

A Thousand Mountains

by

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Abstract

In creating a series of short dances and presenting them in a variety of informal settings, my Thesis Project examines the encounter of emotion to body movement and the transfer of feeling that occurs when movement is witnessed by a live audience. In making the dances in this series I have borrowed performance practices and structures from song-writing traditions in order to frame this body of trans-performance work. The performance of *A Thousand Mountains* serves as an archive of my artistic research in this vein. The dances are not strung together to create an over-arching narrative, nor are they seeking to portray characters. They appear as distinct yet related entities. The formal dances are framed by an informal setting and by informal address from performer to audience. This encounter of formality and informality highlights the notion of shifting between states of being, acknowledges the event as a presentation of multiple events and recognizes my presence in relation to others (i.e. liveness).

Keywords: feeling-memory archive; dance; choreography; music; song; song structure; liveness; perishing; performance; gesture; repetition; referencing; recording; representation; expression; emotion; disappearance; presence; absence; event; longing

*With endless gratitude to Jos and Donna,
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Thesis Defense Statement:

A Thousand Mountains

A Thousand Mountains is a part of a series of presentations that perform body movement as an occasion for transformation in performer and observer alike and to the emotional and intellectual complexity that can be performed as dance. The dances in this series of performances grew out of a creative practice I began in 2006 involving: collecting impulsive or non-self aware movements; arranging these movements into brief sequences often imitating Anglo-American folk song structure (for example, a series of verses punctuated by a chorus), and; performing the resulting sets of dances in informal settings.

In performing dances in venues such as community halls, clubs, house parties, studio/galleries and rumpus rooms *A Thousand Mountains* makes for a charged intimate environment. Each performance is explicitly designed to function as a 'feeling-memory archive' in which dance movements trigger one's accessing of one's privately associated emotions. Akin to William James' theory of emotions, in which body states are identified as inseparable from emotions¹ I take the shared/public experience, within the serial of *A Thousand Mountains*, of encountering feeling in the dance performance *itself* and create another encounter out of that experience. Consequently, the emotion connected to body movement that shifts from performance to performance gets performed as its own un-chartable multiplicity of influences (which includes the encounter with the given audience who bring their diverse experiences and their own 'feeling-memory archives'). In terms of Erika Fischer-Lichte's account of the specific

¹ *The heart of William James*. Edited and with an introduction by Robert Richardson. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

event of performing as a “self-referential and ever-changing feedback loop”² that engages both the audience and performers in an unspoken dialogue the intraglacial movement of *A Thousand Mountains* propels the audiences interaction across a multiplicity of performance.

The Anglo-American folksong (and related forms such as country, punk rock, reggae, soul, pop, etc.), due to its compositional formula and concert presentation convention, is very effective for facilitating my plan of trans-performance work. Making use of such traditional song structuring draws on and plays against a backdrop of dance works by Ivo Dimchev, Aimée Dawn Robinson, Jerome Bel and Ame Henderson. Each has been mining the rich territory of personal and cultural experience of song through performance. Most importantly, they all recognize the importance of the individuated folksong as mechanism for providing the choreographer with a tangible and commonly known format for treating each dance as its own detailed and precise world. When the dance so-structured in terms of, for example, the verse-chorus trope is put into play in the context of particular non-conventional venues characterized by somewhat indeterminate interactions between performer and audience the performer has to juggle the pre-determined movements with live performance and somewhat improvisatory tasks. Always the trick for any of my performances is to have performers embody evocative movement and yet maintain the discipline of performing the ‘set-list’ (and quite importantly so for purposes of problematizing the ‘concept album’ or perhaps any musical program) of relationally conceived presentations.

