

**Moving Publics:
Site-Based Dance and Urban Spatial Politics**

by

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Abstract

Moving Publics develops a set of strategies for analyzing how professional site-based dances refunction and reframe the public spaces in which they are set. Using a site-specific methodology, I focus on five case studies in Vancouver (Canada) to advance a theory about the reciprocal relationship between ground and movement—a notion of “choreographic topographies” that is sensitive to the socially and politically inscribed grooves that constitute a given dance’s local emplacement. I examine an archival dance, an “urban proscenium” dance, a vertical dance, a danced walking tour, and a tactile dance to analyze how different forms of site-based dance hail audiences in their bids for curbside attention. These performances, I argue, contain important information about the relationship between a temporary public and the address (in the dual sense of salutation and location) around which that public coheres. I contend that choreographic explorations of public places bring us together to move, or in stillness to watch, in ways that challenge our atomized movement through city spaces. In doing so, these dance-based practices pose questions of aesthetics, use, access, exclusion, density, and mobility in resolutely physical terms.

Framed by kinaesthetic concepts (arriving, gathering, following, turning, lifting, passing, and adjusting), *Moving Publics* proposes a model of choreographic thinking that takes movement as a critical lens as well as an object of study. Extending outward from my study of the choreographic object, I bring a movement interpreter’s attention to the physical arrangements of audiencing bodies in and around the dances I study. I analyze the consequences of coding as theatrical both the publics and the public spaces in which these dances are set, and I examine what dance—a form that regularly relies on directed, delegated, and aesthetic labour in the context of collaborative co-presence—can expose about how we move in and through our cities, with and past one another. The dances I study foreground how the city (a built, legislated, lived, and perpetually unsettled structure) orchestrates a set of quiet choreographies of the everyday even as they reimagine a “relational kinaesthetics” at the threshold of vicariousness.

Keywords: site-based dance; temporary publics; relational kinaesthetics; choreographic topographies; audiencing bodies; urban proscenium

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Introduction.

Appearing

[T]he process of creating political interference calls forth a perceptive and responsive physicality that, everywhere along the way, deciphers the social and then choreographs an imagined alternative. As they fathom injustice, organize to protest, craft a tactics, and engage in action, these bodies read what is happening and articulate their imaginative rebuttal. ~ Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies" 412.

Adbusters, a Vancouver-based culture-jamming media organization, generated numerous provocative posters to act as rallying cries for the initial Occupy Wall Street protest in September of 2011; but one had particular force. Known as "The Ballerina and the Bull," the image features a female dancer perched atop Arturo Di Modica's *Charging Bull* in a delicate *attitude*. From the bull's aggressive charge forward toward the viewer, to the encroaching line of gas-masked protestors advancing from the hazy distance, to the dancer teetering in a precarious balance, the image gestures toward itself as momentarily arrested movement. Poised at the brink of an onslaught—the bull's and the crowd's respective advances, the ballerina's inevitable descent—the image teems with promised action.



Figure 1.1. “The Ballerina and the Bull,” image from *Adbusters* 97 (Sept/Oct 2011); rpt. in *The Tyee* (7 October 2011, web, 10 January 2016).

Note. The *Adbusters* poster promoting the initial Occupy Wall Street protest on September 17, 2011.

That the ballerina dances on a public sculpture does more than set up my examination of site-based dance within the context of a long tradition of public art: the image and its circulation also index the complex locational quality of site. Indeed, Di Modica’s bull has a curiously sited history of its own. In response to the 1987 stock market crash, Di Modica created this 3200-kilogram bronze bull sculpture in December of 1989 to symbolize an aggressive determination toward economic growth. In an act of

guerrilla art, Di Modica installed the sculpture without city permission directly in front of the New York Stock Exchange. The subsequent police seizure and removal of what is often referred to as the “Wall Street Bull” provoked such a clamorous public outcry that the bull was ultimately reinstated in Bowling Green plaza, just south of the Exchange, where it has captured public imagination and become one of New York’s most iconic symbols. Although it was evicted from Wall Street, “The Wall Street Bull” managed—as its moniker indicates—to take an echo of its original emplacement along with it. Likewise, this dissertation has thus far performed a spatial slippage: in an effort to trace the component parts of the *Adbusters* poster, I have travelled (in the space of an *attitude*) from Vancouver to New York, and from New York outward to any number of the hundreds of global Occupy encampments that were spurred by these first Occupy events. This dynamic exchange between the global and the local—it was, after all, a Vancouver-based culture jamming organization that sparked the global Occupy movement—sets up a larger contention that underpins my methodological approach: a local, site-based study of Vancouver dance is entangled with movement practices *in* and *of* publics more widely conceived.

Before “The Ballerina and the Bull” was published as a centrefold in *Adbusters*, and before the physical poster was plastered around New York to promote Occupy, the magazine’s creative team forayed into virtual, online public spaces to compile the image.¹ *Adbusters* editor, Kalle Lasn, describes the process: the creative team was instructed to seek out an image of “a generic ballerina on the internet” that could be digitally positioned on top of Di Modica’s bull (Telephone interview). This careless internet image-grab and Photoshop cut-and-paste job took the dancer, Rachel Cossar—who, as it turns out, is a Canadian living and dancing in Boston—by such surprise that she threatened legal action.² “The Ballerina and the Bull,” then, also sets up the uniquely

¹ As Berry et al. (2012) and others demonstrate, virtual space is also an important and contested form of public space, one that is beyond the scope of this project.

² Cossar was dancing with Boston Ballet when her image was famously Photoshopped on top of Di Modica’s bull. In return for a quiet resolution to the threatened legal action, the magazine promised not to print the image again or to sell it for reprinting. Of course, in an age of digital dissemination, this has not stopped the circulation of the image. (The image appears here by way of Canadian Fair dealing policies.) *Adbusters* also printed a brief apology to Cossar in their January/February 2012 issue, buried deep in the magazine and easy to miss.

complex relationship of the dancing body as both object (the “generic ballerina”) and subject (outraged individual) in ever-expanding understandings of public space. Moreover, for Cossar’s image to hover upon this particular guerrilla sculpture in promotion of an illegal, embodied protest is to ground the dancing body in relation to political and economic issues of the day even as it also foregrounds the practice of aesthetic and ad hoc claiming of public spaces, as well as the regulation of those same public spaces.

Drawing its power from the juxtaposition of the dancer against her improbable dancing surface and encroaching background, the image, like the event it promotes, points to a central concern of this dissertation. That is, the image instructs its viewers to attend to the centrality of site in constructing the meaning of movement. Nothing about the dancer’s movement is particularly revolutionary—indeed, ballet’s intricate complicity with social, financial, raced, and gendered hierarchies has been well studied by dance scholars.³ It is the setting that tips the image into the domain of the political. Characterized by an impossible balance of juxtapositions, the dancer exists in opposition to the bull: he charges forward while she is still; he is heavy while she is impossibly light in her extension upward; his body is brawny while she is slight; he is aggressive while she is serene; his weight is on his left side, hers on her right; his front-body is closed while hers—with externally rotated legs, a long neck, open chest—is exposed. She seems waifish and fragile, and yet she not only rides the bull, but she does so without a saddle, without a bull-rope.⁴ On one foot and on a precarious (and barefoot) demi-pointe, she dominates the bull with seeming ease and grace.

Even as the image relies upon a series of stale social expectations that come together in the form of the thin, apparently white, and classically beautiful woman who is the centre of the viewer’s gaze—Lasn’s “generic ballerina”—“The Ballerina and the Bull”

³ For more on the social dynamics of ballet, see Susan Leigh Foster’s “The Ballerina’s Phallic Pointe,” in her *Corporealities* (2005); Sally Banes’ *Dancing Women* (1998); and Elizabeth Dempster’s “Women Writing the Body,” in Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy’s *Bodies of the Text* (1995).

⁴ The use of Di Modica’s *Charging Bull* as a surface for dance was explored further when, in the summer of 2012, the Occupy Cinema Collective projected video footage of Anna Pavlova’s “The Dying Swan” onto the statue.

is also credited with catalyzing a social movement. As such, the force of the image calls into focus the capacity of public art and the dancing body to intervene in the public sphere socially, economically, and politically—either in support of the status-quo (as with Di Modica’s original sculpture, which throws its force behind aggressive capitalism and the “1%”), or in resistance to the status-quo (as with the ballerina’s balance which, in its apparent precarity, calls for the “99%” to join in a similarly audacious public occupation).⁵ The poster collapses together public art, dance, and social change.⁶ Implicitly, the image raises questions of race and class privilege, the social force of place-making and place-taking, gender expectations, and a certain bare-foot-on-cold-copper brand of precarious bodily vulnerability. And, most crucially for the purposes of my project, the efficacy of the poster in catching attention and bringing bodies together in the initial stages of the Occupy Wall Street movement foregrounds the capacity of the dancing body to gather what Randy Martin calls “the concrete labor of participation” (*Critical* 3). This participatory labour is always, necessarily, made manifest at the scale of the local; and yet—as I hope my analysis of “The Ballerina and the Bull” has illustrated—it also has the potential to extend outward with influential global resonances.

My goal, in what follows, is not to perform a choreographic reading of different protest and social movements as danced events, for in Foster’s words “that would radically decontextualize their motivation and intent” (“Choreographies” 396). Rather, *Moving Publics* offers a close consideration of dances choreographed for and sited in public places—contemporary site-based dances with roots in the Western stage tradition—in an effort to supplement an understanding of the reciprocal relationships

⁵ For more on the link between dance, play, and protest, see Benjamin Heim Shepard’s *Play, Creativity, and Social Movements: If I Can’t Dance, It’s Not My Revolution* (2011).

⁶ “The Ballerina and the Bull” poster is only one manifestation of the restless choreography embedded in the Occupy movement. Numerous flash mobs were nested within various Occupy encampments. Choreography was used as “a surprise tactic” in the “One People” dance-based flash mob in the Occupy Oakland encampment (Abileah); here an upbeat, unison contemporary jazz routine follows a collective “die-in”—another choreographic protest form pioneered by ACT-UP in its responses to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s (see Foster, “Choreographies”). More deeply integrated into the structure of Occupy is the choreography evidenced in the collectively adopted modes of communication that enabled discussion and debate within the encampments. Hand signals were ubiquitous in various encampments, including, among other gestures, a physical quotation of “jazz hands”—raising both hands and wiggling fingers upward—to indicate agreement (and downward to indicate disagreement).

between bodies, movements, and public spaces. What does it mean to appear, bodily, in urban space? To show up together? To be called together? To be still together? To move together? To *be moved* together? These questions are at the heart of the site-based dances I examine in this dissertation, all of which attend—with sometimes greater, sometimes lesser degrees of choreographed knowingness—to a local politics of place specific to Vancouver. But these same questions also underpin the renewed attention to the body in recent social theory produced in the wake of global protest movements from the Arab Spring to Occupy. It is the relational and kinaesthetic interface between these two ways of organizing and mobilizing bodies in urban spaces that I seek to tease out in what follows.

“The Politics of the Public Body”

Although she was critiqued early in her career for absencing the physical body from her theory of gender performativity, Judith Butler—who was at the leading edge of the poststructuralist turn to performance with her foundational study of the performativity of gender—has fixed her attention squarely on the physical body in recent years.⁷ The inherent injurability of the body, Butler argues in her post-9/11 works, renders us all subject to a shared vulnerability. This “precariousness” casts us together in a network of relationships of interdependence with and exposure to one another. Despite her emphasis on the injurability of the physical body, Butler’s theory does not restrict the possibility of relating to physical co-presence. Rather, calling up the ethico-political ramifications of not being able to relate to others over distance and through absence, Butler insists on the importance of developing an ability to relate to those with whom we do not share a common cultural background, political ideology, or geographical ground. She insists that “we are constituted in relationality: implicated, beholden, derived, sustained by a social world that is beyond us and before us” (*Giving An Account* 64). For Butler, relationality is an ontological condition (Lloyd 92); it extends through both time and space and ultimately determines the social context and the set of social norms in

⁷ For a dance studies analysis of Butler’s diminishing of the role of the body and the gestural in her theory of performativity, see Foster’s 2002 essay “Walking and Other Choreographic Tactics” (137-38).

which we find ourselves and by which we attempt to define ourselves. Butler establishes a theoretical framework for—and makes a case for the urgency of—a global sense of interconnectedness and ethical responsibility that is at once grounded in the body and also circulates between bodies.⁸ An effort to think the body both positively and negatively—simultaneously corporeal and between, emplaced and enmeshed—also characterizes my project.

Beyond her theoretical account of how the mutual vulnerability of our bodies enmeshes us, Butler also posits another dimension of our reciprocal contingency. Because “[t]he body is constituted through perspectives it cannot inhabit,” the body is fundamentally discontinuous with itself (“Bodies” n. pag.). Butler elaborates:

[W]ho we are, bodily, is already a way of being “for” the other, appearing in ways that we cannot see, being a body for another in a way that I cannot be for myself, and so dispossessed, perspectively, by our very sociality. I must appear to others in ways for which I cannot give an account, and in this way my body establishes a perspective that I cannot inhabit. This is an important point because it is not the case that the body only establishes my own perspective; it is also that which displaces that perspective, and makes that displacement into a necessity. (“Bodies”)

When we appear in public, Butler maintains, it is “over there, between us, in a space that exists only because we are more than one, more than two, plural and embodied” (“Bodies”). Our bodies exist beyond our own visceral experiences and self-understanding. Not simply present or singular, we are always also constituted from outside ourselves; even as our bodies are radically intimate and hyper-local, our bodies always also occupy multiple simultaneous elsewheres: “The body, defined politically, is precisely organized by a perspective that is not one’s own and is, in that sense, already elsewhere, for another, and so in departure from oneself” (“Bodies”). In many ways, then, the body exceeds the fleshy boundaries of skin and self.

Taking seriously her academic attention to the physical body, Butler’s response to the Occupy movement has been impassioned and direct. As the movement took root

⁸ See Jodi Dean’s “Change of Address” (2008) for a critique of Butler’s ethic of mutual responsibility as a failure to indict.

in the fall of 2011, Butler got out into the streets and showed up at multiple Occupy encampments in New York City. Situating herself within the “99%,” Butler shifts the terms of shared bodily vulnerability from a focus on the possibility of acute injurability to the ongoing maintenance needs of all human bodies—needs that are met or unmet by (and here is the link to Occupy) distinctly economic forces.⁹ At the Washington Square Park encampment, and with the echoed amplification of “the human microphone,” Butler mounted the idea of a “politics of the public body” (“Judith” n. pag.).¹⁰ Captured on a shaky hand-held recording device, and against the backdrop of a grey sky, Butler stumbles over the mechanics of the human microphone only a few times as she “lend[s] her support” to the movement. “It matters,” she says (“It matters,” the crowd intones): “It matters that as bodies we arrive together in public. As bodies we suffer; we require food and shelter; and as bodies we require one another in dependency and desire. So this is a politics of the public body—the requirements of the body, its movements and its voice” (“Judith”).¹¹ For Butler, sustained physical presence in public is vital to the political charge of Occupy: part of the politics of the movement is its insistence on simply showing up together in public spaces and putting bodily needs (like eating, sleeping, urinating, and so on) on display.¹² Butler insists: “In order to understand the power and effect of public demonstrations for our time, we will need to understand the bodily dimensions of action, what the body requires, and what the body can do, especially

⁹ That Butler has failed, by her own admission, to offer a detailed “critique of the market economy” (qtd. in Ford 2) makes her involvement in the Occupy movement—an economically driven uprising—somewhat fraught. Indeed, Butler has explicitly distanced herself from economics, claiming: “I am emphatically not in this field at all, wandering as I do between literary theory, philosophy, and social theory” (“Performative Agency” 148). And yet, in the same essay she also applies her theory of performativity to the market economy, insisting that “a conceptual distinction *has been made* between the economic and the social,” one that is repeatedly and “performatively produced through a process of selection, elision, and exclusion” (149, emphasis in original).

