otolaryngologist and Associate Professor in the Johns Hopkins Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery in Baltimore currently researches creativity, and conducts studies that monitor the activities of the brain in musicians. At a TEDTalk²¹, he spoke of his research in a presentation entitled “Your brain on improv,” stating “artistic creativity is a neurologic product that can be examined using rigorous scientific methods” (Limb). He uses a fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) machine

²¹**TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design)** was founded in 1984. It is a global set of conferences owned by the private non-profit Sapling Foundation, under the slogan “ideas worth spreading”. Since June 2006, the talks have been offered for free viewing online through www.TED.com.

to take pictures and active images of the brain to measure blood flow. Limb and his team monitored the activity in the brain while a musician played a memorized song, and then again when improvising or spontaneously generating a song. The result was a change in activity in the lateral prefrontal cortex (associated with self-monitoring) and the medial prefrontal cortex (associated with self-expression) of the brain. Limb hypothesized “to be creative, you have to have this weird dissociation in your frontal lobe. One area [medial prefrontal cortex] turns on, and a big area [lateral prefrontal cortex] shuts off, so that you are not inhibited and you are willing to make a mistake, so that you are not constantly shutting down all of these new generative impulses”(Limb). It would be interesting to try this same study with dancers by studying the changes in brain activity when shifting from a choreographed phrase into an improvisation, and compare the results to that of the musicians. Unfortunately, a fMRI machine is currently too small and confining to allow someone to move freely, but it may be a possibility to practice *states of the body* on a small scale. It would be informative to study the brain activities of a dancer visualizing a memorized movement phrase, visualizing an improvisation, and while practicing *states of the body*. From Dr. Limb’s past research, I assume that there will be a clear distinction between the fMRI results of memorized movement and improvisation, however, I am curious to discover how the results from the practice of *states of the body* compares to those results. According to brain activity, is *states of the body* more similar to memorized movement or improvisation—or is *states of the body* a combination of both? Is there another area of the brain that is activated during *states of the body* that is not activated during improvisation or memorized movement?

To experiment with the performer being truly in the moment, there must be an evaluation of how the performer reacts to different situations. Certain spaces and certain people can change the performer's comfort level. Take that same person with the same objectives and put them in a different circumstance, it will be completely different. The performer can't feel *in the moment* without understanding what the triggers are associated with different performance spaces. Future developments are to place the three case studies in different spaces (outdoor spaces, intimate gallery spaces, warehouse spaces, theatre venues, school gymnasiums) and investigate how this change of environment impacts the performers and what subsequent decisions must be made in order for the performers to honestly remain rooted in their internal process and awareness of the space.

An embodied performer is fully open and committed to the process of awakening the body towards sensorial awareness. When performers are following *states of the body* as a method, they will generate movement vocabulary, deepen expression, artistry, and individuality. The greater the personal investment and commitment to the *states of the body* method outlined in this thesis, the deeper and richer the choreography becomes.

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SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTATION

APPENDIX A.1.

Gotta Go Church Performer's Score

1. Qigong
2. Qigong (hands one inch apart) is combined with Metal ball inside hollow torso. Metal ball is magnetized (attract and repulse) and affects the breath.
3. Metal ball (large ball is in sternum and upper back) is attracted and repulsed along diagonal.
4. Improvised choreography phrase #1 ending with head on ground.
5. Set choreographic phrase #1
6. Qigong
7. Magnetized (attract and repulse) metal ball in hollow torso (large ball) that moves down stage.
8. Qigong with metal ball starting at feet and travelling up to fingertips. 2 metal balls ricochet in hollow legs, form into one ball ricocheting up spine until it reaches the throat, split into 2 balls that move to shoulders and ricochet up hollow arms to meet between fingertips. Metal ball (small) is magnetized upwards.
9. Top of head is magnetized (attracted) to floor.
10. Magnet is moving head along floor.
11. Set choreographic phrase #2
12. Magnet head on floor with tightrope walk Improvisation.
13. Tightrope walk with Qigong
14. Improvised choreography phrase #2 with Magnet (repulse only) ending with chin up.
Traveling from upstage right to upstage left.
15. Follow disappearing hand with improvised choreography phrase "roping" with retrograde.
16. Set choreographic phrase "roping"
17. Qigong
18. Qigong combined with improvised choreography phrase "slippery" ending with *departure and return*
19. Qigong
20. Metal ball (extra large ball) ricochet in torso
21. Qigong

APPENDIX A.2.***Gotta Go Church Dreams***

Performer Kate Franklin asked her unconscious to answer the follow questions through her dreams. Below are the results.