The rhythm of presenting a succession of short dances magnifies the details of each work without succumbing to the narrative-based inclination of generating a single event reducible to a single conclusion. The thought here is to challenge my practice in a manner that prompts engagement with more organic

² Fischer-Lichte, Erika. "Shared Bodies, Shared Spaces: The Bodily Co-Presence of Actors and Spectators." *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2008. p. 38

and overtly pre-scripted processes of the folksong tradition. For the series of ongoing dances in *A Thousand Mountains* I work by the notion of the rhizome, a subterranean root-like system that sends up shoots in unpredictable directions. Used as a structure of thought by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*³ the rhizome, as active form and force, cultivates, at least as I have interpreted, re-conceiving the framing of each piece and/or dance event as merely an isolable experience. *A Thousand Mountains*, a play on this rhizomatic action, calls to mind a weave of connectivity and multiplicity of meaning that puts in question the idea of experience and the construction of an event as being of a single meaning.

A Thousand Mountains is in contrast to the *informal*, participatory style of the 'Happenings' of the 1960s and the works of artists of the Grand Union during the 1970s. These works valued *presence* in that they used improvisation and task-oriented audient activities in highlighting 'the situated now' to make a point of challenging the universality and canonic formulae of art practices. By contrast, though my work is as context-conscious, my dances are largely conceived in terms of the mechanics of choreography and do not presuppose improvisation as the connecting thread (as if a free and open dialogue were to occur) between performer and audience. As described above, the problem for my work is to wrestle with each performance, or each repeated structured 'folk' composition of a dance, as the re-inscription of the inclination for a dance to summon its own immediacy amidst an audience somehow *always already* participating.

Phillip Auslander states "although live performance awakens our desire for community it also frustrates that desire by creating a gap between performer and audience"⁴. In relation to this perceived gap, many theatre and visual artists over the last two decades have developed work that blurs the line between audience

³ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

⁴ Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999. p.66.

and performer. However, I would argue that this frustration of desire, this longing, is a unique and desirable feature of live performance. It addresses our desire for desire, our longing for longing.

Appendices

Appendix A.

Inventory of Performances

Event: A Thousand Mountains

Date: August 22nd, 2011

Location: The Wise Hall, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Description of event: Final presentation towards Graduating Project. An event presented with the School for Contemporary Arts.

Approximate number of persons attending: 120

Title of the set: A Thousand Mountains

Dances presented: Mountains; Speaking with Spirits (Parts I, II, III); Ghosts; Away; Trust; New Excitement Part I; Dreamin'; New Excitement Part II; Untitled dance; New Sadness; Yours, for a song; River and Stone; Mega-dance; Not the End; Dangerous Day; Elevation dance; The Falls

Event: an occasion for sharing

Date: May 7th, 2011

Location: Performing Art Forum (PAf), St Erme, France

Description of event: After two weeks residence at PAF I offered a performance in the media room (much like a well equipped rec room furnished with couches, easy chairs, projectors, sound system etc... An environment for leisure, entertainment and socializing) for co-residents.

Approximate number of persons attending: 20

Title of the set: none

Dances presented: Not the End; Ghosts; River and Stone

Event: house concert

Date: December 4th, 2010

Location: 2205 Turner Street

Description of event: A party in my home featuring performances by myself, Dave Chokroun, Nikolai Gauer and Stacey Ho.

Approximate number of persons attending: 30

Title of the set: none

Dances presented: Second Bird Dance; Yours, for a song; Not the End

Event: Once you cross the threshold, you're in another world

Date: July 15th, 2010

Location: Holy Oak, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Description of event: An event presented with Aimée Dawn Robinson and Holy Oak featuring my choreography and music/dance performance by Aimée Dawn Robinson.

Approximate number of persons attending: 45

Title of the set: Golden Something

Dances presented: Speaking with Spirits; Yours, for a song; Mega-dance; Standing by you; Not the end

Event: Always Already

Date: May 14th, 2010

Location: 611 Alexander Street (SFU Visual Arts Studios and Gallery), Vancouver, BC, Canada

Description of event: Presentation with MFA cohort. This event used the entire studio/gallery, as well as an offsite location, to present works connected with our practices.

Approximate number of persons attending: 80

Title of the set: Golden Something

Dances presented: Let me have your attention; Speaking with Spirits; Figure of Speech; Yours, for a song; Mega-dance; Standing by you; Fighting song; Not the End

Appendix B.