¹⁰ The human microphone, or the people’s microphone, is a human-powered approach to amplifying the voice of a single speaker in a large crowd. In unison, the crowd echoes each of the solo speaker’s sentences (which are delivered in short, partial segments); as such, the crowd effectively boosts the sound without the use of electronic amplification equipment. For a performance studies reading of the human microphone, see Hoday King’s “Antiphon: Notes on the People’s Microphone,” in the *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (2012); and Ben Lerner’s “A Note on the Human Microphone,” in *Critical Quarterly* (2012).

¹¹ For more on the emerging role of YouTube files in academic research, see Snickars et al. (2009) and Strangelove (2010).

¹² Butler has very recently developed the lecture I cite here into a book-length project, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015).

when we must think about bodies together, what holds them there, their conditions of persistence and of power” (“Bodies” n. pag.). Through its unabashed physicalization of *bodies together*, Occupy, Butler argues, renders the body, with its social, ethical, political and economic ties, an urgent matter for public attention. Supplementing her consideration of what the body needs, Butler also calls for a more urgent, creative, and serious consideration of “what the body can do” than has yet been undertaken (“Bodies”).

Taking up Butler’s charge, I turn to dance studies—a discipline fixated on the body, and one that continually tests the limits of “what the body can do.” It is significant that Butler echoes, nearly verbatim, the imperative of dance theorist André Lepecki, who asks the “political, ontological, physiological, and ethical question ...: what can a body do?” (*Exhausting* 6). Lepecki is not alone amongst dance scholars in his ask; indeed, dance scholars (and makers) have long been “preoccupied” with this question. After all, the bodily dimensions of action, *what the body can do*, and how bodies come together is the stuff of dance.¹³ In her contribution to *Dance Research Journal’s* curated roundtable, “Dialogues: The State of the Body,” Barbara Browning also airs the question—a question, she goes on to observe, that “somebody like Judith Butler will take up in very interesting ways” (82). Rubbing up against the same theoretical concerns about the capacity of the body to *do* that Butler examines, Browning then turns to Randy Martin: “Thinking about what a body can do in relation to dance studies, I would invoke Randy [Martin]’s way of talking about mobilization to think about how a body moves through the world” (83). Following up on this suggestion, Browning insists that dance is “ultimately about thinking about our performative capacities, our ability not just to configure social relations but also to change them” (83). What the body can do *choreographically* is

¹³ In posing the question of “What the body can do,” Butler and Lepecki are consciously echoing Gilles Deleuze, who is himself taking up the call from Baruch Spinoza. See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (217-18). More recently, performance studies scholar Ben Spatz’s *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (2015) makes a case—borrowing extensively from dance—for understanding all forms of embodied technique (from dance and acting to yoga and physical culture to practices of everyday life, including techniques of gender) as knowledge that structures practice, including the practice of politics and ideology. Spatz quotes extensively from Butler (including on Deleuze) in his fourth chapter.

related, Lepecki and Browning insist, to what the body can do in a larger “political, ontological, physiological and ethical” sense.

In my consideration of the political, ethical and social force of the dancing body, I follow Browning in her turn to Martin and his extensive consideration of the relationship between choreographic movement and political movements. Over twenty years ago in his *Performance As Political Act: The Embodied Self* (1990)—published the same year as Butler’s *Gender Trouble*—Martin made a provocative claim about the state of the body in critical theory. “Theory,” Martin asserted, “has lagged behind practice so far as the body is concerned. The body has been incompletely conceived or left outside of theory all together” (12). While Martin acknowledges considerations of the body by some of critical theory’s most influential thinkers, he maintains that rigorous examinations of the body are out of step with creative practice. Although much theoretical work treating the body erupted in the span between *Performance as Political Act* and Martin’s follow-up book, *Critical Moves*—indeed, attesting to the critical activity on issues of the body, dance and movement philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone introduced the concept of the “corporeal turn” in 1990—Martin still finds the state of the body in social theory lacking in 1998.¹⁴ He foregrounds his conviction that the ways that the dancing body is worked, directed, considered and choreographed are the ingredients for the action required of social movements. For Martin, “[d]ance has much to offer this problem of theorizing participation and mobilization” and, as such, “[a] critical reflection on dance can help promote fluency in the language of mobilization that political theory makes reference to but barely speaks” (4). A closer examination of what moves dancing bodies might, Martin suggests, “help to move certain clots and blockages in our entire epistemological enterprise” (24). Martin frames dance as “a social process that foregrounds the very means through which bodies gather. Through dance, the means and ends of mobilization are joined together and made available to performers and their publics” (6). Dance, Martin argues, is a social process that self-reflexively hinges on the coming together of bodies—to rehearse, to perform, and to watch.

¹⁴ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone first used the term “the corporeal turn” in *The Roots of Thinking* (1990). In her edited edition *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (2009), she redeploys the term within the context of multiple explorations of the body.

In the summer of 2010, Martin acknowledged Butler's efforts to examine a theoretically complex body. In the same *DRJ* roundtable to which Browning contributed, Martin first (briefly) traces the trajectory of the "riot of embodiment" (78)—where the refusal, via poststructuralist, postcolonial, feminist and queer theory, to take the body as a given or a universal entity comes into tension with a somatic insistence that the body is not wholly socially inscribed either. Having identified that "part of what is erupting now is precisely that facile difference between an essential, naturalized, stable body and a purely constructed one" (79), Martin invokes Butler: "I think that Judith Butler's work and the whole arena of poststructuralism is asking, *What is the body that emerges when one no longer takes for granted the boundary between that which is given in nature and that which is made up in social or human domain?*" (79, emphasis in original). Butler's recent grounding of her early discourse-based model of the body in the ontological physical givenness of the vulnerable body plays at precisely the boundary that Martin identifies, a boundary that, I argue, site-based dance is particularly well suited to navigate.

Site-based dance performs Butler's insistence that "[t]he body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life" (*Precarious* 26). This division inherent to the constitution of the body—that is, from both inside and outside the body, at once—has preoccupied dance theorists since the emergence of the field: the private subjectivity of the dancing body is always set against and within the body's public display as a moving art object. "[V]isceral matter as well as sociopolitical agent, discontinuous with itself, moving in the folds of time, dissident of time," the dancing body, Lepecki argues, "manifests its agency through the many ways it eventually smuggles its materiality into a charged presence that defies subjection" (6). It is this set of dialectics—between inside and outside, between subject and object, between self and other—that dance, particularly dance sited in public spaces, is so well poised to explore. By bringing dance studies' considerations of the body to bear on current discussions of the role of the body in politics, and on discourses of publics and public spaces that all too often take the body as a metaphor, I hope to call attention to the social, spatial, and political implications of bodies coming together and moving apart in public spaces.

On Moving Publics

Throughout *Moving Publics*, I examine site-based dance—that is, dance created and performed in, or in response to, a site other than the presumed neutrality of the theatre or studio—in an effort to untangle some of the social, political, and philosophical issues that constitute appearing in public. As yet under-theorized, there has been “a certain hesitancy in the dance world about where site-specific dance should fall. Should it be classified as a genre in its own right, a minor branch of the dance history tree, or a mere fad? If it is a genre, does it link more closely to site-specific theatre and visual art or to postmodern dance?” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 16). Following Victoria Hunter, I define site-based dance as a form “wide-ranging and varied in terms of its aims, location and focus, from the rural to the urban, the political to the spectacle,” but one which can be conceptually consolidated around its process: that is, as “dance performance created and performed in response to a specific site or location” (1). Rather than “site-specific,” I use “site-based dance” or “site dance” as umbrella terms for a spectrum of site-responsive practices. These practices include, in prominent US choreographer Stephan Koplowitz’s terms: site-specific, site-adaptive, studio-site, and general “reframing” works—performances sited “outside of conventional platforms,” like outdoor concerts or festivals (73). As Fiona Wilkie notes, an impulse dominant in the early discourse on site-based performance to categorize a given performance’s precise relationship to site in these or other terms has abated as the conversation has matured.¹⁵ “Site-specific” and “site-based” are contested terms: as performance scholars have compellingly argued, to suggest that a conventional theatre space is without its own situational context is to overlook the myriad ways in which the geographical, architectural, social, and historical specificities of each theatre determines the material details and audience reception of the performances it hosts. These spaces of conventional theatre are, themselves,

¹⁵ In her ambitious effort to survey the field of British site-specific theatre practice, “Mapping the Terrain” (2002), Wilkie publishes British scholar-practitioner Stephen Hodge’s continuum of site relations, which ranges from “In theatre building” to “Outside theatre” to “Site-sympathetic” to “Site-generic” (works created for a certain type of off-stage site) to “Site-specific” works (150). In Hunter’s anthology, Wilkie addresses Hodge’s continuum, which apparently spurred much debate upon its publication: “My feeling is that practitioners are now far less concerned with labelling the work and with issues of ‘purity’ of site-specific performance than they were a decade ago” (41).

radically specific sites which shape the creation, performance, and reception of a given work in particular ways.¹⁶ Although I agree that this is a crucial qualification, I engage with the literature and the terminology of site-based dance here in an effort to examine the particular social and spatial functions of works sited outside of theatre buildings. It is the public placement of choreography, I argue, that generates the unique potential of site-based dance to gather together accidental and incidental audiences “to explore space, place and environment through corporeal means” (Hunter 2). Site-based dance’s efforts to capture passersby and transform them into aesthetic publics affects the set social and spatial politics I seek to examine in *Moving Publics*.

I intervene in dance studies discourses by extending my attention beyond the choreographic object to study how a given dance and its physical site co-choreograph audiences. The limited critical attention that site-based dance has received tends to ignore the contextual and ideological complexities of site in favour of the form and content of the dance. In contrast, I attend to the shape, feel, and use of the built structures that constitute the spaces I study—all of them urban spaces in Vancouver, British Columbia—and that constitute, in turn, the various possibilities for movement, engagement, and entanglement within those specific spaces. I also examine how dances situated in urban, public spaces reshape the spaces in which they are set. These dances hail and thereby bring into being what Jill Dolan has called “temporary publics” (11). Extending outward from my study of the choreographic object, I bring a movement interpreter’s attention to the physical arrangements of what I call *audiencing bodies* in and around the dances I study; that is, I attend to the embodied organization of the intentional and accidental audiences of site-based dance as they are physically directed and moved in the act of witnessing these dances. In *Moving Publics*, I argue that site-based dance functions as both an artistic practice and a mode of critique that analyzes and reorients how bodies are organized, gathered, and moved through urban environments. Building on a rich body of urban theory that situates the moving body in

¹⁶ For more on the theatre as a site-specific entity, see Susan Bennett’s recent research on entertainment districts (“Theatre/Tourism”), Peggy Phelan’s analysis of the shifting sites of the Globe Theatre (2007), and Michael McKinnie’s analysis of theatre buildings in Toronto (2007), among other works. See also Biba Bell’s recent research on the studio as a site structured by material and ideological particularities (2015).

public spaces, I argue that site-based dances situated in city spaces expose and challenge a set of *urban choreographies*—movement imperatives built into the architecture, regulatory practices, and social fabric of the city.¹⁷

This is a project, then, preoccupied with the social function of the choreographic in public spaces. Attuned to the multiple valences of the word *moving* (as well as the work this word has performed within dance studies), my title plays with the folding together of the kinaesthetic and the affective, moving and being moved. Curious also about the slippage between multiple resonances of *publics* (that is, as physical spaces and as peopled groups), my project—like my title—seeks to explore how physical spaces and the publics that appear within them are reciprocally interconnected. But I hope my title does more, too. I hope the directive quality of “Moving Publics” sets up my examination of the power dynamics intrinsic to the project of choreography, be they legislative, architectural, or artistic. In my application of a dance studies lens to the question of movement in and through public spaces, I examine what is at stake in determining or structuring the movement of another.

Emphasizing the physical investment that dance demands all along the performer-audience spectrum, I explore the potential of site dance both to reinforce and to challenge ideologies, hierarchies, and expectations built into urban environments and encounters, and to mobilize social change. As such, I move through each chapter to arrive at a choreographic analysis of the audience. In each of my chapters, I ask permutations of the following questions: How are dance artists reconsidering and reorganizing, aesthetically and publicly, the ways in which we move through our cities? When, where, and why do we move together? What, physically, are dancing and audiencing bodies being asked to do? How do various choreographies of unison, force, and direction reorient us to our surroundings and to one another? How do dancing

¹⁷ Urban geography’s “mobility turn” (Cresswell; Thrift), “non-representational theory” (Thrift), explorations of “emotional geography” (Davidson et al.), and “deep mapping” or “deep geography” (Bodenhamer et al.) flesh out considerations of moving bodies in public spaces. I will return in my next chapter to follow more closely a few of these trajectories of thought, including the understandings of movement in and through the city as formulated by Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Ash Amin, Nigel Thrift, Tim Cresswell, Neil Smith, David Ley, and Nicholas Blomley—among others.

bodies relate to gravity, to ground, to background, and to one another—and how does this formal relation reorient our conception of the social?¹⁸ What are the politics of witnessing and of coming together around art? And how does each modality literally and affectively *move* its publics? Fundamentally, I am concerned with an examination of how audiences are interpellated by the dances I study. I explore how formal shifts in choreography and the placement of dancers and audiencing bodies invite different understandings and experiences of the performance, the urban environment, and the publics of which they are a part.

It is my contention throughout that the relationship between a peopled site and a given public performance is fertile ground for an inquiry into the social, material, and aesthetic dynamics at play. A dance artist myself, and one with a site-based practice, I am invested in the potential of dance in public places to change the ways we experience publicness; however, I am also cautious about the possibilities and limitations of the form. I examine the various axes of privilege that support these practices and which they, in turn, support. What, I ask, are the implications and consequences of setting dance in richly storied, inhabited, and dynamic public urban spaces? Thinking beyond a celebratory model, I explore both the possibilities and limitations of site dance to challenge and change movement in and through urban spaces.

An analysis of site-based dance requires a parallel shift in research methodology. Without the programs, calendars of events, and archives that dances sited in theatre spaces generate, and without the scripts that often support (and hold record of) site-specific theatre, I have had to develop a kinetic, site-specific methodology. Informed by Sarah Pink's approach to "sensory ethnography," I draw from Fiona Wilkie's understanding of "mobile methodologies" in my "sited conversations" with the artists I study ("Sited" 40). This has often involved conducting semi-structured interviews, collecting oral histories, and participating in ambulatory walks that return (and, in returning, reanimate) the sites in and on which the dances I study were once situated.

¹⁸ I work with the "ground" of site-specific performance in Laura Levin's sense. Like Levin, an investment in disrupting the hierarchical relationship between ground and figure, between foreground and background, informs my analysis of site-based dance's ground. For more, see Levin's *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* (2014).

Cautious of my role in shaping the collection of these oral histories, these interviews combine specific questions with open space for artists' reflections. I have also conducted semi-structured interviews with players in the "supporting acts" (to call on Shannon Jackson's formulation) that are so central to different forms of public art (*Social* 36), including government and arts council officials, municipal workers, local historians, and facility programmers. With an emphasis on material configurations of support, I view these site-based movement practices in relation to their funding and presentation structures, the architecture in and on which the dances are set, and the public space policies that create the conditions in which these dances are developed and performed.

Rooted in dance studies, performance studies, and social theory, I take a performance ethnography approach to my research: my choreographic analysis is situated in experiences of live and recorded performance analysis, engagements with paper and digital archives (permit applications, funding applications, rehearsal and production notes, photographs), and the recollected stories of various actants. Each of my chapters situates me in a different relation to the piece I study: whether I am watching a performance video, attending a live performance, reanimating a lost dance, or inside the dance as a performer, I am attentive to my proximity to and distance from the dance.