Question: Where am I departing from? What am I arriving to?

Dream Answer #1: I look at my phone. It says 11:39. This means I will be late for a crazy show with Marc Boivin and a whole bunch of people I don't know. I am not in Toronto, I am somewhere like New York. It feels like New York. I don't feel like going. No one will miss me there anyway. My cousin and I have a party to do to later. She is bringing food. When I was in rehearsal improvising, and I met a woman with brightly coloured hair, and Marquita Lester (my old ballet teacher) was there. I WAS OVER IT, but Marc and I did a cool improv where some improbable moments happened—I was lying down on top of him, he was face down and he did a back arch and I ended up in a forward bend. Totally impossible. We got a break. We were supposed to change into a costume or a costume suggestion from our wardrobe, but I had only one dance outfit for the whole day which involved Ryan's blue sweatpants (which are basically falling apart. They are so ratty and over a decade old).

Dream Answer #2: A woman who I have never seen before is pulling a huge truck with only her bike. It was all flying. She was very beautiful and acted like it was no big deal. She knew me, and when I went up to her truck she sold me some repair supplies. I don't know what I was trying to repair. She told me to have a great day and smiled at me. I felt small. I think I had been having trouble trying to pull my truck through the air with my bike. For some reason, I woke up with Madonna in my head, that song "time goes by... so slowly...".

Question: Where am I when I have arrived?

Dream Answer #1: I am trying to explain why Robin Dutt calls me 'diva'. Insisting that I'm not actually a diva!

Dream Answer #2: I am sitting at a picnic table. My cousin and her husband walk up with their new baby and their toddler. Neither kid really looked like themselves. They had weirder noses than they do in real life.

Dream Answer #3: I was going to get a bikini wax even though I knew I just had one.

Dream Answer #4: Marc Boivin interrupted me and then apologized, saying he should be enjoying every moment with me.

Dream Answer #5: Rosslyn Jacob Edwards was giving away many comps. She'd give away a comp just because she knew someone. I was like "Rosslyn, don't be afraid to actually take money for some of these! We know a lot of people!"

Question: When the piece is 'successful', what is the formula?

Dream Answer: Molly Johnson went pure vegan. Kaleb Robertson was giving her tips on how to do it.

*NB: Kate stated "This last dream seemed like a very clear answer to me. I took it to mean that I should delve as deeply as possible into my routines and rituals for the whole day leading up to the show, as well as on stage during the piece."

APPENDIX A.3.

Gotta Go Church Flier





A mixed program with two solos and a duet, *with a trace* explores the nature of personal history and relationships, and how our experiences and interactions influence how we continue to define ourselves. Produced by the firstthingsfirst Co-Artistic Directors Kate Holden and Kate Franklin, the works range from the world premiere of *WOULD* by Montreal's provocative Demers, to Brahms Waltzes created by Baker 1992 / Holden 2013, and Calam's fierce and dichotomous *Gotta Go Church*

APPENDIX A.4.

Gotta Go Church Program Credits and Notes

Gotta Go Church

Choreography: Valerie Calam/Company Vice Versa in collaboration with Kate Franklin

Sound Design: Paul Shepherd

Performer: Kate Franklin

Mentor: Holly Small

Lighting Design: Simon Rossiter

Stage Management/Production Management: Marianna Rosato

Photography and Postcard Design: Jeremy Mimmagh

In this piece, I was inspired to find a deep spiritual energy in Kate that could be carried and evolved through her physicality. More and more, I feel a pull towards ‘physical states of the body’ as a path towards being present onstage.

Kate and I created a space where she is free to make decisions in the moment, while maintaining a pre-determined structure and arc. We feel that it is important to leave space in the piece for Kate to feel the reactions to her actions.

I notice that my experience changes when I watch Kate trying to negotiate interaction, perspective changes, and recurrences in the moment. I am affected by the realness of her commitment. I see that this process leads the performer towards embodiment, which (for me) is the ultimate goal.

APPENDIX A.5.

Gotta Go Church **Review**

Mixed messages

By *Bridget Cauthery*

Below is an excerpt of Bridget Cauthery’s review posted online for The Dance Current on September 30, 2013.