Descriptions of dances performed at *A Thousand Mountains*

All lighting arrangements by Stacey Ho

Title: Mountains

Duration: approximately 4 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance consists of very small body movements performed largely in unison by a group of dancers. The dancers, placed evenly across the space, perform the minute gestures as a metaphor for small but beautiful geographical or emotional shifts over time.

Title: Speaking with Spirits (Parts I, II, III)

Duration: approximately 6 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Musical Introduction by: Dave Chokroun and Rachael Wadham

Studio notes: A detailed arm dance in which the performers' arms are behind their line of vision for the duration of the dance. Some dancers are raised on the shoulders of other dancers and the depth of the performing area is used to its maximum to create a visual awareness of distance and proximity. This dance uses arm gestures to indicate communication and activity. Focusing these gestures in the area behind the performer suggests interaction with the past, with lives and events that have come before ours. Rather than representing a struggle or challenge, the performers approach this communication with facility and draw the metaphorical past and future closer and closer to themselves.

Title: Ghosts

Duration: approximately 5 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Music written by Jennifer Castle and performed by Dave Chokroun and Rachael Wadham

Studio notes: 'Ghosts' presents tender movement that highlights distance and flow from one movement to the next. The spatial pattern sets up a diagonal focus in the first trajectory of movement. Over the course of the dance the solo dancer is pulled away from that diagonal, charging forward into the space or retreating to the back. This is a sentimental dance related to Speaking With Spirits in that it is based on communicating with those who are not in our immediate perception. In recent performances I have found a child-like innocence in the movement contrasted with a motherly coaxing feeling.

Title: Away

Duration: approximately 10 seconds

Performers: Jennifer Cole, Barbara Lindenberg, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Lindsey White, Jennifer Aoki

Studio notes: This dance shows a group of performers swishing away from the audience. It is about creating a sensation of distance and strength.

Title: Trust

Duration: approximately one minute

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: In this dance the performers fall and are caught and swept up by one another on a diagonal path through the space. The final image is of one dancer elevated and thrust downwards head first to stop suddenly.

Title: New Excitement Part I

Duration: approximately 30 seconds

Performers: Shannon Lee, Brittany Gorman, Jennifer Aoki, Michelle Lui

Studio notes: This dance features wild, exuberant movement performed in a corner of the performance space. It has a sense of impatience.

Title: Dreamin'

Duration: approximately one minute

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance shows performers dragging each other across the stage. The image sets up a compelling contrast of restfulness and laboriousness.

Title: New Excitement Part II

Duration: approximately one minute

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Sound: Rachael Wadham

Studio notes: This piece features wild movement in close proximity to the audience and conjures the feeling of spell casting.

Title: Untitled dance

Duration: approximately 20 seconds

Performers: Lindsey White, Jennifer Cole, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo

Studio notes: This dance involves five movements performed in a canon by a trio of dancers. The quality of movement is that of movements that are being stopped before they are completed. There is a sharp tenderness to the movement and the quality of movement suggests the defeated acceptance of being restrained or limited in some way.

Title: New Sadness

Duration: approximately one minute

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance is based on a very simple gesture of the chest caving towards the back. The movement activates the emotional associations of this area of the body.

Title: Yours, for a song

Duration: approximately 4 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Song by Larry Banks and Milton Bennett performed by Dave Chokroun, Rachael Wadham

Studio notes: This dance consists of one 'lead' dancer and two or more 'backup' dancers mouthing the words to a passionate song about heartbreak. This dance is very minimal and isolates movement of the mouth and facial expression. In 'Yours, for a song' the 'lead' performer expresses sadness, anger and vulnerability while the silence of the words suggests a certain isolation or voicelessness. The presence of 'backup' dancers who bring greater emphasis to the actions of the mouth become a metaphor for solidarity.

Title: River and Stone

Duration: approximately 7 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: The movement of 'River and Stone' is tense yet flowing with much of the choreography taking place in a kneeling position, indicative of humility and our gravitational attraction to the earth. This dance is based on movements that evoke a story about the futility of resisting the forces of nature. Although it appears wild and without structure, it has a musicality to it and a sensation that there is a song moving the body from the inside.