In this study, I do not aim to give a full account of site-based dance in Canada or even an exhaustive survey of site-based dance in Vancouver. Instead, what I aim to do is offer a sited analysis of a few examples of how the form—as practiced by professional, self-identified, contemporary choreographers—works in and on the public spaces in which it is set. My site-based methodology is grounded in five case studies performed in Vancouver, Canada, between 1998 and 2013. While my intention in taking a regional focus is to attend closely to specific Vancouver-based sets of spatial and social dynamics, the issues I address are also relevant within a much wider geographical scope. This dissertation, which works toward a larger analysis of site-based dance as a mode of choreographic knowledge, is about Vancouver, to be sure; but, just as my analysis of "The Ballerina and the Bull" could not remain contained by a single geographic site, this project is also about much more than Vancouver. Dance, as a mobile form of knowledge-making, challenges us to ground the instant in the local by

contouring the relation of a specific physical body to a particular physical site; and yet dance also travels beyond its local instantiation, drawing from other bodies in other locations and seeding itself in the bodies and the memories of those who watch. Vancouver-based explorations of local history, architecture, and movement ordinances speak to larger and geographically diffuse issues of, for example, the creative city, the global city, (post)colonialism, and environmental degradation. And, as I will argue, local, artistic experiments with assembly are linked to multi- and trans-locational concerns about *coming together*.

Although my project insists on geographical site-specificity, I also understand that site is not self-identical: made and unmade daily and constituted by bodily, environmental, and built materials in a global economy that emphasizes circulation, my selection of artists lays bare some of the tensions inherent to site-specificity. From veteran Vancouver-based (though partly New York-trained) Karen Jamieson's *The River* to the internationally touring *Solo 30x30*, by Montreal-based Paul-André Fortier; from California-based Amelia Rudolph's vertical dance performed by Vancouver-based company Aeriosa to Vancouver-based interdisciplinary artist David McIntosh's reimagining of urban choreography; and, finally, from the choreographic impulses behind European artists Martin Chaput and Martial Chazallon's globally touring *Do You See What I Mean?* to the show's performance in Vancouver by local dancers (myself included): the choreographers, performers, and performances I study are spaced along various spectrums—including geographical emplacement. My choice of artists and movement practices speaks to my larger project: I aim to employ a site-specific methodology to examine site dance regionally even as I challenge what it means to be of *a place* in the intrinsically and insistently mobile context of dance.

While I do not explicitly attempt to generate a taxonomy of site-based dance (as Hunter has argued, "site dance" is an umbrella term that encompasses a vast number of wide-ranging practices, far beyond my ability to chronicle and analyze), I have found it useful to structure my project around a series of recurring conceptual pivots. My project examines works that present movement material in various forms: set choreography performed by professional dancers (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), choreography performed by volunteer amateur community dancers (Chapter 2), and improvised movement within an

established score (sections of Chapters 2, 5, and Afterword). The works range in their performances of virtuosity and their technical expression of dance movement, from works that feature big leaps, high kicks, and other movements easily recognizable as “dance” (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) to works that emphasize versions of internal, small or micro-dances of the everyday (Chapter 5 and Afterword)—although, of course, various crosshatches and overlaps in these formal properties complicate these distinctions. The dances I study range in proximity to their audiences, from a distanced remove buffered by a physical frame (Chapters 3 and 4) to intimate closeness (Chapter 5 and Afterword). They range in the size of the temporary publics they generate, from large groups (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) to small gatherings (Chapter 5 and Afterword). And they range in their placement in the city, from Vancouver’s oldest suburb, to its current downtown core, to the historic heart of the city. Most crucially for my study, these dances also range in the spatial relationships they cultivate within and between audiencing bodies and environments: each artist choreographs a different understanding of mobility and place, of dance’s place within the social city, and of the raced, gendered, classed, and sexed body in public. My examination of the formal choreographic object and how it, in turn, choreographs its temporary public(s) attends to these formal differences in an effort to track the politics of ground, orientation, direction, and relation both upheld and challenged in specific instances of site-based dance.

In Chapter 1, I establish the historical and theoretical contours of my project, drawing from dance studies, performance studies, and urban studies. I generate an argument that asserts the reciprocity between ground and movement and I set up my concept of “relational kinaesthetics.”¹⁹ With my turn to the relational, I emphasize the elements of co-participation and co-production in site-based dance: foregrounding the uneven power dynamics that often structure such relations, I argue that sites

¹⁹ Throughout this dissertation, I will use the Canadian (and British) spelling of “kinaesthetic(s)” when I write about my notion of *relational kinaesthetics*. Not only does this feel appropriate as a site-based scholar situated in Canada, but this spelling also embeds the “aesthetic” within “kinetic” at the level of the letter—something that supports my play with Nicholas Bourriaud’s “relational aesthetics” even as it insists on a kinetic register. However, throughout, I will use the American spelling, “kinesthetic,” in quotations that spell the word thusly as well as in my treatment of “kinesthetic empathy” and other theoretical categories with an established lineage of scholarship that uses the American spelling.

(topographically, architecturally, and behaviourally defined) and choreographies co-constitute one another, and that the movement of the audience around the dance proper is part of the form's choreographic function. With my turn to the kinaesthetic, I emphasize vicarious, affective, and kinetic senses of the body in motion while attempting to frame physical sensations within their various social, economic, material, and personal contexts. Pairing the concepts and critiques of "kinesthetic empathy" (Sklar; Foster, *Choreographing*; Reynolds and Reason) with "relational aesthetics" (Bourriaud; Bishop "Antagonism"; Jackson, *Social*; Harvie, "Democracy"), I seek to contribute to an ongoing discussion of how publics are moved *in* and *by* aesthetic experiences in city spaces.

In Chapter 2, I turn to an investigation of what I call "choreographic topographies" and the kinetics and politics of shifting ground with a study of Karen Jamieson's *The River* (1998)—a hybrid professional/community dance sited along one of Vancouver's lost streams. Here, I argue that the colonial city's buried past (in the form of, in this case, the historic Brewery Creek) continues, through its internment, to shape the movement possibilities along the city surface. In Chapter 3, I offer a case study of the Vancouver instalment of Montreal-based Canadian dance icon Paul-André Fortier's *Solo 30x30* (2009). Attending to the disjunction between the dance and its site, I explore the politics of taking place, and I mount an argument that aligns the performance's ambiguous hail or bid for "curbside attention" with the self-reflexive temporary public it calls together. In Chapter 4, I grapple with a particular and heightened version of dance's cultural labour as it is made manifest in Aeriosa's vertical dance, *In Situ* (2010). Here, I acknowledge site-based dance practices as embedded in economic constructions of Vancouver as "global" and "creative" even as I attend to the productive possibilities of vertical dance's spatial disorientation within a critique of such civic branding initiatives. From the high-flying virtuosity of my fourth chapter, Chapter 5 pulls back physically. I analyze battery opera's aesthetic walking tour, *Lives Were Around Me* (2009) as a micro-dance, a quotidian version of Steve Paxton's "small dance," that plays out in its audiencing bodies. *Lives*, I argue, exposes the classed strictures of everyday urban choreographies and implicates its audience as bourgeois art consumers within the charged context of the Downtown Eastside's social and economic disparities. Finally, in my Afterword, I make some critical adjustments to my project by reflecting on my experiences

performing in Projet In Situ's *Do You See What I Mean?* (2013). In addition to acknowledging important lacunae in *Moving Publics*—key among them, my failure to treat Coastal First Nations dance practices in relation to (unceded) territory, land claims, and choreo-topographical knowledge-making—I also turn my attention more squarely to the fraught relations of “command” (Lepecki, “Choreopolice”) and “support” (Jackson, *Social*) that, I argue, are central to site-based dance’s social and spatial functions. Here, I explore the form of site-based dance as a choreographic manifestation of *beside* (Sedgwick) that seeks to refigure relations between bodies and between spaces.

Throughout, I ask: Where do we find choreography in urban movement? What reimaginings of urban movement do we find in site-based dance? And what does site-based dance bring to an understanding of urban movement? Framed by kinaesthetic concepts (appearing, gathering, following, turning, lifting, passing, and adjusting), *Moving Publics* proposes a model of choreographic thinking that takes movement as a critical lens as well as an object of study. I insist that a dance-based epistemology yields important insights into embodied experiences of urban spaces. The dances I study foreground how the city (as a built, legislated, lived, and perpetually unsettled structure) orchestrates a set of quiet choreographies of the everyday. I examine the consequences of coding as theatrical both the publics and the public spaces in the midst of which site-based dances are situated, and I examine how dance—a form that regularly relies on divided, delegated, surrogated labour and collaborative co-presence—can unsettle movement in and through our city spaces, with and past one another. As a whole, my project seeks to advance a theory of relational kinaesthetics as a way to understand the reciprocal relationships between environment (social and spatial) and bodily movement that is sensitive to the socially and politically inscribed grooves that constitute the specificities of ground.

Chapter 1.

Gathering

Art's journey to the public provokes the question of context, of how people are to gather, of what they are to make of being together without any prescribed purpose, of how they are to relate the forms of work they encounter to the world around them. ~ Randy Martin, "Artistic Citizenship"
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It has since moved locations, but when I visited Canada's dance archive, Dance Collections Danse, in a naive effort to gather a history of site-based dance in Canada, I found it located inside a century home in Toronto. I spent most of my days there up the narrow, creaky staircase in the central archival room, leafing through pages of *Spill* and *Canadian Dance News* (Toronto-based dance publications circulating in the late 1970s and early 1980s), *Dance in Canada*, and folders of promotional material and press coverage: searching in all cases for some record of performances sited off stage and outdoors. I walked away from the archive a few days later with knowledge of new dances, practices, and artists; but what I left *without* weighed more heavily than my impressive stack of photocopies. If dance has earned a reputation, for better or worse, as an especially ephemeral performance form, site-based dance, the archive would seem to say, was hardly there at all. Often unsupported by programs or tickets, and without (much) funding—indeed many early site-based dance practices were creative responses to a lack of and/or cuts in funding—site based dance is incredibly difficult (impossible?) to track in any comprehensive way. Even the Canada Council for the Arts' recent and ambitious "Mapping Dance in Canada" project—which, complete with an interactive map, chronicles professional and social dance practices across the country—does not attempt to account for site-based dance. Bound up in practical explorations of the form's particular archival evasiveness, any attempt to gather a history of the form, even partial and incomplete, is entangled with failure.

What stories we have of the development of site-based dance are overwhelmingly American, owing, in part, to their articulation in the self-reflexively U.S.-focused founding anthology of the form, Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik's *Site Dance: Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces* (2009). Kloetzel and Pavlik contend that Allan Kaprow's art-world 'Happenings' in New York City, social justice movements of the late sixties and early seventies, and explorations of embodiment and environment long-seeded in American modern dance combined to "create the elemental stew for site-specific dance" (8). Immersed in this art scene, choreographer Merce Cunningham began experimenting with off-stage performances and chance procedures to reorient the placement and power dynamics of dance. *Event #45* (1972), which featured dancers weaving between everyday users of a plaza in Venice, was just one of his notable off-stage works. Cunningham's company fostered the early careers of many members of what would become Judson Dance Theatre—accredited with what Kloetzel and Pavlik call a postmodern "choreographic upheaval" (9).²⁰ These artists took elements like pedestrian movement, improvisation, and off-site exploration as central to the processes of dance-making (9).

Other narratives affirm the central role of the Judson collaborators in the development of site-based dance practices. As Susan Leigh Foster observes in her "Walking and Other Choreographic Tactics" (2002), their experiments in dance-making "took theatrical space and opened it up, moved it around, or brought it down" (127). Moving into the streets and parking lots, onto sidewalks and building tops, these dances relocated theatrical frameworks and sensibilities from the theatre proper into the midst of non-theatrical, everyday spaces. Foster references Lucinda Childs' *Street Dance* (1964), which offered its audience elevated loft-window viewing of the street-level pedestrian duet, and Meredith Monk's *Vessel* (1971), which was performed at night in a vacant lot in Soho and featured a shared meal and a host of tasks that teetered between the pragmatic and the absurd. She also outlines Trisha Brown's litany of pioneering outdoor dances, including her iconic *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), *Roof*

²⁰ For more on Judson-era politics and aesthetics, see Sally Banes' seminal works, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-64* (1983) and *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (1987). Ramsay Burt offers a keen and more recent exploration of the influential group in his *Judson Dance Theatre: Performative Traces* (2006).

Piece (1973), and *Primary Group Accumulation* (1973). Brown's pioneering site-specific dances continue to capture the imagination of the international dance community. Both aptly titled, *Roof Piece* (a kind of choreographic broken telephone set on rooftops in New York City) and *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (which featured a harnessed dancer traversing vertically down a five-story building) have been remounted in recent years. To be sure, the innovations of this particular group of practitioners have been crucial to the development of site-based dance in America and beyond. But there is much more to the story.

Anna Halprin, for example, is another central figure in the development of site-based dance. Halprin was one of the first professional dancer-choreographers to make incursions into the realm of site-based dance, and her choreographic explorations of the outdoors were linked with the particularities of urban spaces and natural landscapes on the west coast of North America. Dance historians have attended carefully to the full scope of Halprin's career, detailing her slow movement away from traditional theatre spaces and notions of professional dance toward a social movement practice catering to amateur dancers. With her early explorations of outdoor spaces, Halprin "expanded where dance could take place," a move most clearly evidenced by her outdoor workshops and events with the San Francisco Dancers' Workshop, and her largest work to date, *Citydance* (1966-67) (Worth and Poynor 32). Halprin's formal innovations were inextricable from the political element of her practice: her reclamation of public spaces and insistence on the "right to perform anywhere in the city" resulted in numerous "clashes with the authorities" (22). Less publicly, she practiced and trained dancers on her influential outdoor "dance deck." The deck—built by Halprin's husband, Lawrence Halprin, a frequent collaborator and an influential landscape architect and designer—would become a crucial site for the development of site-based and postmodern dance because, in Halprin's words, it "removed the usual restrictions and added elements of nature and chance and, with them, a lack of control and predictability" (qtd. in Worth and Poynor 11). Crucially, Halprin's interest in urban and natural landscapes seeped east with her facilitation of annual summer outdoor workshops throughout the 1950s and 60s that drew influential dancers from New York City, including Merce Cunningham and Simone Forti, as well as members of Judson Dance Theatre: Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk, and Yvonne Rainer. Cunningham attests to the movement and choreographic

possibilities unlocked by Halprin's outdoor dance workshops: "Ordinarily the dancer deals with a fixed space set by outside convention, the dimension of a box with a view from one side. But here on the dance deck there is a totally different situation. Aside from the obvious openness in the architectural arrangement there is another freedom for the dancer. There is no necessity to face front, to limit the focus to one side" (qtd. in Ross, *Anna* 54). Halprin's choice of site posed an implicit and felt challenge to understandings of space that had dominated professional concert dance for decades.

Of course, dance's expanded understanding of the theatrical is also bound up with the development of "environmental theatre"—a predominantly 1960s and 1970s theatre movement that pushed against the boundaries of the proscenium stage both physically (sometimes siting performances off stage) and conceptually (inviting audience members on stage, for example). In his treatise on the form, Richard Schechner makes numerous claims for the social potentials of environmental theatre. Key among them, Schechner argues that there is a direct correlation between audience engagement and increased agency to determine physical positioning in relation to the performance.²¹ Most theatre layouts work to regiment and anonymize audience experience: raised or sunken stages delineate the performance area in opposition to the audience area; the dimming of houselights assures at least partial anonymity for theatre audiences; and seat designations partition one audience member from the next. Conversely, site-based performances put the physical layout of its audience into play, allowing "spectators [to] arrange themselves in unexpected patterns" (Schechner, *Environmental* xxxvi). Mobile rather than static, viewers of site-based performances choose how to place themselves in relation to the performance, the performers, and the other viewers (6). They can pause or wander, cluster or spread, approach or retreat, stay or go. These choices will be architecturally influenced (if not prescribed), shaped by the spatial structure of the performance (the blocking or the choreography), and socially determined, to be sure, but they remain, within varying degrees of circumscription, choices.

²¹ On the subject of spatial control, Una Chaudhuri and Laura Levin each make a compelling case for the troubling dynamics of mastery in Schechner's environmental theatre, focusing on the form's imperialism (Chaudhuri 25-46) and misogyny (Levin, *Performing* 78-82), respectively. I will return to explore these critiques in Chapter 3.