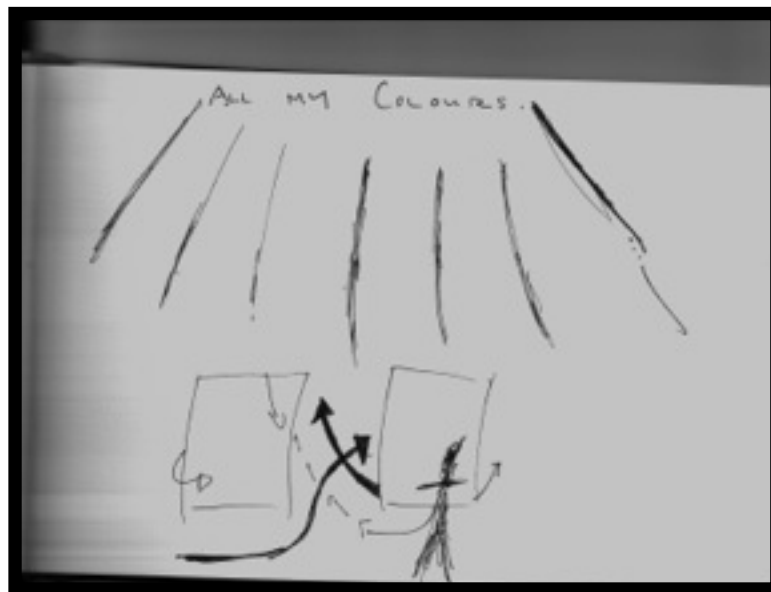
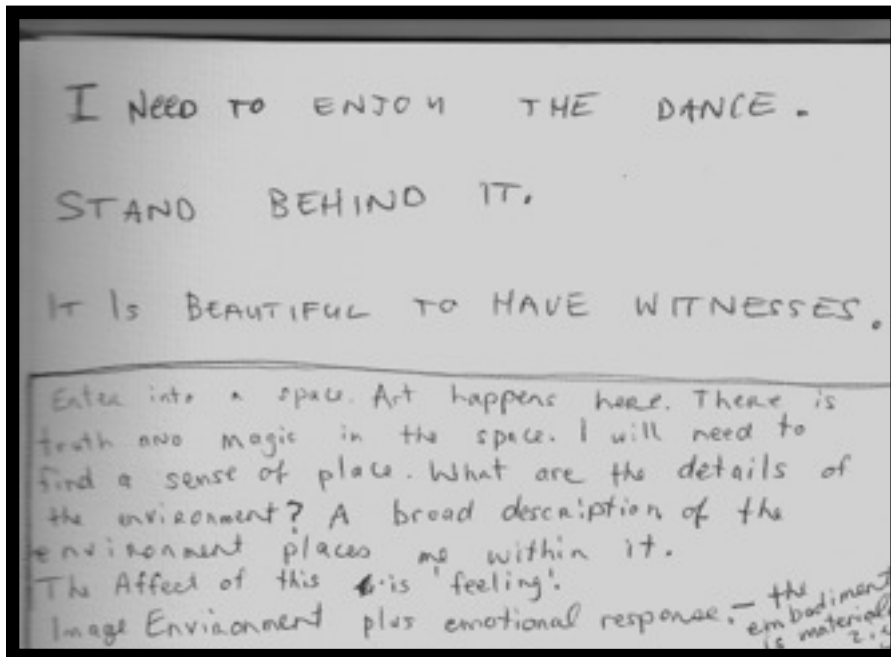
Toronto dance lovers were recently treated to an evening of exceptional contemporary dance. Comprised of three individual works from three gifted choreographers – one emerging, one mid-career and one senior – the pieces could not have been more different. Together, however, *with a trace* – produced by firstthingsfirst productions and presented by DanceWorks as part of Harbourfront’s NextSteps season at the Enwave Theatre – amounted to a rewarding and extraordinary program in which the pieces seemed to feed and build off one another. Co-founders and directors Kate Holden and Kate Franklin and their collaborators created a buzz in the theatre that was hard to shake even after the evening had come to an end.

The second work, *Gotta Go Church*, presented another kind of yearning. Choreographed by Toronto Dance Theatre (TDT) veteran and indie maven Valerie Calam, the work is the culmination of her MFA research into “physical states of the body.” Calam has managed to transfer her signature idiosyncratic style onto performer Kate Franklin. Having watched Calam perform for more than a decade with TDT, I found it nothing short of eerie to see her movements, her corporeality, her facial expressions, her quirkiness, apparent in another body. At

times it was like Calam had taken over Franklin's body and it demonstrates how effectively Franklin has absorbed and transmitted Calam's intention for the choreography.