Title: Mega-dance

Duration: approximately 3 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: 'Mega-dance' features very small movements related to the movements of 'Mountains' performed in unison by a group who stand in close proximity to one another. The meaning is quite simple: there is power and beauty in small gestures and togetherness.

Title: Not the End

Duration: approximately 5 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance uses small measured movements and tense aggressive bursts of action in contrast to a repeated sequence of movement featuring a very open, confident, smooth arabesque in attitude. Head and facial gestures are featured and the dance does not travel a great deal from the small area the performer's body takes up. This dance is based on the rhythm, lyrics and feeling of *Figure of Speech*, a song by Joan Armatrading. The dance is performed in silence while the intention of the song is communicated through movement. The performance evokes feelings of despair and the strength required to overcome them.

Title: Dangerous Day

Duration: approximately 4 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance features large sweeping movement and depicts a stormy emotional landscape contrasting tentativeness and urgency.

Title: Elevation dance

Duration: approximately 6 minutes

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White

Studio notes: This dance features a series of scenarios in which one performer is elevated by the rest. The task brings a busy, awkward, scurrying energy to the dance as well as many striking images. The elevated dancer is almost entirely helpless in the hands of the group and the vulnerability of this position of status creates a captivating contrast.

Title: The Falls

Duration: approximately 90 seconds

Performers: Jennifer Aoki, Jennifer Cole, Brittany Gorman, Shannon Lee, Barbara Lindenberg, Michelle Lui, Carmen Smith-Morpurgo, Lindsey White
Music by Rachael Wadham

Studio notes: This short dance presents eight dancers in a circle facing outwards to an audience who has surrounded them. The simple sequence of movements suggests strength, vulnerability, ceremony and conclusion.

Appendix C.

Sample of Academic Writing

Perishing: repetition, representation and referencing in live performance

First version submitted: December 2/2010

For: Graduate Seminar FPA 812

Professor: Jin-Me Yoon

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Submitted by: Barbara Lindenberg

Student #: 301120899

Revisions supervised by: Robert Kitsos

Performance studies theorist Richard Schechner defines performance as 'restored behaviour' or 'behaviour twice behaved.' (Schechner 36) This simple definition points to a certain repeatability or re-iterability that is foundational to much of staged performance work, dance training and rehearsal of choreography. Historically, the repetition of specific chosen movements has been a central characteristic of formal choreography and defined it as very distinct from the more spontaneous movement expression valued by improvisational dance, for instance. Although the definition of the word 'choreography' has been challenged innumerable times over the last half century, it tends to refer to the design of a live performance and still carries with it the suggestion of repeatability. This essay uses repetition, representation and referencing as they have appeared in dance performance in order to make an inquiry into the tantalizing nature of liveness.

Repetition in dance training is designed to give *performers* facility with a repertoire of movement so as to be able to use it much like a language (Woycicki

80). In Western concert dance, repetition is also used as a choreographic device designed to enhance narrative meaning in addition to displaying the structural form in a dance work for the benefit of its *audience*. As a narrative device, repetition of a gesture or a sequence of gestures can broaden the meaning of the gesture, for example when the same movement is repeated in different contexts, or create a thematic anchor for the viewer. Repetition may also be used to present a critique of the nature of choreographic practice or to highlight unique characteristics of live performance as will be discussed in this essay.

This essay will detail the intertwining roles of transformation, memory, referencing and representation as they revolve around the use of repetition in live contemporary choreography. It will follow an associative path towards one element of my own current choreographic practice drawing important ideas and performance works into the discussion along the way. The writing draws together contemporary trends, research, and creations that push and pull at each other with relation to the proposed topics.