While the abovementioned alternative spatial practices have been foundational to the development of the site-specific performance milieu to which site-based dance belongs, Victoria Hunter makes an important move in her recent historical genealogy of the form when she expands the scope beyond a strictly American context. Integrating the Americanist genealogy I have just rehearsed (which includes attention to Isadora Duncan's and Ruth St. Denis' early outdoor dance experiments) with a European discourse of the form, Hunter acknowledges the work of a range of dance artists with outdoor components to their practices. She also gestures toward how aesthetic explorations of the relationship between body and environment in German modern dance, British New Dance, the natural dance movement in England and continental Europe, and "screen dance" have shaped current site dance practices (4-11). From the 1990s forward, "site dance" began to emerge across a global spectrum of practitioners of dance rooted in the western theatrical stage tradition, often overlapping and intertwining with ongoing community dance initiatives. Currently, as Hunter observes, "incarnations of site-specific dance can be found in various formats around the world, and, as the genre continues to evolve it has incorporated a wide variety of performance components including circus skills, aerial performance, walking, durational and immersive performance elements" (11).²²

Glaringly absent from the genealogies I have rehearsed is, to this Canadian dance scholar, a history of site-based dance practices in Canada. Part of my interest in drawing out such a history is a simple desire to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the form that includes Canadian practices—an effort begun in a recent issue of Canada's dance magazine of note, *The Dance Current*. Introducing a special issue on dance in public space (in which my essay "Choreographing Publics" appears), Brittany Duggan acknowledges both the increase in site-based dance practices in recent years and the impossibility of giving an exhaustive account of the form: "we could not possibly create a comprehensive account of all artists exploring public space through

²² While I do not seek here to reproduce the same canon of site-based dance already represented in the literature, I will name a few key artists whose work continues to shape the form: Joanna Haigood, Stephan Koplowitz, Heidi Duckler, Ann Carlson, Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad, Leah Stein, Marylee Hardenbergh, Eiko and Koma Otake, Sally Jacques, Jo Kreiter, Tamar Rogoff, Martha Bowers, Amelia Rudolph, Carolyn Deby, and Kate Lawrence, to name only a few of the most visible site-dance practitioners.

dance in this country” (34). Indeed, the past decade has been incredibly active for site-based dance across Canada. At a glance, some important figures coming out of Québec include Paul-André Fortier, Katya Montaignac, Tedi Tafel, and New York-based Noemie Lafrance. In Ontario, Ottawa-based Kenneth Emig and Toronto-based companies Up Darling, COROUS, and artists Susan Cash, Priscilla Guy, Kate Nankervis, Alicia Grand, Cara Spooner, and artists involved in the Intersection Project are moving the form forward. In Alberta, Calgary-based Melanie Kloetzel (also co-editor of the *Site Dance* anthology I mentioned earlier) and Edmonton-based Mile Zero Dance, directed by Gerry Morita, are important forces. Festivals like Toronto’s Dance in My Backyard (DIMBY), Kaeja d’Dance’s Porch View Dances, Dusk Dances series, and numerous others have cropped up in recent years to support site-based dance. Gesturing further back in Canadian dance history, Duggan starts her genealogy in the early twentieth century: “Alison Sutcliffe put her dancers on the rooftops of downtown Toronto around 1931. In the mid-1920s, Hylde Davies’ dancers could be seen dancing on the beaches of Cow Head, Nova Scotia. Grace Tinning’s dancers graced the prairies of Saskatchewan while dances by Boris Volkoff found a performance space in Toronto’s parks in the 1940s” (34). Of course, reference to the long history and vibrant present of First Nations dance practices in the country—practices which exemplify a deep bind between land, territory, and the dancing body—would have rounded out this narrative of Canadian site-based dance, but I am hardly in a position to make this criticism as my work, too, reproduces (even as it marks) this same lacuna.

Rounding out Duggan’s overview, the archival collection at Dance Collection Danse contains records of other danced-based explorations of Canadian outdoor sites, including some early works by Québec-based artist Françoise Sullivan. After studying dance in New York, Sullivan returned to Montreal in 1948 and became involved in the Automatiste movement.²³ As part of her aesthetic of “La Danse et l’espoir” (Dance and

²³ Les Automatistes were a group of Québécois artists active internationally in the 1940s and 1950s. Their work, which crossed disciplinary boundaries, was driven by a fierce political belief in the need for expressive freedom particularly in the context of what they identified as an oppressive Catholic church. Their manifesto, *Refus Global* (1948), became an important pillar of Québec’s Quiet Revolution. Understandings of place and nation are of particular significance in French-Canada’s dance traditions. See Erin Hurley’s *National Performance* (2010) for an interdisciplinary approach to performance in and of Québec.

Hope), Sullivan created and performed four outdoor dance works themed after the four seasons; her *Danse dans la neige* (1948) remains as a series of photographs of the event (Ellenwood 114-15). Sullivan's interest in alternative sites continued throughout her decades-long and prolific career, including her "Accumulation" (1980), which featured choreography for six dancers and five cars. Justifiably, then, her site-based work occupies an important place in a Canadian history of the form.

In Toronto, the 1975 Festival of Women and the Arts was a key moment in site-based dance in Canada because of its outdoor emphasis: the festival featured a sequence of "Phantom street dances"—a series of "unique dance adaptations of street theatre" designed to "surprise people in non-theatrical locations around Toronto" (Festival, "Dance"). Elizabeth Chitty and Jennifer Mascall, along with members of GRID—a Toronto-based collective spearheaded by Mascall—were central figures in Toronto-based explorations of what Chitty sometimes called "environmental dance" throughout the 1970s and 1980s ("Dancing" 2).²⁴ Chitty's *Drop* (1976), a proto-vertical dance that echoes and reworks Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, is a particularly notable moment in Toronto's site-based dance history not least because of its recent recapture of Canadian dance world attention: footage of Chitty's descent from the window of a building on Queen Street West was screened at the Society for Canadian Dance Studies 2010 conference. Another key figure in Toronto's site-based dance scene is Terrill Maguire, who would move to the city in the early 1980s from California (by way of New York) with an already refined outdoor dance practice. These various experiments with off-stage and off-studio locations were motivated by a combination of aesthetic curiosity, an effort to reach a "layman audience" (Festival, "Dance"), an avant-garde impulse to reimagine theatrical dance, and a set of very real financial limitations: funding cuts in the mid-1970s forced this generation of artists to get creative about making and presenting work.²⁵ Experiments with site were also encouraged in higher education contexts: during the 1970s and 80s, dance students

²⁴ I quote from a draft of an article Chitty wrote for the first issue of *15 Print* (1975), the publication that would eventually become perhaps the most important dance magazine in Canada during the late 1970s, Toronto-based *Spill*.

²⁵ For an overview of Canadian dance history with reference to the development of its national and provincial funding bodies, see Michael Crabb and Max Wyman's "Dance History" entry in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (2012).

across Canada were exploring alternative sites with performances and improvisations all over campus and beyond—including artists who would go on to shape the course of site-based dance in Vancouver (Gerecke, “Dance”).

This crudely sketched constellation of influences in Canadian site-based dance brings me to a question I have encountered throughout my studies: putting placement aside (as if that were possible), are any of these site-based dance practices particularly, or *specifically*, Canadian? Alongside my interest in fleshing out a wider sense of the various practices of site-based dance, I also believe that an analysis of Canadian site-based dance practices can complicate and enrich the burgeoning international discourse in important ways. Just as Jen Harvie has defined her analysis of the relationship between art and the public against Shannon Jackson’s by pointing to the different roles of the welfare state in the United Kingdom (Harvie’s context) and the United States (Jackson’s context) (*Fair* 11), I see a relationship that is different again in Canada. Contrasting the financial support for the site-based dances I study to those in the U.S., I write about a Canadian placement of dance in the public sphere that positions the form both inside and against official discourses and practices of historical recovery, civic branding, and urban planning. Public funding creates a set of material conditions specific to Canadian dance—and, even more precisely, to Vancouver, which has a history of meagre funding in comparison with other major Canadian dance centres. There is a link between the geographical and the symbolic *place* of dance in Vancouver. Moreover, as I will explore more fully later in this chapter and again in Chapter 4, geographers have demonstrated that although Vancouver shares with other North American cities legitimate concerns about the contraction, corporatization, and privatization of public spaces, Vancouver has been differently affected by such issues than its American (and some of its Canadian) counterparts (Lees 326). Vancouver-based place-making and place-taking initiatives like site dance are also framed by a specific colonial structure. As I explore in Chapter 5, the city of Vancouver’s uninvited establishment on traditional unceded Coastal First Nations’ territories renders its public spaces uniquely “unsettled” at a national and global scale (Blomley, *Unsettling*). Further still, Vancouver is a city that, itself, performs as an assortment of different sites: known as “Hollywood North,” Vancouver is a major international film location that regularly stands in for a variety of different U.S. (and global) cities. Taken together, and taking a site-specific methodology

seriously, these various distinguishing circumstances of urban space in Vancouver necessarily yield aesthetic explorations that respond to and shape the spaces and the publics they bring into being in ways that are specific to Vancouver, Canada.

In Vancouver, site-based dance explorations have occupied the peripheries of established stage-choreography careers for upwards of four decades.²⁶ I will detail Karen Jamieson's early experiments with alternative sites in my next chapter; hers are some of Vancouver's first large-scale site-based dance works choreographed and performed by professional dance artists (often alongside amateur dancers). At first as a collective, and then in their own artistic trajectories, the co-founders of EDAM Performing Arts Society have also been forces in the development of site-based dance practices in the city.²⁷ Early EDAM processes and performances sometimes explored exterior spaces, but the focused explorations of alternative sites came from Jennifer Mascall, Barbara Bourget, and Jay Hirabayashi. Mascall's early experiments with scored improvisations in public spaces in Toronto with GRID developed into a long-time engagement with offstage sites in Vancouver: in addition to the revolving improvisational research ensemble "Nijinsky Jibber Jazz Club" (early 1990s to present), which performs in nontheatrical sites around the city, Mascall Dance also hosts a mixed bill of site-based dances at its annual outdoor Garden Dances series (2002-present). Bourget and Hirabayashi's Kokoro Dance has improvised and performed sporadically in outdoor spaces over the years—including free, publicly sited dance performances during their Vancouver International Dance Festival—and the company has been facilitating their nude workshop and performance at Wreck Beach in Pacific Spirit Regional Park annually since 1996. Younger companies like Raven Spirit Dance, directed by Michelle Olson, and Aeriosa, directed by Julia Taffe, have maintained committed site-based dance practices, while a variety of contemporary dance artists—including Rob Kitsos,

²⁶ For a history of some of Vancouver's early dance pioneers, see Kaija Pepper's *Theatrical Dance in Vancouver* (2000). With relevance to site-based dance, see Pepper's research on the Barbes School de Ballet, which presented at least one show, *Land of Wonders* (1920), on an outdoor pavilion in Stanley Park (72). Pepper also includes a photograph of Joyce Pumphrey's students dancing outdoors on the Crofton House School grounds circa 1927 (79).

²⁷ Co-founded in 1982, by Peter Bingham and some of Vancouver's most influential dance-makers, including Lola MacLaughlin, Jennifer Mascall, Barbara Bourget, Jay Hirabayashi, Peter Ryan, and Ahmed Hassan, EDAM has been under Bingham's sole direction since 1989.

Alvin Erasga Tolentino, Tara Cheyenne Friedenber, Lee Su-Feh and David McIntosh, Judith Marcuse, Caroline Liffman, Ziyian Kwan, Justine A. Chambers, and others—have dabbled with the form. A fringe of other participatory, community-based movement practices facilitated by professional dance artists, including Julie Lebel and Mirae Rosner, and the site-based movement explorations of the Behind Open Doors Arts Collective have animated the city's outdoor spaces with danced movement in recent years.²⁸ In addition to home-grown dances, Vancouver has also hosted works by international site-based dance artists (like Carolyn Deby's *City Skinned* and *Imbolc* {in the belly}) and instantiations of internationally touring Canadian site-based dances like Paul-André Fortier's *Solo 30x30*, among others.

Increasingly, site-based dance works like Deby's, Fortier's, and those created by local artists have been supported in Vancouver by various festivals and series including the Dancing on the Edge festival's adaptation of Dusk Dances, the biennial Dance in Vancouver, the Coastal First Nations Dance Festival at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, New Works' All Over the Map series on Granville Island, the Scotiabank Dance Centre's International Dance Day pop-up dance series, the interdisciplinary PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (PuSh Festival), the Firehall Arts Centre's BC Buds Festival, the outdoor performances that support and promote the Vancouver International Dance Festival, and others. The development of these infrastructures and festivals have both met and created presentational demands for site-based dance in the city. In addition, the city's dance-makers are very recently being invited into art-world engagements, sited both indoors and out, in a local expression of the global trend of dance's incorporation into the gallery that André Lepecki, Erin Brannigan, and others have analyzed. Recent Vancouver-based choreographic and curatorial works by Justine A. Chambers, Alexa Mardon, and David McIntosh, among others, navigate between visual art and choreography to locate movement within and between different public spaces. Site-based dance's ability to straddle multiple and disparate presentational contexts allows for its proliferation and follows from its site-responsiveness, to be sure, but it also signals and generates a larger crisis of classification and criticism.

²⁸ I am a co-founder of Behind Open Doors, which has been mostly inactive since 2013.

Performing Public

Given the difficulty of gathering a rigorous and thorough account of site-based dance, it is little wonder that the literature supporting the form—like the trace of the events that literature would seek to record—is scant. In the past decade, theatre critics and visual arts critics alike have expanded the focus of the extensive literature treating public art to support and interrogate both live performance art and theatre practices situated in outdoor, public places. This work teases out issues of economic, geographical, sexual, gendered, and racial privilege, the flux or fixed nature of site, as well as the problems inherent in concepts of “equal” access to public performances.²⁹ However, critics have been less interested in treating dance in the context of the larger debates about public art. Indeed, when I first undertook *Moving Publics*, the few published analyses of the form were buried in texts written by theatre or visual arts practitioners, or else they fell in with larger projects either structured by biographical impulses or bent toward other ends.³⁰ The specific sets of theoretical, formal, and social questions posed by dancing bodies in public spaces have not yet been fully explored. Meanwhile, choreographers and dance critics increasingly laud community-based and site-specific dance movements, but often without a clear understanding of public art history and criticism. Blithely celebratory and lacking a rigorous theoretical or social critique of the form, claims that dance in public spaces fosters healthy communities too

²⁹ With a few notable exceptions—e.g., Suzanne Lacy’s *Mapping the Terrain* (1995) and Lucy Lippard’s *Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (1997)—many of the first theatre scholars to address site-based work are based in Europe and the United Kingdom. Nick Kaye’s *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (2000) was one of the first of its kind, articulating some of the major concerns of site-specific performance from a theatre studies perspective. More recently, in *Unsettling Space: Contestations in Contemporary Australian Theatre* (2006), Joanne Tompkins has joined the discussion with her examination of theatrical experimentations with space in a contemporary Australian context. Mike Pearson offers reflections on decades of site-specific performance practice and thought in his performatively written *In Comes I: Performance, Memory and Landscape* (2006) and *Site-Specific Performance* (2010). Susan C Haedicke’s *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe: Aesthetics and Politics* (2013) insists on the real-world implications of the performing street arts in the development of democratic models and action.

³⁰ Of course, Helen Thomas’ *Dance in the City* (1997), Valerie Briginshaw’s *Dance, Space and Subjectivity* (2001), and other dance studies texts offer important insights into issues of space and the urban, but they do so without concerted attention to site-based dance.

often stands in for a more nuanced debate about the social function of this form of public art.