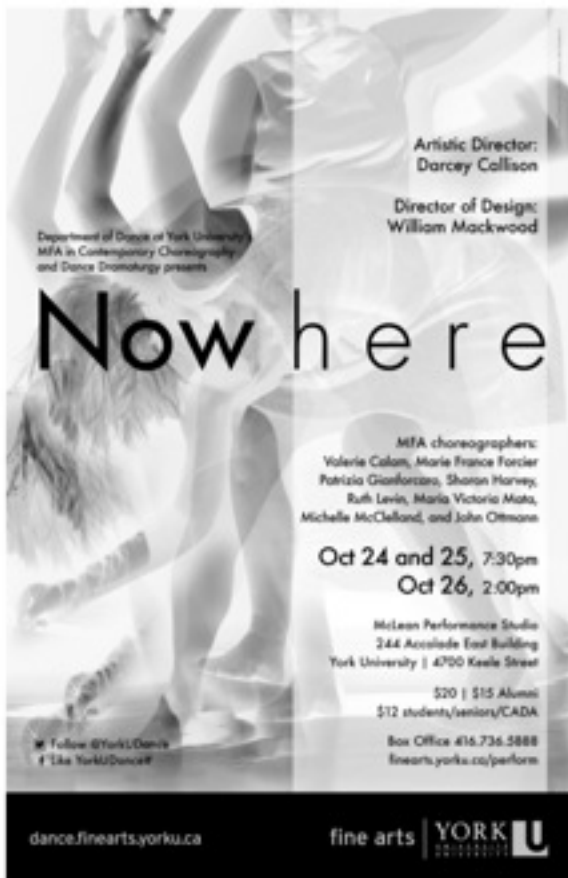
The piece begins with Franklin moving diagonally across the stage towards a bright light downstage right. Sometimes drawn forward, sometimes repelled, Franklin performs a series of movements that appear to have been turned inside out and performed in reverse. Each step is awkward, twitchy and angular with Franklin's facial expressions morphing from coy to wonder to ghoulish. The sound design by Paul Shepherd features loud distorted electric guitar that is as jarring and disjointed as Franklin's broken-doll advance across the stage.

The piece is broken up into several sections that play on themes of centring and grounding the body. At one point Franklin enters the audience and encourages individual members to take deep, cleansing breaths with her. Another section sees Franklin sitting cross-legged in a pool of light alternately touching her head, her heart, her belly as though trying to connect with her chakras. A particularly interesting section has Franklin up against one of the brick pillars at the rear of the stage, dancing beneath a red light. Franklin lies on the floor trying to push her body vertically up the wall, all the while smiling with the embarrassed effort of her task. (The scene reminded me of documentary I saw once about autism where a young woman gets a sexual thrill from rubbing up against the side of a skyscraper ... but I digress.) Here, Franklin is strangely sensual but also very vulnerable and the audience wants her to succeed. Overall, in this and every scene, it is a more mature and grown-up Franklin that emerges revealing a tremendous range of emotion and physicality.

APPENDIX B.1.*All My Colours Journal Notes*

APPENDIX B.2.

All My Colours Program



Department of Dance at York University
MFA in Contemporary Choreography
and Dance Dramaturgy presents

Nowhere

Artistic Director:
Darcey Collison

Director of Design:
William Mackwood

MFA choreographers:
Valerie Calam, Marie France Fortier,
Patrizia Gianfranco, Sharon Harvey,
Ruth Levin, Maria Victoria Mota,
Michelle McClelland, and John Ottmann

Oct 24 and 25, 7:30pm
Oct 26, 2:00pm

McLean Performance Studio
244 Ascotside East Building
York University | 4700 Keele Street

\$20 | \$15 Alumni
\$12 students/seniors/CADA

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UNIVERSITY

All My Colours

Choreographer and Interpreter: Valerie Calam
Lighting Design: April Gorday
Music: Paul Shepherd; Makers
Filmmaker/Visuals: Franci Duran
Costume Design: Valerie Calam
MFA Supervisors: Professor Holly Small, Professor William Mackwood

The soles of my feet
move along the floor
as if attracted to a
magnet that travels
under the surface of
the floor. My head
is repelled from
the ceiling, causing
a weighted drop
downwards. The
remainder of my
body follows,
always subservient
to the action.



Valerie Calam has been presenting choreography in Toronto since 1997. She formed Company Vice Versa in 2011 as an umbrella for her creative work and collaborations. She is co-producer of *F/ (flash.net)*. As a dancer, Valerie recently worked with Guillaume Coté, Jenn Goodwin, and Serge Bennathan. She is the winner of the 2011 K.M. Hunter Award in Dance.

APPENDIX C.1.

Dull Roar Interview Questions and Answers

1. What do you define ‘embodiment’ as?

Luke Garwood: To me, embodiment is the personal manifestation, however slight, of a concept or an idea in my body and in my thinking. It’s a feeling from the inside outward of what that concept or idea would be if it were one in the same with my body. Embodiment means asking the question: how does allowing priority to a train of thought, or imagery, affect me? How does it affect my physicality, my emotional state, my decision making?