I will begin by discussing the works of Trisha Brown and Pina Bausch and their use of repetition of movement within choreography. From there I will discuss the repeating of entire choreographies and the significance of representation in the works of Jérôme Bel and Ame Henderson. While Brown and Bausch draw attention to the constructed nature of theme in dance making, Bel and Henderson raise questions regarding the value and possibility of an original. The notion of reproduction that comes up with the works of Bel and Henderson leads us to Philip Auslander's convictions regarding the relationship of recorded music to live music. I argue that this relationship bears relevance to current live dance performance practices that use representation and referencing of music and recording in ways that draw attention to another formal element historically associated with the live arts: disappearance. The research examines some ways in which repetition has been problematized and abstracted over the last 40 years so as to enhance or subvert formal conventions of dance creation and address the challenges of live performance today.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a time when many choreographers were interested in minimalism, American choreographers such as Trisha Brown began to challenge repetition of gesture by denying it its common use in choreographic composition as a means of generating thematic meaning. Brown, in her *Accumulation* series (1970s) uses repetition to draw attention away from meaning in the movement and instead to bring focus to the structural task of the dance and the roles of memory and transformation in live performance. She builds the dance one movement at a time, returning to the beginning after the addition of each new movement. With each repetition of the movement sequence it grows longer and with each repetition there is the potential for the movements to mutate. This dance is not *about* something other than itself and does not use repetition to push forward a narrative. In fact, simple sets of movements, repeated insistently and self-reflexively, have become a characteristic commonly associated with what is known as postmodern dance (Bottoms 421).

In contrast to Brown's aesthetic, German choreographer Pina Bausch, a pioneer of the Tanztheatre revival of the 1980s, was known for her highly theatrical choreography. The extensive use of repetition in her work is often a reinforcement of the thematic intention of any given performance. However, Ciane Fernandes discusses how her use of this compositional device extends beyond the creation of narrative or gestural language. One of her strategies has been the repetition of 'spontaneous' reactions in performance so as to reveal the premeditated nature of her (and many other) theatrical dance presentations (Fernandes 36). These 'spontaneous' reactions could be expressions of shock or a sudden burst of laughter. Fernandes writes that Bausch worked with the repeated representation of spontaneity within her dances in order to acknowledge and indicate the construction and artifice of the art form itself. Bausch also works with re-enactments, repetitions of real events in the performers' lives. In this respect her choreography presents as the "body's consciousness of its history as a symbolic and social subject in constant transformation." (Fernandes 10)

Later decades have seen the repetition of entire choreographies. Extending the examination of referencing movement within a choreography, works by artists such as Jérôme Bel and Ame Henderson explore possibilities in presenting full sequences of choreography created by other choreographers. This brings up the issue of quotation and archive. Many art forms, from writing to painting, quote other artists within works so as to reference another time, context, idea, etc.... Jérôme Bel's *The Last Performance*, further described below, took inspiration from questioning how one might quote another artist in live dance performance (Bel), what is the effect when an artist intentionally repeats another artists performance? Often in dance, repetition of past works takes on an archival role. Videos and labanotation are not commonly considered as accurate representations of a historical work. Live re-stagings tend to be attempts to faithfully revive the original with choreographic accuracy or reveal the contemporary choreographer's interpretation of the work. Henderson challenges notions of archive in her work *Relay*, also described below.

Fundamental to Bel and Henderson's work is the notion of repetition defining the temporal nature of dance performance. With live performance being historically defined by its own self-erasure, repetition of movement indicates a relationship to past and future movement. There are inherent challenges to studying an art form that is based on constant disappearance. The way in which we come to know past works is through memory and representation. In some cases, restaging of choreography is focused on reference to an original and on historical accuracy. But with each repetition, there is inevitable variation in interpretation, context, and possibly even movement vocabulary. In other words, meaning may be obscured. Matthew Reason suggests a giving in to this inevitability of difference through repetition and promotes the notion of exploring "the meaning of representations in the space that they construct for themselves" (Reason 236) as opposed to seeking truthfulness or authenticity. There are many examples of contemporary choreographers (myself included) who treat re-staging and re-constructing in this way and it becomes of great interest to note what elements of the choreography survive the transfer. What is it about the

original that is important to revisit? The choices made in reconstructive endeavors have the potential to reveal a great deal about the contemporary artist's current interests and agendas.