My doctoral research is at the leading edge of a critical turn toward site-based dance. As long-time site-dance practitioner and organizer Elise Bernhardt asserted in her 2009 preface to Kloetzel and Pavlik's *Site Dance*: "Finally someone has begun to capture the voices, stories, observations, successes, theories, and working methods of the pioneering artists who have embarked on this integrated civic and artistic adventure" (xi). In the time that I researched and wrote my dissertation, the first and only two books on the subject were published: Kloetzel and Pavlik's anthology and Hunter's more theoretically ambitious *Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance* (2015). Other recent and significant contributions to the study of site-based dance include Fiona Wilkie's interdisciplinary *Performance, Transport, and Mobility: Making Passage* (2015), which forwards a theory of performance as a way to make and mark the experience of moving between destinations. With attention to the ways in which place shapes movement, Gretchen Schiller and Sarah Rubidge's co-edited anthology, *Choreographic Dwellings: Practising Place* (2014), works to expand the definition of choreography beyond the realm of dance; my research finds many resonances with Schiller and Rubidge's—particularly their notion of "kinesthetic topologies" (11-24), which aligns in important ways with my concept of "choreographic topographies" (developed in Chapter 2). And although it is not explicitly focused on site-based dance, SanSan Kwan's *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (2013) contributes to the conversation with its rigorous analysis of how public space, dance, and "Chineseness" intertwine; moreover, Kwan's ethnographic and kinaesthetic methodology performs a link between dance and the quotidian movements of urban flow. In addition, academic interest in dance in public spaces is reflected in recent conference themes for major academic and artistic organizations in the field of dance and performance studies: Performance Studies International's 2010 conference, "Performing Publics," provided a platform for numerous site-based dance talks, as did the Society for Dance History Scholars' 2012 conference with its theme "Dance and the Social City." In the realm of practice, the Canada Dance Festival's "Changing Perspectives" festival took site-based dance as its curatorial focus in the summer of

2013. These are only a few of many such examples of the burgeoning critical interest in site-based dance practices.

And yet despite these recent and rapid advances, critical discussions of site-based dance are still sparse and in an early phase of development. Writing in 2015, Victoria Hunter notes that “While the wider fields of site-specific devised, visual and text-based performance are well documented ..., little academic research into site-specific dance performance and its creative methods currently exists” (2-3). Even the two foundational book-length projects that focus on site-based dance leave room for development: both invaluable resources, Kloetzel and Pavlik’s anthology offers a collection of interviews with and essays written by (as I have indicated) key American practitioners of the form, while Hunter’s edited collection of disparate essays brings together a variety of voices to start a dialogue rather than to advance a comprehensive analysis. *Moving Publics* begins to address the field’s need for a sustained and focused analysis of site-based dance’s social and spatial choreographies of the temporary publics and public spaces in which it intervenes. Anchored by a site-specific and kinetic methodology, I attempt to ground my site-based dance criticism in ongoing critical debates in art and social theory, and in performance studies, about concepts of public art, public space, and publics.³¹ Although the scope of these bodies of work—punctuated as they are by vibrant debates on the complex issues of framing, public culture, urban spatial politics, memory, colonization, movement, and audience—extends beyond the limits of this dissertation, a few threads are particularly relevant to my study of site-based dance.

In particular, attention to the antagonistic as well as the ameliorative potentials of the form prompted by Rosalyn Deutsche’s *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (1996) challenges a widely held assumption that performance in public places effects a democratization of performance and the public sphere in equal measure. Based in feminist poststructuralist thought, Deutsche applies Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau’s notion of radical democracy to her analysis of public art: disagreement, difference, and

³¹ For one iteration of a Canadian public art discourse, see Annie Gérin and James S. McLean’s co-edited anthology *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives* (2009).

dissensus are fundamental to a functioning democracy, instead of agreement, homogeneity, and consensus—qualities which, in this equation, signal exclusion, unevenness, and the stifling of difference.³² Following Mouffe and Laclau, Deutsche contends that: “Conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are the conditions of its existence. The threat [to democracy] arises with efforts to supersede conflict, for the public sphere remains democratic only insofar as its exclusions are taken into account and open to contestation” (289). Deutsche’s distinction between integrationist and interventionist public art—public art that either affirms or interrupts seeming coherence and consensus in the public sphere—and the case she makes for the latter spurred a lineage of public art thinkers and practitioners motivated by interrogatory impulses. Miwon Kwon, Claire Bishop, and others have squared off against critics and artists in an argument that divides along, and sometimes blurs, interventionist and integrationist lines, developing analytical models to demonstrate with compelling certainty that neither public art nor public space are neutral. Against integrationist impulses to generate communities around public installations, Kwon insists that site-based art can actually serve to render a given site more regulated and exclusionary than it would otherwise be.³³ This claim has particular resonance in the context of Vancouver, which was described in Pier Luigi Sacco’s 2007 report on the potential of the arts to transform Vancouver into a viable global brand as a “dual city” that is divided starkly along economic and cultural lines (29).³⁴

Indeed, instead of making itself available to those most vulnerable in the social structure of a given place, many public art practices in Vancouver have been accused of complicity with the dominant powers in public spaces. With particular reference to the

³² In their influential *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), Laclau and Mouffe insist that subjectivity and democracy are structured by antagonisms that arise between entities that cannot be thought of as separate, but rather as mutually constructed at an ontological, social, and political level.

³³ For a critique of Kwon on this subject, see Grant Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* (2004).

³⁴ Richard Florida’s notion of the “creative class”—and its corollaries “creative city” and “creative economy”—seek to shape cities to draw white collar workers in a variety of professional and creative markets to boost a city’s economy and its profile within a network of global cities. Jon Hawkes’ *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability* (2003) has also been influential in the systemic development of cultural capital to meet economic ends. I will return to explore the role of site-based dance within this form of urban development in more detail in Chapter 4.

2010 Cultural Olympiad, Graeme Fisher and Andrew Witt argue that “Public art ...blindly sought to ‘anchor place,’ reflect the ‘spirit’ of the games, and above all mystify social cleansing brought on by the ensuing redevelopment blitz” (“Fabricating” n. pag.). Vancouver’s version of Deutsche’s New York city-based assertion that public art “serv[es] as an arm of urban redevelopment” (*Evictions* 279) is, to some degree, quantifiable: “As poor and working class neighbourhoods are razed, developers are forced to allocate \$1.8/sqft of production costs for buildings over 100,000 sqft. to either build cultural space, or contribute to the city’s Public Art reserve” (Fisher and Witt, “Fabricating”). In spaces that are actually riven with social exclusions and inequities, public art practices have functioned in some cases to effectively perform away what Deutsche calls the “conflictual character” of urban space (279). Instead of challenging dominant and uneven power dynamics in cities, public art practices have often served to make cities and sites more comfortable for those who are already in positions of economic and social power. Kwon articulates the dynamic provocatively when she claims that public artists operate as “culture-makers-for-hire, traveling from city to city to lend the caché of their reputations to productions and exhibits that serve as elaborate civic marketing campaigns” (1). An examination of the function of various site-based dance practices to refine or to challenge Vancouver’s civic branding runs through my dissertation, and braids together these strands of thought from public art criticism with current discourses in performance studies.

A range of performance theorists have recently parsed the issue of performance’s role in the ongoing efforts to transform cities into “world class” or “global” cities, a phenomenon Keren Zaiontz succinctly refers to as “the incontestable link between art and the pulse of the city” (“Performing” 110). For example, working in the context of another Canadian city, Toronto, Michael McKinnie has noted “how civic theatre-building can be used strategically as part of urban core development to soften the upheavals that this development may bring to represent, and to reinscribe the civic ideal of downtown” (*City* 28). McKinnie argues that theatre practice performs important “ideological and market work ... within a capitalist social formation” (10). With particular reference to Vancouver, Zaiontz points out that what McKinnie identifies as “a sense of civic well being” has recently “been scripted as an economic benefit to cities” (“Performing” 109). Indeed, such instrumental uses of public art and performance put

each to work to ensure that cities come off as unthreatening and aesthetically pleasing. For both better and worse, performance participates in official and unofficial efforts to brand the city: “Performance can help to renegotiate the urban archive, to build the city, and to change it” (Solga et al., *Performance and the City* 6). Throughout, I will attend to how the site-based dance practices I study engage with or are subsumed by Vancouver’s “urban archive.”

Of course, the instrumentalization of art, public or otherwise, is never so clear-cut. In his forthcoming essay “Vancouverism and its Cultural Amenities” (2016), Peter Dickinson seeks to think through “some of the very basic material (as in, bricks and mortar) links between real estate and the performing arts” (1). Here, he draws out the complexities of public art’s relationship with gentrification, pointing, for example, to Vancouver’s *Gesamtkunstwerk: Life as a Total Work of Art* (2014): simultaneously, this exhibition and salon series showcased a concept drawing for an upcoming public art installation, a speaker series that featured voices critical of the complicity of art with gentrifying forces, and the “soft launch” of an ambitious and upscale residential development project (2). Resistance to and advancement of gentrification were bound together around public art in ways that complicate a straightforward narrative. In their recent analysis of the performing arts landscape in Vancouver in the wake of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games (2015), Dickinson, Zaiontz, and Kirsty Johnston draw out the potential of “expressly local acts of creative resistance [to] question expedient narratives of place promotion” (5). This interplay between public art’s capacity to both reinforce and challenge place branding in Vancouver is a thread that will run through my dissertation as I trace the status of site-based dance in processes of place-making—a status rendered all the more complex for the form’s marginalization from municipal Public Art Program funds. I have begun to argue that the social and political potential of site-based dance resides in its capacity to call together temporary publics and to choreograph these publics in particular relations to one another, to the built and natural surrounds, and to the art object. But precisely how these publics are moved depends, in part, on the locational and the choreographic *address* around which they cohere.

For, as Randy Martin contends in the epigraph to this chapter, while public art functions to foreground the questions of context and of “how people ... gather” (“Artistic Citizenship” 14), this attention can be used to a variety of different ends. “What is done with this attention,” Martin insists, “is an open question, and so, too, is how seeing the world aesthetically relates to how one attends to it socially—to the people around us and the concerns that issue from them” (3). Indeed, public art’s ability to stimulate self-reflexive inquiry into the structure of publics as embodied, affective, and theoretical entities is a key part of its social potential:

Unlike political citizenship, which asks that we take state authority for granted, art compels us to seek in ourselves the authority by which we are obliged to one another in the fleeting, discretionary occasions for publics to gather together. If this is the case, arts controversies have much to teach us not simply about how artists are perceived by the public but also about the very nature of what we take *public* to mean. (12)

Martin’s definition of public art as “a way of seeing, a way of knowing, and a way of gathering” (2) dovetails productively with my analysis of site-based dance as gathering force, an effort to bring people together in new ways within the context of familiar spaces and pathways. My project considers in choreographic terms “how spaces of attention, hope, interest, affiliation, entanglement, commitment, passion, empathy, possibility and imagination are crafted when people pause to reflect on what it means to be together” (Martin, “Artistic Citizenship” 16).

Defined by the orchestration, enactment, and consideration of the intricacies of bodies moving together, I argue that dance has particular insights into the material conditions that enable the gathering, spatial organization, and dispersal of publics. Following Martin’s insistence that public art prompts us to examine “the very nature of what we take *public* to mean” (12), I turn to trace, briefly, a lineage of thought on the topic in an effort to draw out what site-based dance might bring to the discourse of publicness. I begin with the theory every analysis of public art, publics, and public space takes (sometimes unthinkingly) as its foundation: Jürgen Habermas’ notion of a “bourgeois public sphere.” Habermas describes the emergence in the eighteenth century of a reading public or a “public sphere in the world of letters” that, through critical discourse, had the capacity to “undercut the principle on which existing rule was based”

(30-31, 28). This discursive public sphere, Habermas contends, was defined by a quality of accessibility that “transcend[ed] the barriers of social hierarchy” (34-35)—a controversial claim that is troubled even as it is established by Habermas’ insistence on the importance of (classed and gendered) private ownership in public belonging (28-29). Indeed, in one of the most forceful critiques of Habermas’ theory, Nancy Fraser demonstrates how a Habermasian public sphere is constituted by gendered exclusion. Sexism, Fraser famously argues, is so deeply engrained in the concept of “public” that it is built into the very word: “the etymological connection between ‘public’ and ‘pubic’ [is] a graphic trace of the fact that in the ancient world possession of a penis was a requirement for speaking in public” (60). This is an observation brought to bear on public art by W.J.T. Mitchell in his essay “The Violence of Public Art” (1990). Mitchell insists: “The very notion of the ‘public,’ it seems, grows out of a conflation of two quite different Latin words, *populus* (the people) and *pubes* (adult men). The word *public* might more properly be written with the *l* in parentheses to remind us that for much of human history political and social authority has derived from a ‘pubic’ sphere, not a public one” (887). These reminders that the penis has long been the physiological talking stick that structures access to (de facto) white and male publics signal a (re)turn to the body that disrupts foundational notions of publicness.

And yet, debates about the place of the body in theories of publicness persist in the critical discourse. For example, the physically absented and abstracted “partial nonidentity” of the addressee is fundamental to Michael Warner’s influential notion of “counterpublics.” Building his theory on the compelling claim that “a public exists only by virtue of address” (87), Warner maintains: “the addressee of public discourse is always yet to be realized” (73). He expounds, insisting that “publics are different from persons, that the address of public rhetoric is never going to be the same as address to actual persons, and that our partial nonidentity with the object of address in public seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech” (78). Accepting much of Warner’s theoretical framework, but taking issue with the placelessness of Warner’s publics, Michael Wittenberg works to “re-literalize the term ‘space’ ... and ask straightforwardly what it is like to ‘go out in public,’ or to ‘appear in public’ as a particular individual” (427). For Wittenberg, the abstract and discursive public that Warner presents presupposes a physical public that Warner (after Habermas) tends to overlook. All

discourse, Wittenberg insists, is physiologically based. To Warner's axiomatic insistence on the discursive nature of publicness—if you are reading his essay, he contends, then you are part of its public—Wittenberg counters: “if you are reading this, you are either now in a physical public space, or were when you acquired this text” (429). Warner's very discourse about discursive publics, Wittenberg argues, passes through and exists by virtue of physical public spaces. Wittenberg's work relies on earlier efforts to respatialize critical theory, including Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's respective rethinkings of walking the city, and Edward Soja's effort to ground Marxist considerations of space (4-6). For Soja, space functions hand-in-hand with history: “social life is materially constituted in its historical geography” (127). Following Soja, Wittenberg maintains that although traces of space are present throughout discourses on publics and counterpublics, overall space has remained “to borrow Edward Soja's phrase, ‘theoretically inert’” (426). The spatial and the particular are crucial for Wittenberg's understanding of publicness—“because indeed we *do*, as public actors or agents, also consider ‘publicness’ a real, concrete space, a place ‘out of doors’ or ‘out of the house.’ We venture ‘out in public’ or ‘appear in public,’ subjecting ourselves to the conditions of visibility” (428). As Wittenberg puts it: “the fundamental anonymity that constitutes public ‘strangerhood’ ... threatens to be supplanted by the specific and vulnerable real body when it actually and literally appears in the space that was supposed to be occupied only indefinitely or metaphorically” (428-29). Just such a set of kinetic and “critical moves” (to echo Randy Martin) drives my examination of what a site dance-based epistemology can bring to understandings of publicness.

Recent performance studies-based discussions of the public, and indeed of public space, as embodied and *performative* are instructive here. Indeed, as Laura Levin and Lisa Wolford Wylam contend in the program notes for the Performance Studies International conference “Performing Publics” (2010), “the idea of ‘public’ is inseparable from the body, the site where public meets private” (5). In the co-edited special edition of *Performance Research* that followed the conference (2011), Levin and Marlis Schweitzer elaborate, insisting that the application of a performance studies lens to studies of publics can “revise, extend, challenge and enliven existing notions of publics and publicness and offer new strategies for thinking about and engaging with global transformations” (1). Thinking publicness through performance grounds the dynamics of

social and civic “legitimation and exclusion” (Levin and Schweitzer 5) that constitute publics in the sensing body, the witnessing body, the vulnerable body, the acting body, the moving body.