Amanda Davis: The personification of a feeling, quality or an idea. The uniting of the body and the mind.

Kate Franklin: Embodiment is when a performer feels that she is not 100% in control of her actions. Something else, some energy or some character or some idea has somewhat taken over. As a result, the performance can be surprising, even to the performer. It has something to do with the performer actively relinquishing control, being willing to go further into the ideas of the work, and the performer must not care what she looks like.

Christianne Ullmark: In context to contemporary dance practices, I would define ‘embodiment’ as, a complete physical realization and manifestation of an integrated bodily and cerebral awareness, enabling the dancer to move freely in response to their instinctual impulses and ‘creative’ choices. However, as the act of embodying, for example, a set of proposed images and sensations undoubtedly requires a cognitive understanding of what these images look like-meaning an understanding from a personal perspective as well as from the collective group of dancing individuals, in order to maintain consistency for the sake of presenting a piece that follows an idea with depth and clarity-it is the pure physicality drawn out of these sensations which, for me brings meaning to the movement I am discovering through the practice of ‘embodiment’.

2. During the creation and/or performance of *Dull Roar*, did you ever feel embodied? When?

LG: As a performer in *Dull Roar*, trying to maintain my idea of embodiment was a challenge but one I felt I needed to challenge myself to stay in as much as I could. Not to say it was constant. It often felt like a juggling game in which I would drop a ball (fall out of embodiment or embodiment as a priority) and just have to pick it right up again. It would start as soon as my eyes shut and I allowed an internal image of a small metal ball to focus my main attention. A juggling ball would drop, so to speak, when I had to line up with my colleagues and it became as

much about gaging their embodiment, or what I perceived as their embodiment, in order to line up and be the same as them. Soon after dismantling from a straight line though, the ball gets picked up and what happens is that not only did I have my own embodiment back but also an awareness of the group embodiment. So as we were “small metal ball to ricochet”, the embodiment didn’t remain what would an idea or concept be if it was manifested in my body but more, what is the result of the manifestations in our collective body? Sometimes a new manifestation of an image resulted without our awareness in so much as our commitment to our own versions of any given image (we we’re never in “rabbit state” yet the image persisted to the point of cleverly including it in the piece). It’s this same group embodiment that would occasionally draw me out of my own as I would question what it was I saw in my colleagues and as a result, in our new collective body.

AD: Yes. During the creation I felt embodiment through the exploration of each individual state of the body. Initially, I was able to connect to each state more honestly with my eyes closed. Through this almost private and internal practice it eventually became easier to access each state with my eyes open and allow the energy of the space and the individuals around me to also influence the states without losing the embodiment. The states I felt the most embodied in were; the metal ball/hollow body, metal ball tracing, rolling, rolling and ricocheting, heavy metal ball, magnet feet, attracting and repelling the whole body from itself and to others and 100% magnet. During the performance it felt more difficult to feel fully embodied by the states and the space. There were times when I was fully embodied during performance, but it was more challenging to stay truly and consistently connected to each state while letting the space also influence them.

KF: I often felt embodied during the creation and especially in the performances of *Dull Roar*. In the “Dance Party” section it was easy to lose myself and give myself over to the forces inside of me and/or get pulled along with the group. I think because decisions had to be made so quickly, there was no time to think, I just had to get swept away. In the “Beyonce” section as well it was really easy to forget myself and just ride with the extreme forces trying to tear me apart. In these moments, I would surprise myself by doing something unplanned. I felt like something other than myself was in control.

CU: While Performing *Dull Roar*, I definitely felt embodied. Performing in this way allowed me to feel comfortable and confident with my movement choices, because I was not worried about trying to be ‘interesting’. Using the sensational tool of ‘embodiment’, as a motive for semi-structure improvisation and creation, allowed me to feel very calm while performing, because as long as I tried to stay true to the task and follow my instincts, I was ‘performing’ the piece. Specifically during the more individualized sections of the piece, I felt the most embodied.

3. How do you think a performer needs to train/prepare in order to reach a state of embodiment within a dance piece?

LG: I feel that the embodiment of a concept or an idea takes practice. I'm not sure that there is a one method of training that could help facilitate this, as embodiment is a personal experience and may require different preparation for different people. For me it was extremely helpful for group embodiment in the early stages, to do Qi Gong together. It was something very simple that allowed us, as a group, to practice being in consensus. After that, practicing the actual manifestation and then practicing doing it in front of an audience was also very helpful. In doing it more often and in more challenging situations, I was able to enter it more quickly and sustain it more while managing other tasks.