In *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, André Lepecki quotes Gilles Deleuze:

Does not the paradox of repetition [lie] in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces in the mind which contemplates it? By virtue of a difference, the mind draws from repetition? (2006, 61)

Rather than assuming the higher value of the original (in a more Platonic view), with imitations being secondary, Deleuze suggests greater value be assigned to imitations, pointing out the infinite possibility and inevitability of difference, thus liberating a likeness from its original.

With the creation of *The Last Performance* (1998), Jérôme Bel asks how it is that we might address quotation, imitation, and likeness in live performance. The performance begins with the entrance of a performer who introduces himself as Jérôme Bel. Jérôme Bel then enters dressed in tennis clothes and introduces himself as André Agassiz. Yet another performer enters and introduces himself as Hamlet thus setting the stage for Bel's question of Being. While 'Hamlet' is asking "To be or not to be," the actors are performing what Richard Schechner calls the "not me-not not me" (127). The actors in character are not themselves, but at the same time, not not themselves since they are performing. Bel references the abstract concept of Being by creating a situation in which the 'not me' and the 'not not me' are simultaneously revealed.

These actions set the stage for a section of the piece in which four dancers enter, introduce themselves as Susanne Linke and perform the same four-minute dance, choreographed by Linke, one after the other. As opposed to using the repetition of a gesture, Bel is using the repetition of a sequence of choreography that he himself did not create. In fact, he is representing a

representation of an original live performance, in that the dance was reconstructed through the use of video documentation (Bel).

The trajectory of Bel's *The Last Performance* sets up the question: are there any true originals or are there nothing but originals? The implication is that no subject exists in isolation of others. Bel refuses closed identity or the concept of a single subject that is in isolation of others (Lepecki 2006, 50). He uses the discipline of choreography to expose Deleuze & Guattari's assertion that we set up a "false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are" (Lepecki 2006, 49). In other words, simply being who we are involves imitation in some way. In his critique of representation, Bel is participating in a broader project of representation, which fractures modernity's faith in the 'real' (Lepecki 2006, 45). This faith is what Deleuze is trying to break in his view of imitations being their own originals rather than the idea that there is one true original, known as the 'real', and imitations are regarded as fakes, forgeries, not real.

In relationship with Bel's work, Toronto-based choreographer Ame Henderson also uses repetition of choreography in *Relay* (2010). This piece demonstrates the notion of archive as lived memory. In *Relay*, she asks a group of dancers to perform dances that they have performed in the past while working with other choreographers; in other words, movement sequences that Henderson herself has not created. The dancers demonstrate the inherent challenges of 'accuracy' in archiving as they each display their own individual approach to the material (Henderson). Although this work is entirely based on repetition, representation and referencing, it serves to expose the inherent contradiction in the repetition of behaviour. The contradiction here is that it is through repetition of the same that we are able to view difference.

In discussing his work with Jonathan Burrows, Jérôme Bel comments that he "wants people to be able to 'tell dance', to recall specific onstage events and to describe them in a way that the non-dancer can then picture as well." (Abrams 44) This brings yet another level of interpretation and representation to work that

is already in itself representative. “Any act of representation is intended to invoke an image, impression or sensation of something that is absent. In doing so it involves active choice, the execution of selection and omission, and the conscious use of technique.” (Reason 233) Each act of representation changes and mutates the previous. It is precisely this ‘broken telephone’ trickle down effect that Henderson’s work seeks to exploit in *Relay*.

Insistent repetition, whether it is the repetition of a gesture or the repetition of an entire choreography, takes the viewer through a temporal experience during which multiple readings of a movement or series of movements (i.e. choreography) are exposed. In allowing time to experience and re-experience a movement, viewers are given the opportunity to reflect on possible formal, thematic and personal interpretations. How might one generate familiarity with and observe transformation in live performance, which is, in the vast majority, viewed but once? This brings up the problem of communicating meaning as well as the issue of quoting or referencing live performance from a body of work that is largely unknown to the general public. While commercial choreography, such as Beyoncé Knowles’s *All the single ladies* dance routine, might enjoy a fair bit of recognition, there are relatively few people involved in the recognition and transformation of the living archive of contemporary dance art. Over the last decade or so, many contemporary choreographers and performers, from a variety of approaches, have been investigating the potential in referencing recorded art forms, forms that allow for greater familiarity through repetition.