An underlying contention of my dissertation is that performance and publics are structurally parallel. The dialectic between abstraction and material particularities that drives the Warner and Wittenberg debate is precisely the dialectic that structures performance itself. A form defined by rehearsal, restagings, remounts, and recurrence, performance is radically contingent and repeatable, at once. Acknowledging the connection, Wittenberg claims: “To be part of a public, or to be part of *the* public, is to be at once both an actor and a stand-in, both a person and a *kind* of person, whose part could, in principle, have been played by someone else” (426-27, emphasis in original). He continues with reference to performance’s publics: “even, for instance, at the big or unique or ‘historical’ performance or event—the audience still understands itself as no more than a coincidental cross section of the larger mass of people who ‘could have been there’ instead” (428). (And who, I might add, might be there tomorrow night, or might have been there yesterday.) Even though a theatre audience is a physically discrete and definable group, it is also a quasi-abstract entity. Theatre publics are “both present and potentially absent or replaceable” (428). That is, performance, like “the public,” is structured by a dialectic between particularity and abstraction: both the performance and the publics it calls into being are, simultaneously, radically particular and constituted by replaceable stand-ins.

In *Moving Publics*, I seek to examine this conflictual character of performance publics as it is expressed in specific instances of site-based dance. I borrow from Jill Dolan, who—in her contribution to Levin and Schweitzer’s special edition—describes the connection between publicness and performance in compelling terms: “Performance studies has productively unsettled our collective understandings of what a public is, from the most private performance, staged between one performer and one other person, to a gallery exhibit, to a rowdy faculty meeting, to a Broadway audience and well beyond” (184). Dolan’s thoughts here build on the theory of “temporary publics” she forwards in her book, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2006). Celebrating the radical contingency of performance—that each performance is different from those that

came before and those that will follow, even if they follow an identical script—Dolan argues that performance’s constant flux is precisely what ensures its relevance to discussions of publicness. For Dolan, the “constantly morphing” quality of performance publics has the potential to model ways of understanding publicness that find a way out of a homogenizing bind (17). That “[p]erformance creates ever-new publics, groups of spectators who come together for a moment and then disperse out across a wide social field” (90), indicates performance’s simultaneous “attachment to particulars—particular moments in time, spaces in geography, constellations of spectators joined as audiences to witness specific configurations of performers” (168-69)—and performance’s precondition of detachment from those same particulars. Even as it is defined by physical presence, performance also “sees itself as a moment in time, as progressive, partial, unfinished, and open” (162). Although they are constituted through physical co-presence, performance publics are also always in the midst of dissolution—they are “partial, unfinished, and open.” The unique value of performance’s temporary publics, in Dolan’s terms, is their manifest combination of insistent visceral presence with perpetual contingency.

My dissertation is motivated by a belief that site-based dance can contribute to a critical consideration of what happens when strangers show up with their “specific and vulnerable real bod[ies]” to occupy spaces intended for only “indefinite” use—which is, circling back to my Introduction and to Judith Butler, precisely what played out at various Occupy encampments in the fall of 2011. With attention to both the performativity and the materiality of publicness, Butler argues that it is this vulnerable real body—the body that shows up in public—that has the capacity to “reconfigure the materiality of public space, and produce, or reproduce, the public character of that material environment” (“Bodies” n. pag.). How we enact *public* is determined by our physical actions: “the collective actions collect the space itself, gather the pavement, and animate and organize the architecture” (“Bodies”). Crucially, for Butler and for my project, the organization and reorganization of the material environment of being-in-public shapes the experience of the more nebulous qualities of publicness. Bodies, Butler argues, “find and produce the public through seizing and reconfiguring the matter of material environments” (“Bodies”). Relational and contingent, the public is generated and challenged and reconstituted through action performed by bodies that show up. And

“showing up,” after all, is foundational to site-based dance, a form in which arriving at a specific site and holding the space is a requisite—and a form that insists on upstaging (or showing up) the atomized, everyday flow of urban life with creative interjections, images, and reuses of familiar spaces. By showing up (in both senses) the publicly dancing body draws attention to non-functional possible trajectories of inhabitation. Which is not to say that the publicly dancing body does not perform a function. Indeed, the ability of the dancing body to make and remake publics and their spaces is precisely what this project seeks to explore.

A stubbornly embodied form, but one that is bound together with the knotted issues of ephemerality and “remain[ing] differently” (Schneider, *Performing* 98), dance is uniquely equipped to illuminate a tension central to the very concept of publicness: that is, the tension between the specific, embodied individual who “shows up,” and the anonymous, abstract, and presumably uniform whole the word “public” is meant to signify. Site-based dance, in other words, forces the question: where and how is the body—*are these bodies*—situated? By bringing us together to move, or in stillness to watch, the site-based dances I study in *Moving Publics* challenge the atomized ways we normally move through cities. In doing so, they pose questions of gathering and its constitutive conditions of access, exclusion, density, and mobility in resolutely physical terms. In this dissertation, I rework Lepecki’s formulation—“Rethinking the subject in terms of the body is precisely the task of choreography” (*Exhausting* 5)—and apply it to site-based dance: I argue that rethinking *the public* in terms of the body is precisely the task of site-based choreography.

Site, Space, and Urban Choreography

In my analysis of publicly sited dance, I take as a point of departure Shannon Jackson’s contention that each practicing artist and critic is equipped with a discipline-specific “perceptual apparatus” (*Social* 18). In both creation and reception, formal delimitations and traditions determine the contours and content of the social model a given artistic practice has the capacity to imagine (14). Taking seriously Jackson’s insistence that there are very real differences between the various “medium-specific imaginings of social theory” (18), I ask how dance imagines the social models it performs

and provokes. As a moving form, how is dance uniquely structured to attend to the gatherings and dispersals, the passes and gestures, the pathways and pauses that constitute bodily being in public space? Or, differently put: what is the role of the traditionally choreographic in an understanding of what I will call “urban choreography”?

In their anthology on site dance, Kloetzel and Pavlik contend that critical analyses of site dance have the capacity to unfix the theoretical underpinnings of site art studies. They ask (but stop short of answering) a key question, and one that drives my project: “placing ‘site-specific’ and ‘dance’ side by side puts a new twist into the theoretical fabric. How will the medium of movement change the site-specific discussion?” (18). Of course, the discussion of site and site-specificity has, itself, long been on the move. In her effort to sketch what she identifies as the first historical and theoretical account of site-specific art, Miwon Kwon demonstrates the excess and slippage of the language of *site*: “Site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, site-related. These are some new terms that have emerged in recent years among many artists and critics to account for the various permutations of site-specific art in the present” (1). Site works emerged, Kwon argues, in contradistinction to a modernist, minimalist paradigm that was deeply invested in the autonomy of the artwork—that understood the artwork as separate from and unchanged by its physical situatedness. In response, early site-based works emphasized an immobility that hinged on an intrinsic connection to a particular place. Kwon quotes acclaimed and contentious sculptor Richard Serra who articulated his reluctance to move his site-based sculpture, *Tilted Arc* (1981), insisting, “To remove the work is to destroy the work” (12). Indeed, even as it adheres to a certain immobility, Serra’s sculpture also raises questions about the stakes of art’s choreography of its publics: a daily nuisance to those forced to walk around the more than thirty-six meter long wall in order to access the Jacob Javits Federal Building in New York City, the piece—which was ultimately removed from the Foley Federal Plaza in 1989—generated an alternative urban choreography that, it would seem, also obstructed movement (from point A to B).

When the art object is itself constituted of performance, the question of site shifts again. Performance, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks contend,

is the latest occupation of a location at which other occupations—their material traces and histories—are still apparent: site is not just an interesting, and disinterested, backdrop. ... The multiple meanings and readings of performance and site intermingle, amending and compromising one another. (qtd. in Tompkins, “The ‘Place’” 2)

Performance’s temporal relationship to site—its appearance, disappearance, and perpetual reappearance—draws out the layers of past and present occupations that constitute a given site.³⁵ Site, in a performance epistemology, is constantly (re)enacted, constantly shifting. Site-based dance foregrounds the movement inherent in site even more forcefully. With its emphasis on organized movement, the dancing body in public space “recontextualizes” its sites through the medium of choreography, exposing the choreographic impulse at the core of site: by “moving sites” (to invoke Victoria Hunter’s term), site-based dance foregrounds how particular aesthetic, social, and spatial enactments of site, themselves, compel movement. Particular understandings of the correlations between site, space, and movement are embedded in a dancing body’s relationship to its surrounding environment (physical and peopled): the dancer’s performance of specific embodied techniques, her distinctive movement sensibility, the movements performed, and the arc of their development all combine to model a particular and intimate spatial epistemology.

Central to my study of site-based dance is an analysis of, in Valerie Briginshaw’s words, “what and how space means in dance, [and] how it is possible to think space differently” (8). Indeed, “In a very fundamental and immediate way,” Briginshaw argues, “dance presents representations of bodies in spaces, their relations to the spaces and to other bodies” (5-6). It follows, then, that site-based dance, as a form fixated on the embodied intricacies of site and space, is particularly well situated to contribute to ongoing discussions of the body in space—a vast literature that ranges across disciplines and beyond the scope of this dissertation. In my use of “space,” I follow Henri Lefebvre and the social theorists and human geographers who develop his line of thinking. By “space” I mean neither the raw, “natural,” and presumably empty space of early human geographers, nor their deeply personalized understanding of “place.”

³⁵ I will (re)turn to more fully explore performance’s “againness” as theorized by Rebecca Schneider (*Performing* 6) in my next chapter.

Following a litany of social geographers and urbanists, I approach space as always already “ideologically constructed” along racialized, gendered, and classed lines, and yet also available (to various degrees and variously to different people) to restructuring (Cresswell 28-32). Spaces are neither fixed nor empty; rather, they are both storied and available for temporary inscription, at once. These inscriptions are inevitably bodily: “It is by means of the body,” Lefebvre argues, “that space is perceived, lived—and produced” (162). With this in mind, I take up Nigel Thrift’s notion of place as practice and Michel de Certeau’s notion of tactical intervention in city spaces. Taken together, these theories suggest that, as Tim Cresswell contends, “place is constituted through reiterative social practice—place is made and remade on a daily basis” (Cresswell 39). Or, “Places are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed” (Cresswell 37).

Site-based dance, I argue, has a particular purchase on notions of space and place as kinetic. In their genealogy of place as action, dance theorists and practitioners Gretchen Schiller and Sarah Rubidge trace developments in human geography from the 1950s forward, drawing out various theorizations of places as kinaesthetic forms of inquiry. Drawing from the writings of human geographers Thrift, Cresswell, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Edward Casey, among others, Schiller and Rubidge identify five categories of place as movement: the slow shifting of specific places (seashores, mountains, etc.) over time; movement’s necessary site-specificity and responsiveness to particular geographies; the phenomenological experience of subjectivity; the ways in which the body carries place; and the focus on “*place as a practice of dwelling*” (13, emphasis in original). I will pursue all five categories in this dissertation. Adding necessary nuance to a theory of place as movement, Fiona Wilkie analyzes performance in the context of the mobility turn and, via geographer Doreen Massey, attends to the “clash of trajectories” of variously classed, gendered, raced and other agendas and bodies in their movements through specific places (6). Places, Massey argues, “necessitate intervention; they pose a challenge. They implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees” (qtd. in Machon, *Immersive* 132). Mobility, as Wilkie argues with reference to sociologist John Urry, “is fundamentally relational.... That is, the various scales on which mobility operates, and the vastly different levels of

privilege and empowerment in experiences of being mobile, exist not in spite of but in direct relation to one another” (6). Always a negotiation between the lived and moving body and the space that contains and allows for the movement (Briginshaw; Brown; Hunter), dance situated in public spaces brings issues of choreography, the body, collectivity, propriety, and regulation to the fore.

Often, site-based dance achieves a critical reflection on space and place not by resisting dominant power structures, but by exposing them. Attentive to the types of bodies that people the American canon of site dance, Foster complements her history of postmodern site-specific dance with attention to non-dancing moving bodies in urban spaces. She is self-conscious of her reproduction of the “whiteness of the avant-garde” in her description of the early site-based works of members of Judson Dance Theatre (“Walking” 128). Foster draws from the observations of Judson member Yvonne Rainer to call “into question the privileged position of those for whom these performances were significant. Only an elite group of choreographers and viewers—white, educated, tracing its heritage from a European avant-garde aesthetic tradition—involved themselves in this assault on the theatre” (128). Indeed, restrictions to bodily movement cast unevenly along classed, raced, gendered, and abled lines structure the development of site-based dance. Site-based dance practitioner Olive Bieringa of BodyCartography Project observes: “I have the privilege of being white and can therefore choose my invisibility and maybe my ‘craziness.’ As one African American witness commented at an earlier BodyCartography event: ‘Man, I just scratch my nuts and they take me to jail. What do you clowns think you’re doing?’” (138).

It is precisely by reinscribing urban pathways within the context of choreographed bodily attention, *particularly* when the space for that inscription is carved out by compliance with forces of structural racism and classism, that site-based dance has the potential to expose those same forces that allow for and deny various movement possibilities. In her essay, Foster weaves together lineages of thought (she traces Michel de Certeau’s theory of walking the city) and of dance (along with the site-based dances she details, she also outlines the development of Contact Improvisation, for example), to identify “two distinctive edifices of theatricality”: one that attempts to transport and the other to deny “the effects of the theatre” (138). The site-based movement experiments of

the Judson dance-makers, she argues, belong to the first category which transports the theatrical frame out of the theatre space: “Their blending of pedestrian and dancery elements exposed the disciplining conventions of the theatre: its proscenium, plush velour, lights, virtuosity, interiority, and the hallowedness of dance movement” (128).

I want to push Foster’s useful framework further. While I think Foster is right to critique the postmodern dance movement’s various axes of privilege and its perhaps naïve belief that recasting everyday spaces as spaces of theatrical exception is in a generalized best interest or public good, I want to recuperate the critical possibilities of site-based dance. Whereas Foster identifies how early site-based dance “exposed the disciplining conventions of the theatre,” I am interested in how dances situated in public spaces can expose the theatricality that structures purportedly non-theatrical spaces and the various forces that orchestrate under-examined and seemingly inevitable movement pathways through our cities. Site-based dance, as an organization of trained and moving bodies, has a unique capacity to expose the stage management of public spaces: the particular choreographies of class, gender, race, and ability that determine who moves how and where; the movement dictums of public space policies, urban design, and social expectations of behaviour that regulate bodily movement in more obvious ways; and the ways that urban, natural, and social history are alternately paved over and celebrated in the ongoing development and redevelopment of a city.³⁶ It is this nexus of movement trajectories and impulses that I identify as “urban choreographies.”

The urban sidewalk is a clear example of a site of urban choreography—a space that mandates movement along a variety of architectural, behavioural, and ideological lines. It is telling that geographer Nicolas Blomley (drawing from Jane Jacobs) uses the term “sidewalk ballet” to describe the processes by which “people occupy and use the sidewalk in intricate, yet patterned forms of community-based surveillance and encounter” (*Unsettling* 19). Working with notions of “shy distances” that are informally maintained between pedestrians who share sidewalk space and a two-foot “no-touch

³⁶ For performance studies perspectives on how spaces organize their users, see Schiller and Rubidge’s turn to architect Bernard Tschumi, who claims to create not built structures so much as “the conditions for the movement of bodies in space” (4). See also Josephine Machon’s treatment of Juhani Pallasmaa (*Immersive* 124).

zone” that structures ideal sidewalk usage and design, Blomley’s understanding of the “sidewalk ballet” and of the intrinsic link between social and spatial relations lends itself to choreographic analysis—a task I will undertake in Chapter 5 (*Rights* 41-43). In his kinetic theory of passage through urban spaces, Blomley contends that the sidewalk “choreograph[s] urban encounters between subjects” (28).