AD: I think that having the different *states of the body* to relate to and the time to explore and understand them is really helpful in preparing to reach a state of embodiment within a dance piece. Having a set practice, such as exploring a state like the metal ball moving through a hollow body first, then exploring the metal ball rolling through the body before exploring ideas like rolling and ricocheting is important. Having the time to feel as though a state has been fully explored or "accomplished" before moving into the next or adding layers of states is also helpful in working towards reaching embodiment.

KF: A performer needs to train to be very comfortable being watched. It helps to have some kind of meditative practice to train the mind and the body to be responsive to being in the moment. In the performer's training there should be a conscious shedding of the idea that there are "mistakes". A performer has to get comfortable with the idea that no two performances will be the exact same. A performer should practice making very specific choices and sticking to them, but then making different specific choices next time. Training in improvisation and composition is helpful. Training should help the performer become very sensitive to sensations in the body and to signals from fellow performers.

CU: Although performing in this way allows for increased freedom from habitual movement patterns and cerebral mobility to remain aware of my choices as they come into my consciousness, I do believe, however, that specialized training and preparation is needed in order to get the most out of practicing and performing embodied *states of the body*. For me, I feel that attempting to perform an embodied idea with other individuals requires an ongoing, in depth collective somatic practice. As somatic practices are usually for the benefit of the individual to develop a way of working with their body from a 'first-person' perspective, a collective somatic practice is necessary in order for these 'first-person' sensations to manifest in relation to another person. Due to time restrictions in the creation of *Dull Roar*, this form of ongoing practice was not realized. Perhaps this is why I felt more embodied during the individualized sections. However, this is not to say that I did not feel that as a collective, I felt a sense of 'togetherness' moving towards a similar goal and with the same 'performative' intent. But I do believe, therefore, that because collective 'embodiment' requires an extremely

heightened awareness for your movement in relation to others, a serious and specific approach to cultivating this awareness is very necessary.

4. What did you experience while practicing *states of the body*? Was it challenging to perform *states of the body* on a large stage?

LG: Yes it was. But again, I think it's in challenging ourselves with where and how and with what, that the states can become stronger in the performer. At first I needed to be in the space but ignore it. I did not allow the space to affect me in any way because I was still juggling the other balls (sorry more juggling metaphors) and wasn't ready for one more. But after a while I found myself able to keep my attention on the state I was in while acknowledging the space I was in and the fact that I was in front of an audience.

AD: Practicing the states of the body was a different experience each time. I feel like through deep exploration, I understood more and more about each state and was able to connect to them more clearly but also make and leave room for new discoveries and for them to develop and change.

Practicing and exploring the states while connecting to the music was also really interesting. There were many moments when the music influenced the state I was exploring or determined how I moved in and out of different states.

There were definitely challenges in performing the states of the body on a large stage. I think that because the exploration of the states is a process that begins very internally and is so connected to individual feelings and interpretations it can be difficult to transfer into performance. I felt like a question that was discussed frequently in relation to performing on a large stage was; how much of the exploration of the states is for the individual who is exploring them and how much is for the audience watching? I think that connecting more honestly to the stage and allowing for the greater amount of space, the audience, lighting, etc. to change and impact the states of the body helped to overcome the challenges.

KF: Practicing states of the body involves the imagination to a high degree. I had to really visualize the task and imagine so hard that it was really happening in my body. I had to almost trick myself into believing the magnetic forces of the states I was working on. The only thing that is hard about transferring this practice onto a larger stage is that so often we just don't get enough stage time in comparison to studio time. So the adjustment to the new surroundings has to be quick, and therefore maybe doesn't always happen all the way.

CU: It was somewhat challenging to perform *states of the body* on a large stage, just because of the heightened state of awareness triggered by being in a traditional performance space. It was hard to block out this flood of 'performative' energy and therefore at times made me slip back into habitual ways of moving and momentarily dropping out of the task. However, as the piece

evolved and this sensation was welcomed, it actually became easier to remain in the ‘state’ knowing you had the freedom to leave.

5. What did you experience in the Qigong warm-up? In your opinion, was Qigong conducive to *states of the body*?

LG: As I mentioned earlier, I found it integral to our practice leading up to group embodiment but it was also a practice in focused attention, which I really found helped. In working within states of the body, the focus has to remain true to the task, even when being layered with choreographic ideas and, for me, Qi Gong is the practice of that focus.