According to performance theorist Peggy Phelan, live performance’s most unique feature is disappearance. This feature affords it a status, which she discusses at length in *Unmarked, The politics of performance*. She states:

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. (146)

The notion of disappearance may be seen as a tool for romanticizing the art form. However, I wish to continue discussion of the ways in which live performance transfers sensory information into the accumulation of memory.

Though disappearance makes it difficult to access live performance works of the past, it may be perceived as a medium that escapes commodification, which appeals to many artists. "Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital" (Phelan 148), a notion that is challenged by Philip Auslander in his seminal work, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*.

Auslander describes mediatized performances such as interactive web art, television broadcasts, and musical recordings that have historically become more and more like live performance so as to replicate and replace it. He is using the term 'mediatized performance' to indicate forms that use technologies of reproduction such as audio or visual recording (4). Now, in many cases, live performance mimics mediatized or recorded performance (24) as with music concerts. Under such conditions, what is the value of live performance? Auslander argues that liveness is losing its independent cultural value and that recordings are what bring value to live events rather than vice versa. He discusses the "position of live performance in a culture for which mediatization is a vehicle for the general code in a way that live performance is not (or is no longer)" (5) since most of the qualities of live performance - spontaneity, community, presence, feedback between performers and audience - are not unique to live performance (63) but are also available in mediatized presentations. Perhaps, since each media is simply a re-mediating of other media (Auslander 6), mediatization is simply a make-work project with the goal of replicating live communication and interaction.

In contrast to the popular notion that performance is a site of resistance because it cannot be owned (assuming the memory is not considered a valid domain of ownership), Auslander argues that recorded forms hold the power to

give live performance value. A live event in relation to its recording provides its own type of proximity (40). For example, attending Woodstock.

might have meant spending three days hungry, sick, covered with mud and unable to hear any music whatsoever... None of this matters, however; merely being able say you were there, live, translates into symbolic capital in the appropriate cultural context. (Auslander 67)

The position of performance within the cultural economy enables us to attach symbolic capital to physical presence at a live event regardless of the quality of the event (Auslander 67). Thus, Auslander contradicts Phelan's claims by which live performance manages to "sidestep the economy of repetition" (Auslander 44). He makes the claim that with the predominance of recording, performances have become commodified (45) through the cache of having been there.

If live performance is given its status by familiarity with the recording, live concerts may become simulations of recordings - for example, where singers pre-record concerts and lip-synch to the audience - to fulfill the expectations of an audience that attaches currency to the authenticity of the recorded version, the one with which they have familiarity through repetition, the one that does not, in effect, disappear. Auslander's examples revolve around a music performance paradigm, however, a number of contemporary dance artists have been examining the parallels and intersections that exist between recorded and live performance in dance and music.

One of my current choreographic works highlights the interface of live and recorded performance. Repetition and representation in live performance have been done, and done again, and done again. Both of these exhausted devices of performance provide the backdrop for some of my own work, work which has moved towards an abstraction of representation, following an interdisciplinary perspective by referencing of another form. In the repetition of movement, we see that presence is always haunted by absence (Lepecki 2004, 128), always

referencing a moment in the past or future. My own work manifests this haunting sensation through the use of 'trace.' In the Derridean sense, "the trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself." (Derrida 403)

Some of my dances apply this concept through the representation of a minimal element of an absent signifier. For example, in *Yours for a song*, dancers 'lip-synch' the words to a song that is **not** being played. They are performing along with a recording that is absent. This creates an opportunity to recognize the nature of live performance's self-erasure by exploiting a form that is recorded and more directly repeatable. This choreographic device not only creates an unusual, comical, and slightly disturbing image, it makes visible that which is invisible. It gives physicality to the shared memory of a song while also addressing themes of voicelessness and the power of simple gesture.