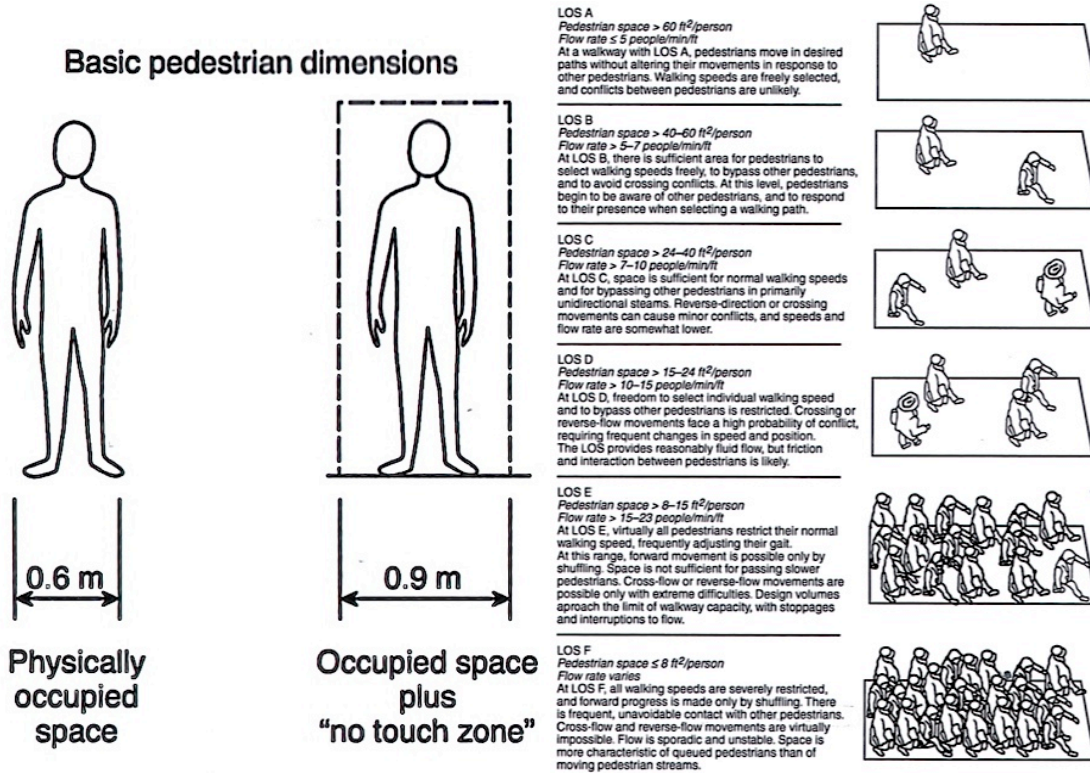


Figure 1.1. Left: “Basic Pedestrian Dimensions,” figure from Transportation Association of Canada, *Geometric Design Guides for Canadian Roads*, Part 1, 1999; rpt. in Nicholas Blomley, *Rights of Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2011; print; 43). Right: Pedestrian walkway LOS: *Highway Capacity Manual 2000*; copyright, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, Exhibit 11-8, 11-19; rpt. in Nicholas Blomley, *Rights of Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2011; print; 44).

Note. The choreographic qualities of the “no touch zone” and the rendering of pedestrian flow is, to this dance scholar, striking: with increasing and quantifiable density, pedestrians become restricted in their directional choices to the degree that “cross-flow and reverse-flow movements are virtually impossible” in the final and most crowded scenario.

Not only do spaces themselves choreograph us, but regulation of those spaces also determines the possibilities and limitations of movement. Public art and performance practices have a long history in North America, but the relationship of

public art to the city spaces in which it is set has shifted radically in recent decades with the “contraction and usurpation of the public realm in North American cities” (Berelowitz 246-7). Neil Smith and Setha Low suggest that public spaces in the United States are becoming increasingly privatized: they are either owned privately or so rigidly controlled in access and allowable behaviour that they function as private. Smith and Low observe a new intensity driving the “clampdown on public space” in the past two decades—and particularly in the high-surveillance, anti-terror post-9/11 years (1-2): “A creeping encroachment in previous years has in the last two decades become an epoch-making shift culminating in multiple closures, erasures, inundations, and transfigurations of public space at the behest of state and corporate strategies” (1). Of course, as Canadian geographers have been quick to point out, the absorption of municipal specificity under the rubric of “North American cities” occludes crucial differences north and south of the border (Lees 326). Nonetheless, recent developments in public space policy in various global cities are designed to circumscribe the use of public spaces. Movement in and through Vancouver, for example, is structured by the Safe Streets Act in Canada (Ontario and British Columbia), which prohibits certain forms of physicality in the act of “solicitation” (i.e., panhandling) (BC 2004). Meanwhile, contentious and classist sit-lie ordinances in numerous American west coast cities (in effect in Seattle, Portland, and under consideration in San Francisco) prohibit sitting and lying down on sidewalks in the downtown core.

It is in the context of these variously mandated movements that dance can intervene by both modeling and eliciting alternative movement pathways. In the introduction to the “On Choreography” special edition of *Performance Research* (2008), Lepecki argues for the fundamentally choreographic properties of privileged and regimented movement:

geo-political and bio-political questions become essentially choreographic ones: to decide *who* is able or allowed to move—and under what circumstances, and on what grounds; to decide *where* one is allowed to move to; to define who are the bodies that can *choose* full mobility and who are the bodies forced into displacement. The end result of this politics of mobility is that of transforming the right for free and amble circulation into a privilege, and then turn that privilege into a prized subjectivity. (1)

Bringing Massey, Blomley, Foster, and Lepecki together, then, we can see that a conception of the city as choreographic—an understanding of place as kinetic and of action as guided along specific, uneven, and clashing trajectories—forces the question of the place of dance. While I distinguish my expansion of the category of “choreography” from that which Erin Brannigan critiques—that is, the visual art world’s decades-old but increasingly trendy exploration of untrained bodies and undisciplined moves under the rubric of “the choreographic” (as well as the recent proliferation of the term as a way to index the act of curation) (6)—I am, nonetheless, cautious of how expanded uses of the term can operate to obviate specific choreographic knowledges and disciplinary specificities. Thus, I attend throughout to the place of choreography in an expanded frame: when dance inserts itself into physical public places, it also inserts itself into a larger sense of public place—where “place” itself is a site of slippage between the physical and the psychic, between geographical coordinates and socio-aesthetic significance, dance placed in public exposes, comments on, and re-choreographs the movement of the publics it encounters.

Choreographing Audiences

The complex function of choreography to gather and discipline bodies is fundamental to my project. In my understanding of how site-based dance choreographs its audiences, I draw from performance and dance studies conversations about the power dynamics built into practices of choreography and participatory performance. In particular, Lepecki’s notions of “choreopolice” and “choreopolitics” (Lepecki’s neologisms) as he articulates them in an essay by the same name are useful for my analysis of site-based dance (2013).³⁷ In response to his observations of the various forms of policing that directed bodily movement within most (if not all) of the global Occupy encampments of 2011 and 2012, Lepecki proposes a link between police officer and choreographer: “police commands are essentially choreographic. Just as a

³⁷ Lepecki defines the “choreopolitical” or “choreo-political” (as it shows up in his early works) as “all kinesthetically performed programs of subjectivation and counter-subjectivation embedded in ideological structures of command or resistance” (“Stumble Dance” 48); or, more simply, as that which is at the nexus of the political and the kinetic (“Choreopolice” 14).

choreographer in the studio asks a dancer to go to a place, to stay there for a few minutes, or to move about in specific ways, the police do exactly the same” (17). Defined as “any movement incapable of breaking the endless reproduction of an imposed circulation of consensual subjectivity, where to be is to fit a prechoreographed pattern of circulation, corporeality, and belonging” (20), Lepecki characterizes the effects of choreopolicing as “a kind of impoverishment of choreographic imagination; [a belief that] movements can only take place in spaces preassigned for ‘proper circulation’” (20). Lepecki establishes “choreopolicing” in contradistinction to “choreopolitics,” which hinges on reimagining movement pathways: “choreopolitics requires a redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and senses through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense (meaning and direction) is the experimental exercise of freedom” (21).

Arguably a form of what urban theorists are calling “tactical urbanism”—that is, low cost, guerrilla, and often temporary and D.I.Y. reclamations of increasingly regulated public spaces (Lydon and Garcia)—site-based dance in urban spaces functions choreopolitically under the pretence of reclaiming variously restricted urban spaces and (re)rendering them *public*. Social geographer Jeffery Hou has explored such practices under the rhetoric of “insurgent public space.” This yields a curious paradox that lies at the heart of site dance: dances in public places are becoming increasingly common even as the movement of bodies in and through public places is becoming increasingly regimented. One explanation for this paradox is urban theorists Karen Franck and Quentin Stevens’ notion of “loose space.” In Franck and Stevens’ formulation, spaces are “loosened” by embodied use: “With their bodies,” Franck and Stevens argue, individuals and groups “lay claim to public spaces, pursuing activities of their choice, activities not intended in the design or program of these spaces” (35).³⁸ “Loosening” refers to making room for practices that are not regimented by institutional control, spatial policy, or behavioural expectations. The spatial practices that “generate looseness” are most often non-productive; instead, they are activities centred on leisure, entertainment, reflection, or social interaction (3).

³⁸ For a compelling analysis of a definitively physical form of tactical urbanism, parkour, as a reworking of city/body relations see Jimena Ortuzar’s “Parkour or l’art du déplacement” (2009).

However, whereas some scholars argue that the contemporary tightening of public spaces by way of policies, the encroachment of the private sector, and surveillance initiatives demands a broad-strokes “loosening” of those same spaces by way of performative interventions (Franck and Stevens; Hou; Lydon and Garcia), other scholars (and, indeed, many policy makers and developers who practice “mixed use” development) argue that these same performative tactics function to close spaces to factions of its potential usership. Coming from the discipline of political studies, John R. Parkinson insists that such arguments for interventionist reclamations of public space against the encroachments of privatization undermine themselves because they bemoan the demise of public space “on the grounds that people can no longer ‘do what they want’ in it, which merely pits one liberal individualist claim against another without providing any reasons to choose between them” (7). He lays out a rebuttal to the reclamation of public space via alternative physicality:

While rebellious acts may be necessary to force open space that should not be closed or overly regulated ..., there is an obvious rejoinder: that space that has been colonized by young people whizzing around on skateboards is no longer ‘public’ for the elderly, or for parents with very young children, among others. ... For public space to be genuinely accessible to all, there must be rules that regulate interactions between individuals, a freedom for each consistent with a like freedom for all ..., not individualist anarchy. In some of the urban theory literature, democracy is treated as if it were solely a matter of individual liberty. That is a mistake. It is about how we resolve conflicts over the exercise of such liberty, and other resource claims. (26)

A question underlying my dissertation resonates with Yvonne Rainer’s critique of postmodern site-based movement experiments, with Parkinson’s critique of performative reclamations of public spaces, and with the language of Pearson and Shanks’ articulation of site-based performance as an “occupation”: do experimentations with movement in public spaces, in fact, render those spaces “loose,” “free” (in Lepecki’s terms), democratic, or more public? And for whom? Who is excluded (self-excluded or simply outside the address) from the invitation to engage with publicly sited dance? What are the stakes of these temporary claims on public spaces and choreographies of publics? I treat this set of questions by attending, in each chapter, to how publics are called together around particular dances, and how their participation in the event is directed.

In my attention to how audiences and publics are choreographed in instances of public dance, I locate site-based dance in a trajectory of participatory art practices. The critical discourse that supports these practices is partly rooted in what curator and art critic Nicholas Bourriaud has famously called “relational aesthetics”—a specific mode of event-based art (typically out of a visual art trajectory) that has fit itself easily and often into both gallery and public spaces throughout cities worldwide. Bourriaud identifies the primary objective of relational aesthetics as the formation of inter-personal relationships: relational artists take as their “theoretical horizon” the “sphere of inter-human relations” (43), and work to produce, “first and foremost, ... relations between people and the world” (42). Typically, this takes the form of active, physical participation: relational works often depend for their fulfillment on the physical involvement of erstwhile ‘viewers.’ Bourriaud’s celebration of benign togetherness is too cheerful for many critics, including his most outspoken interlocutor, Claire Bishop. Bishop is skeptical of relational art’s capacity to challenge social hierarchies (“Antagonism” 67-69). Such works call together overwhelmingly homogenous groups of art-goers to constitute their temporary and “convivial” communities, thereby unthinkingly reinscribing dominant social hierarchies—a criticism also levelled against Bourriaud’s genealogy of relational artists which omits, as Helena Recklitt demonstrates, a lineage of female artists who were creating relational work long before the predominantly male artists Bourriaud cites in his definition of the form. Feel-good relational art, Bishop maintains, is bound to reify oppressive social relations. Like Deutsche, Bishop draws from Laclau and Mouffe’s notion of antagonism to propose a model of “relational antagonism” (“Antagonism” 79; *Installation* 123). A social version of the heterogeneous, unfixed, and often uncomfortable spatial arrangements of public performance, the publics of “relational antagonism” are structured around conflict and difference in an effort to call attention to the lines of exclusion that structure dominant notions of community, participation, and consumption.

Relational aesthetics, relational antagonism, and other participatory forms are motivated by and invested in the resistant potential inherent in the transformation of spectator into participant. This line of thinking, as many scholars have pointed out (Bourriaud included), comes out of a Debordian account of the society of the spectacle and its subject, the presumably passive spectator. But some critics are wary of the claims that underpin the current participation craze. Jen Harvie, for example, argues that

while relational art practices are often cast as automatically and intrinsically democratic and socially progressive, they actually “risk ... alignment with and co-option by a neoliberal capitalist ideological agenda that is inherently élitist”—and this risk is all the more dangerous for its apparent resistance to such inequities (“Democracy” 114). Harvie suggests that socially engaged and relational art reinforces traits of the good capitalist in that it rewards the “enterprise, entrepreneurialism and opportunism of both artists who must find appropriate sites, resources and audiences with which to make their work and audiences, who must seek out the art and make the requisite pilgrimage to experience it” (120-21). In fact, Harvie points out—with particular relevance to site-based relational art—that by producing works off-stage and outside of gallery spaces, artists may well be unintentionally legitimizing and reinforcing neoliberal cuts to arts funding and other institutional supports that enable sustained artistic practice (“Democracy” 121). Moreover, Harvie argues (echoing Bishop and others) that relational and participatory art is limited in its democratic function in that “its conditions limit the agency of its artists and audiences” (“Democratic” 119).³⁹ That is, relational art invites participation, but mandates the parameters, quality, and possibilities of that participation.

Site-based dance, as I have argued, is doubly choreographic: that is, it presents a choreography (in the form of a site-based dance) that, itself, effects a choreography (of the audiencing public). If, as per Harvie, participatory performance practices have instilled in us the notion that the individual has power to act, but only within a structure designed and determined by the artist (i.e., wherein the audience has only pre-circumscribed choices for action), then how can the choreography performed and prompted by site-based dances prompt us to recognize and reimagine the power structures and mechanics of organized movement in public spaces? What structures of power does site-based dance propose?

This seeming bind, between the invitations site-based dance proffers to its publics to move differently and the form’s often regimented set of instructions about the pathways along which such movement should unfold, is one of the core ambivalences of

³⁹ I will return in Chapter 5 to unpack Harvie’s theories of socially turned art as they are developed in her book *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (2013), particularly the links she proposes between participatory art and delegated labour.

site-based dance that this project seeks to explore. Alongside the specific analyses of site-based dance that each chapter of this dissertation pursues, recent theorizations of choreography, I submit, can help nuance the discussion of participatory and relational art in its conscription of audience involvement. In her treatment of the historical usages and current proliferations of the word “choreography,” Foster notes that the meaning of the word has exceeded its official definitions. The *Oxford English Dictionary’s* account of “choreography,” Foster maintains, fails to keep up with its expanding application to everything from military to artistic organizations of bodies (*Choreographing* 16). Foster also traces the ways in which the term “choreography” and the designation of “choreographer” have served, historically, to validate certain forms of work while obscuring others.