AD: The Qigong warm-up helped me to connect to my breath and feel a sense of balance and openness in both my body and mind. Qigong is conducive to the states of the body because you are connecting the breath to movement, they happen simultaneously. For me, one is not initiating or leading the other. In practicing the states, I feel it is important to not let my thoughts lead the movement and to truly be immersed in whatever state I am exploring.

KF: The Qi Gong warm-up makes me sensitive to the subtle movement of energy in my body. I become very aware of what is going on inside of me, in the body and in the mind. I become very calm, aware of my breath, and very open and receptive to what is happening right here and right now. It grounds me in the present moment. I am able to stay in the moment more easily after I practice Qi Gong. This makes it a very valuable practice for *states of the body*. I can easily let go of judgement and just be in the moment, literally going with the flow, maintaining a deep connection to my body and mind. Not judging is a key concept for *states of the body*. It is really important for the performer to be free to just move and make snap decisions without being self-conscious or judgemental about the results. To clear the mind with Qi Gong and just move from moment to moment without the residue of the previous moment makes embodiment easier. My body becomes a vessel to channel whatever is there to be found in the moment, without worrying about whether or not it is the “right” choice.

6. In *Dull Roar*, do you feel that individual personalities of the performers played a role in piece?

LG: Without a doubt. Our personalities and our differences and our personal choices within the group structure of the piece is what I believe coloured the piece. By being so different, it then makes it that more striking when we do get on the same page.

AD: Yes. I think that each individual personality coming together played a large role in creating the dynamics of the piece. I think that each individual had their own energy that shaped different sections, relationships and qualities seen and felt throughout the piece.

KF: Yes I did feel that the individual personalities of the performers played a role in the piece. We all had different ways of interpreting the rules of the physical states. The choreographer kept her directions just open enough to allow for these differences in interpretation. We had different comfort levels with leading and following. We all had slightly different priorities in performance of the work. We had different ways of letting the tasks read on our faces. Our choices were influenced by so many different variables – whether we were introverts or extroverts, our different levels of confidence and performance experience, our birth order in our families, how comfortable we each are with making mistakes and failing, whether we are naturally more interested in being part of a group or whether we are more “lone wolf” by nature, and many other aspects of our unique personalities.

7. In *Dull Roar*, did you feel a ‘group embodiment’, where everyone was committed to the same thing at once? How does ‘group embodiment’ compare to individual embodiment?

LG: I swear I hadn’t read this question before talking about it earlier. But Yes. I did feel a group embodiment. I think the difference is that group embodiment can’t be easily predicted because it’s a result. It’s a result of us as individuals in the space of our embodiment at a given time, mixed with the space we’re in, the lighting we’re in, the effect we’re giving off. In a way, group embodiment is the outside perspective, of which we can have the same and/or different one from the inside. I never felt like a rabbit but when that image came up as a result of our group embodiment it was easy to believe.

AD: I think that there might be different levels or degrees of group embodiment based on how many tasks the group is committed to at the same time. In certain sections like the ‘dance party’ I feel like everyone was committed to following a leader and everyone was committed to embodying the larger space but each individual had the freedom explore attracting or repelling each other in different ways as well as their own pathways and patterns in terms of moving through space. In sections like the 100% magnet or the ‘shake off’ I feel like everyone was committed to doing all of the same things at the same time. I think that individual embodiment does not require as much outside awareness as group embodiment. Its important to be able to read what state each individual is in or exploring. Sometimes this can be difficult because certain states like ‘opposing metal balls’ and ‘metal ball attracting and repelling someone else’s metal ball’ could potentially read as being the same thing. This could look like a group embodiment from the outside but there could actually be many states being explored within the group.

KF: I did feel a group embodiment at times in *Dull Roar*. I was blown away by how few times we hit each other or bumped into each other, even though our exact pathways, dynamics, and movements were not totally planned. This seemed miraculous to me, and made me think that somehow, we were all in service to each other as well as being deeply committed to the task at hand. Many times I felt like we were all part of the same organism, responding immediately to each other's propositions and each other's energy, without having to think about it very hard. We were really in the moment with each other, being very responsive and sensitive to each other.

8. After creating and showing *Dull Roar* at Ross Creek, how did your experience change (as a performer) when asked to adapt to York's theatre space? How did the change of space impact the piece? Were you forced to change your approach?

LG: It didn't change a huge amount for me. It was a different set of challenges to which I had to accustom myself but I believe that would have been true with any new space. It took time to acknowledge the space exactly because I didn't want to change my approach. In the end I feel I remained faithful to an approach I had developed back at Ross Creek.