Current trends in contemporary dance practices have led to new possibilities for the interaction of dance with music, particularly through the use of popular songs. Jerome Bel's popular *The show must go on* (2001) uses popular music in a performance with nineteen dancers to reveal cliché and awaken our associations to pop culture references. Ame Henderson's *dance/songs* (2007) aims to express the essence of 'rock concert' in a choreographic environment.

Both *Concerto* (Ivo Dimchev 2008) and Aimée Dawn Robinson's series, *motherdrift dances to the songs in her head* (2003-present), present the activity of songs taking up residence in the body. In the case of Dimchev, traces of songs are revealed through virtuosic vocalization of lyrics and melodies emerging within an improvised performance. With Robinson, we interpret traces of song through the suggestion of its presence in the title (program notes always reveal the song chosen for the performance) while she dedicates her improvisation to the memory of a song and its affect on movement. Though referencing song, neither Robinson nor Dimchev is producing a physicalized *interpretation* of music. Their

projects engage with the body and memory through music as an absent presence.

In performances of the *motherdrift dances to the songs in her head* series, improvisations performed in silence, it is as though Robinson is enacting what Phelan sums up as the constant indication of past and future in live performance, which “rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered.” (147) In referencing song through its absence in performance Robinson draws attention to the nature of disappearance, the nature of transfer of information from event to memory of the event. It highlights the question, ‘What is the value of this so-called disappearance?’ Perhaps the value lies in the fact that through disappearance the ways in which we imprint experiences are revealed. Through perishing, memory is privileged.

With representation and repetition having become well-worn tropes, a current strategy of some choreographers is to abstract representation in the ways described above (and many more). The use of recording as a representational template highlights the nature of live communication and its disappearing acts (both through its ontological self-erasure and its diminished profile on the artistic landscape) by referencing a form that does not require liveness.

Returning to *Yours, for a song* (Lindenberg), rather than presenting a recording, the dance uses traces of recording - mouthing of lyrics performed with only the bass part of the song - in order to draw attention to the absence of recording and presence of ‘liveness’.

Derrida’s critique of presence implies that any signifying element (in a dance, in a text) is always already inhabited by and referring to another set of references, traces of traces of traces, in an endless play of *différance*. (Lepecki 2004, 134)

The interactions of presence and trace became one of many areas of focus in my recent choreographic research. The work (with *Yours, for a song* as but one example) investigates the potential in presenting works whose

construction and deconstruction of song and song structure draws attention to gesture, expression and transformation. In a sense I have been creating 'albums' of works which audiences are able to access through live events, rather than recordings, and whose content will inevitably shift through repeated performance. With each performance serving as an archive, it is possible for audiences to gain familiarity with and assign meaning to works that are shifting through repetition. In addition to the body presenting itself as social subject engaged in ongoing transformation, as Fernandes comments on Bausch's work (10), this ongoing series of presentations proposes the *art work* as social (and symbolic) subject in constant transformation.

As Philip Auslander has argued, mediatized art forms often replicate the spontaneity and sense of community that live performance claims as unique features. He states that although live performance awakens our desire for community it also frustrates that desire by creating a gap between performer and audience (66). In relation to this perceived gap, many theatre and visual artists over the last two decades have developed work that blurs the line between audience and performer. However, I would argue that this frustration of desire, this longing, is a unique and desirable feature of live performance. It addresses our desire for desire, our longing for longing.

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Appendix D.

DVD contents

The DVD, attached, forms a part of this work. It is the video document of the performance, *A Thousand Mountains*, given at The Wise Hall on August 22, 2011. The total duration is 62 minutes. The dances presented at this event are listed below in the order in which they appear on the video.

Mountains

Speaking with Spirits

Ghosts

Away

Trust

New Excitement Part I

Dreamin'

New Excitement Part II

Untitled dance

New Sadness

Yours, for a song

River and Stone

Mega-dance

Not the End

Dangerous Day

Elevation dance

The Falls

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