AD: My experience definitely changed in terms of approach. Being clearer in my movement and not letting it fall into an internal exploration became more important. Embodying the space and connecting to the audience became greater tasks. I had to allow for more elements outside my body to influence the states in conjunction with what I already understood and connected to within each state.

KF: At Ross Creek I was very calm and efficient in my performance of *Dull Roar*. I was doing what was required, following my priorities and the priorities of the group, having an experience that was fulfilling and surprising and true to what was happening in the room. When Val asked us to find more theatricality for York's theatre space, it made my energy jump up a few notches. I suddenly found more extreme ways of fulfilling the physical tasks. I found more expression on my face. I let go a little bit of serving the group and found more individual moments. I looked around at my new surroundings more often. I stretched my idea of what I thought my job was, and found more exciting places to go. I very much appreciated the nudge from Val in this direction.



APPENDIX C.2.

Dull Roar Sample Rehearsal Schedule (January 14, 2014)

Location: Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. Canning, Nova Scotia

Day one.

10-10:45 personal warmup

10:45-11:15 'small metal ball' practice. suspend, rolling, ricochet, 2 metal balls

11:15-11:30 'single metal ball' is magnetized to the 4 walls of the space. 'single/multiple balls' are magnetized to another person's ball

11:30-12 'feet magnet' practice. 2 magnets under the floor that attract your feet and move. 'repel or attract'. the 2 magnets under the floor. layer with 'head magnet'.

12-12:15 full exploration of all 'states'

BREAK

12:25-12:40 'follow the leader'. one person begins and the others follow. a new person takes the lead

12:40-1 write about any new discoveries or realizations

LUNCH BREAK

2:45-3:40 learn choreographic phrase 'all states'

3:40-4:15 learn choreographic phrase 'standing feet magnet'

4:15-4:25 **BREAK**

4:25-4:50 'rabbit hole' pick up the phrase where you left off

4:50-5:30 Qigong

Discoveries/Questions: *How can 'rabbit hole' connect to the other dancers, the space and the viewer? There is a difference between going into 'rabbit hole' and going out of 'rabbit hole'.*

Day two.

10-11:15 walk outside (it was sunny and vast) and personal warmup

11:15-11:40 'small metal ball' practice. personal exploration with the choice to 'follow' someone else.

12:05-12:20 RUN a sequence of 'two opposing metal balls', ricochet/seeing, magnetic feet, magnetic all. 'follow' where someone is looking at, see what they are seeing.

Discoveries/Questions: *When 'following' someone else, what elements/details do you choose to follow? There are 2 different ways to approach 'metal ball state'. The first way is to 'host' the metal ball in your own body so that you are not in control of where the ball decides to go. You only react to it. The second way is to be in the 'controller mode' and therefore be in control of where the ball goes. There seems to be more momentum in this way.*

When the dancer is 'seeing', they are in the 'controller mode'.

'Expanding/growing ball state' can be used as a way to connect to the outside.

What if there was a one large magnet under the floor that everyone was attracted and repelled to/from?

What if the front was the magnet?

LUNCH BREAK

2:45-4:30 Learn 'all states' phrase, and 'tip forward' phrase

4:30-5 Practice phrases with 'rabbit holes'. 'Follow someone' and then 'Follow the leader'.

APPENDIX C.3 Dull Roar Program

Dull Roar

Within my creative process, I have been developing a method called *states of the body*, an image-based physical exploration to generate movement vocabulary. The aim is to create a path that leads towards being present onstage where the performers are free to make decisions in the moment.

Choreographer:	Valerie Calam
Interpreters:	Amanda Davis, Kate Franklin, Luke Garwood, Christianne Ullmark
Lighting Design:	Blair Larmon
Music, Composer:	Paul Shepherd/Cult Eyes
Costume Design:	Valerie Calam
MFA Supervisor:	Holly Small William Mackwood



APPENDIX C.4.
Dull Roar List of Events (January 17th 2014)



- Hollow - metal ball
- repel/seeing ~~x~~ balls are attracted/repelled
- All see the same thing
- magnet feet
- phrase - tip
- No state

HOLLOW BODY
 SMALL Metal Ball
 Rolling
 Ricochet - 2 opposing balls
 No feet follow the center

① Imagine You own metal Ball is being passed to someone else
 ② Imagine you are receiving the metal ball

PASS metal ball thru one container

throw/catch to FRONT

RABBIT MEAT HOLES
 magnetic feet
 Metal Ball
 repel/Attract
 - Phrase - Lead
 - Phrase - Laying

Repel / Attract
 OWN BODY
 OTHERS

Magnetic Au ON FLOOR
 Same Spot ① floor magnet as On