It is this entanglement—choreography with dominant power structures—that interests me in my reading of site-based dance and its relationship to publics and public spaces. In Lepecki’s terms, “the practice and concept of choreography [i]s a system of command” (“Choreopoliice” 2) and one that “implements, needs, produces, and reproduces whole systems of obedience” (15). However, as Lepecki qualifies, “choreography, if it commands, if it demands, does so in ways that exceed the intentions of choreographers, dancers, critics, audiences” (2-3):

What is left is the observation: choreography was invented in order to structure a system of command to which bodies have to subject themselves ... into the system’s wills and whims. Thus, choreography also names a very corporeal need: the need to pedagogically and biologically (re) produce bodies capable of carrying out certain movement imperatives. ... No wonder the dancers in the *corps-de-ballet* are called *sujets*—this is the appropriate naming of those freely falling into the apparatus of capture called choreography. Indeed, it is known but seldom theorized how dancers have to subjugate themselves to the commands of all sorts of choreographic and para-choreographic imperatives. (3)

Even when choreography operates as a mode of commanding, it is rarely straightforwardly dogmatic. Models of choreography have changed in recent years; Foster argues that choreography has transformed in the past century from a notion of sole authorship with its overtones of control to one that rests on more complex interrelations of power. Postmodern and contemporary practices often rest on reallocations of the labour of movement innovation, interdisciplinary co-production, and a

general reinvestment in concepts and practices of collaboration; in this context, the choreographer, Foster maintains, is now most accurately conceived of as a “facilitator” (*Choreographing* 66).

While choreography is undeniably bound to the practice of disciplining bodies (both to follow instructions and to physically be able to perform given actions), it also depends on a reciprocal relationship between dancer and dance, dancer and choreographer, dance and environment. The dancer cannot perform the dance without also claiming it, seizing it, and finding herself in it. And the process of entering the dance is opened by asserting place, becoming sensitive to ground, and allowing the contours of a given space or set of spaces to co-choreograph. In this way, then, the choreographer must ultimately—even in the most controlling of situations—give the dance to the dancer and to the space. For, as Lepecki argues in his discussion of choreopolitics, “It is the dancer who, in the most policed, controlled spaces (say even in the tightest of choreographic scores) ... finds a way to move politically” (“Choreopolice” 20). My project is motivated by a belief that dance’s unique insights into command, discipline, and participation are immensely useful for thinking through how the city functions as a choreographic entity.

Relational Kinaesthetics

In *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift stress the importance of the “intermingling” of strangers in public spaces (136). They develop an argument with a twinned claim that there is “a politics of sociality that needs to be revisited” (158) and that “there is a whole politics of embodiment, from the minutiae of gesture to the movement of patterns of the crowds which has still only rarely been systematically explored” (158). Taking up their charge, I examine the experience of audiencing site-based dance—an experience which, as I have argued, is shaped by the dance’s choreographic organization of those who watch in relation to the space and to each another—as a model of mobile and intimate sociality amongst strangers.

Our capacity to feel connected to strangers in public spaces has long anchored discussions of public space.⁴⁰ As Jackson puts it: “It seems no coincidence that Richard Sennett’s early prognosis in *The Fall of Public Man* worried most acutely about our diminishing capacity to imagine interdependent connections spatially and temporally to humans who will, for the most part, remain strangers to us” (*Social* 16-17). I argue that as a form, site dance insists on an embodied public that fleetingly but collectively occupies specific spaces and, in doing so, performs and solicits unexpected and intimate public encounters. I analyze how specific site-based dances negotiate between alienation and intimacy in soliciting and provoking audience reactions, and what the differences in those reactions tell us about the possibilities and the limits of bringing people together in common cause around an issue specific to the site of the performance itself. With their attempts to break through what Erving Goffman calls “civil inattention” (84)—that is, the cultivation of disinterested demeanour in public spaces—these performances set up spontaneous moments of shared attention. The movement involved in the site-based dances I study also momentarily redefines the behavioural parameters of the spaces in which the performances are situated. At the same time, I take seriously the fact that in public places, divisions within and differences between sectors of the audience are not concealed by the combination of darkened houselights and super bright stage lights that often render audiences in conventional theatre spaces almost invisible. Instead, audiences in public places are plainly visible and the social and spatial dynamics of audiencing become part of the performance.

Site-based dance, I argue, has the potential to facilitate “vicarious intimacies” of the sort described by Judith Hamera in her study of different dancing communities (18, 209). Hamera argues that considerations of relational and affective labour are particularly “central” to performance because the form is “explicitly communal and corporeal” (3). In Hamera’s words: “There are affective, relational labors as intrinsic to dancing as the physical labors of stretching and lifting” (22). Because of its affective

⁴⁰ For more on the lack of connection and relation in public, see some of the formative texts in the discourse: Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Richard Sennett’s *The Fall of the Public Man* (1971), and Richard Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000)—as well as more recent works including Ash Amin’s *Land of Strangers* (2012). These are only a few titles among many in this expansive and interdisciplinary conversation.

resonance, performance can “reshape the possibilities for intimacy” (4); specifically, Hamera attends to intimacies experienced with strangers, vicariously. Approaching the concept via performance, Hamera, like Amin and Thrift, arrives at a “mobile politics” with the capacity to generate temporary and meaningful connections between strangers (Amin and Thrift 154)—one that pivots on encounter. My project operates on the premise that the placement of dance outside of a theatrical frame and in apparently untheatrical everyday spaces has important implications for the possibilities of a “mobile politics” that is intrinsically bound to the physical details of how we gather and “intermingle” in public space. How bodies are directed to move by particular choreographic structures determines the composition and quality of the publics that come to exist, temporarily, in that movement. Site-based dance in public, urban spaces offers—sometimes more successfully than others—a model of vicarious intimacy that hinges on physical experiences that are shared even as they are cut through with difference.

Dance theorists have, for some decades, discussed one possible model for a felt and intimate vicariousness—closeness at a distance—that intersects in productive ways with the longing for connection that runs through urban studies and public space discourses. Writing about American modern dance in the 1930s, John Martin theorized the process of watching dance as a form of “kinesthetic sympathy” or “inner mimicry” wherein audience experience of watching dance translates into a vicarious sensation of the dancers’ movements at both a muscular and emotional register (Reynolds and Reason 19). Under the rubric of “kinesthetic empathy” (Sklar 15), this theory has received renewed attention in dance studies in recent years with developments in neuroscience that have drawn out the phenomenon of “the mirror neuron”—neuro-mimicry of movement pathways one witnesses visually (19).⁴¹ While the idea of *kinesthetic empathy* has captivated many dance scholars, it has also drawn criticism. Most famously, as Foster outlines in her *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (2011), scholars have mounted valid critiques of the universalist impulses that underpin *kinesthetic empathy* by pointing out that our experiences of our bodies, of

⁴¹ For more on “kinesthetic empathy” and the “mirror neuron,” see Deidre Sklar’s “Can Bodylore Be Brought to Its Senses?” (2014), Foster’s essay “Movement’s Contagion” (2008), her book *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (2011), and Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason’s co-edited *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (2012).

the physical world, and of kinaesthesia (our sense of our bodies in motion) differ along gendered, classed, raced, and other experiential and embodied lines (158-59). Incorporating attention to the particular with its various histories and cultural contexts, Foster pursues a model of an admittedly partial and incomplete, but nonetheless significant, sense of shared experience that can emerge in instances of watching dance. She asks a set of questions that are also central to my study of site-based dance:

Are there any frameworks within which to affirm the located and partial understanding yielded up in the empathetic moment of witnessing another body? Are there ways in which a shared physical semiosis might enable bodies, in all their historical and cultural specificity, to commune with one another? Are there techniques of knowledge production that invite us to imagine the other without presuming knowledge of the other? (14)

In response to Foster and others, Dee Reynolds makes a critical intervention in the notion of *kinesthetic empathy* by reframing the phenomenon as an affective rather than emotional connection (as Martin first suggested and as the word “empathy” continues to evoke). Instead of presenting an understanding of a discrete audience member and performer—each contained neatly within their fleshy and separate bodily boundaries—Reynolds turns to affect theory to suggest that audience and dancer are bound in a relational system that pre-exists a given performance even as that performance gives the relation shape. For Reynolds, audience and dancer are connected by way of “the dance’s body” (123), which she likens to the entity that emerges when an audience member watches a dance in soft-focus—experiencing the dance as a whole rather than following any one particular dancer (124, 133). “Affective empathy,” Reynolds asserts, “does not take as its object a perceived other, such as a dancer, but rather the dance’s body, which is neither ‘self’ nor ‘other’” (129).⁴² I argue that an experience of “the dance’s body” in site-based dance is inextricable from its physical environment. The experience of vicarious sensation is grounded in the dancing surfaces encountered by the bodies that dance: by the dancer’s body, the audiencing bodies, and “the dance’s body.”

⁴² Reynolds’ analysis is rooted in her involvement in the research project “Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy,” which combines audience response with neuroscience to investigate *kinesthetic empathy*. For more, see the project website (<http://www.watchingdance.org>).

It is the “texture” of site in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s sense that site-based dance is so well poised to explore. In her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), Sedgwick links texture with affect and touch, and she identifies the ways in which texture can carry with it material histories.⁴³ An appreciation of texture, for Sedgwick, is always anticipatory, vicarious, and distanced even as it is also radically situated, affective, and kinetic. The sensation of texture is fundamental to her theory (and methodology) of “beside.” For Sedgwick, “*Beside* comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other reactions” (8, emphasis in original). Her proposition of “the irreducible positionality of *beside*” (8, emphasis in original)—a notion I will develop further in my Afterword—takes as a given that to be proximate, to be side-by-side, is not to guarantee subjective solidarity (although there is certainly room for “paralleling,” “desiring,” “identifying,” “attracting,” “mimicking”). Alongside the possibility of cheerful togetherness, then, beside-ness often results from and generates experiences of antagonism (“repelling,” “differentiating,” “rivaling,” “withdrawing,” “aggressing”). Indeed, as one who *has* slept in the middle, I can attest to the ways in which “the irreducible positionality of *beside*” has the potential to foster both tenderness and animosity, both a sense of connection and an affirmation of difference—and often both at once. For a site-situated audience to be positioned *beside* dancing bodies that are themselves situated *beside* a variety of demanding environmental textures (in relations that range from leaning to identifying to paralleling to differentiating, and so on) generates the possibility of the specific affective relational kinaesthetic I seek to ascribe to site-based dance.

Because these textures are so demanding in their roughness, their coldness, their brokenness—because they are so unlike the flat, smooth, theatrical ground of stage spaces that, as I will explore in my next chapter, have long been foundational to contemporary dance—they demand a version of *kinesthetic empathy* that is grounded in

⁴³ Sedgwick rehearses Renu Bora’s distinction between “texture” (as that which is “usually glossy if not positively tacky” and occludes its material history) from “texxture” (as that which “is dense with offered information about how, substantively, historically, materially, it came into being”) (14). After establishing this distinction, though, Sedgwick returns to use “texture” throughout the remainder of her book; I follow her lead.

an understanding of environment and movement as continuous. I feel the roughness of the cracked pavement when I watch Karen Jamieson's dancers throw themselves onto the ground in *The River*; I feel the cold of the rain and the snow when I watch footage of Paul-André Fortier dance on a blustery day in his *Solo 30x30*; I feel a sweeping sense of vertigo when I watch the AERIOSA dancers dangle from the top of the Vancouver Public Library; I feel the cold autopsy table through my pants when battery opera performers strip naked and lie down on the steely surface. But what I feel is not just vicarious, for I, too, am moving in each of these dances: I navigate the same patches of broken pavement, stand in the same weather environment, feel a version of the same spatial slippage that comes of staring skyward, sit on the same cold surface on the table opposite the bare performer. This combination of vicarious and first-hand sensory audiencing emphasizes both the sameness and the difference that structures all intersubjective exchanges even as it also integrates a sensory understanding of the texture of the environment into an experience of the body—my body, my vicarious sense of the dancer's body, and my emergent sense of another entity that is both and neither. Beyond "the dance's body" as a soft-focus, emergent entity that exists somewhere between the dancing and the audiencing bodies, site-based dance also forces a recognition that even the dance's body is not only human: it is bound with the materialities of ground; it carries within it current and past "occupations" (to bring Pearson and Shanks into conversation with Butler); it is regulated by official policies and unofficial habitus; and it is mitigated by the textures of the surfaces it navigates.⁴⁴

My understanding of relational kinaesthetics, then, grounds critical discussions of relational aesthetics and *kinesthetic empathy* in an understanding of land and body—land and movement—as reciprocal. I posit an affective and aesthetic vicariousness that is not only resolutely grounded in a particular, embodied experience of the minutiae of spatial circumstance and gestural sensation, but also in a grasping toward the inevitable and unknowable experiences of the other bodies that track a different version of the same sensations, in tandem. Relational kinaesthetics takes as a guiding principal an understanding that movement—as place, as choreography, as intersubjective

⁴⁴ I use "habitus" in Pierre Bourdieu's sense of bodily habits, styles, dispositions, gestures, mannerisms, postures, and so on, that are both learned and shared culturally and within specific social groups. For more, see his foundational *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977).

exchange—is a fundamentally reciprocal endeavour, bound to the particularities of ground, the nuanced dynamics of discipline, and the possibilities and limitations of vicariousness. Even as site-based dance invites its audiences to recognize qualities of sameness, even as it invites its audiences to imagine the dancers' sensations, it also insists on a radical and embodied specificity. This complicated negotiation between self and other, between environment and self, between movement and environment is, I submit, at the core of relational kinaesthetics.

In step with other site-specific critics, I attend to how the works I study have the potential to both model and elicit new forms of intersubjective exchange and environmental “enmeshment” (Levin, *Performing* 132). Like other contemporary experiments with formal and contextual components of performance, site-based dance has the potential to foster what Zaiontz calls “critical proximity” (“Stagehands” 12) and what Levin refers to as an “ethic of closeness” (28, 160). These are physical, but also philosophical and ethical positions of proximity that seek to theorize an alternative set of relational practices that strive toward neither the cheerful togetherness for which Bourriaud’s theory has been so roundly critiqued, nor quite the antagonism promoted by Bishop—which, as Harvie has demonstrated, raises important ethical questions about the quality of participation. Relational kinaesthetics enters into this discussion by modeling felt, physical attention to the ways in which connection and difference are bound together in experiences of vicarious intimacies that are self-reflexively grounded on uneven surfaces and in culturally and physiologically specific bodies.

My understanding of how bodies are choreographed by the city, and how that choreography is rerouted or exposed by site-based dance, relies on a recognition of the room for discomfort inside of support. In this, I draw from Shannon Jackson. Jackson is critical of art practices and discourses that stress the importance of intervention above cooperation—discourses like Kwon’s and Deutsche’s. As she puts it in *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), “When a political art discourse too often celebrates social disruption at the expense of social coordination, we lose a more complex sense of how art practices contribute to inter-dependent social imagining” (14). Jackson presents a theory of “performance as an art of ‘interpublic coordination,’ and, as such, a reminder that no one can ever fully go it alone” (9). Bringing that which

constitutes background (systems of support, including policies, built environments, and raced and gendered maintenance labour) to the fore, Jackson is critical of the current trend to avow only resistance to (state) structures—a move she, like Harvie, sees as unintentionally aligned with conservative impulses to dismantle state supports: “If artists and critics unthinkingly echo a routinized language of anti-institutionalism and anti-statism, we can find ourselves unexpectedly colluding with neoliberal impulses that want to dismantle public institutions of human welfare” (*Social* 16). Jackson argues that performance holds out a unique potential to model the importance of coordination even as it also admits the difficulties inherent to the enterprise of coordinating:

Performance promises to accommodate within limits collaborating groups of people who do not always know each other and commits to being inconvenienced by the claims they bring. ... As such, performance processes, like human welfare processes, create sites that know the paradox of such systems—that sustaining support can simultaneously be felt as constraining. (42)

The structure of performance, like Sedgwick’s *beside*, is a complicated network of relations that sometimes very literally includes “desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping.” To work in performance, Jackson reminds us, “is to remember, and then to forget and remember again, that such inconvenience is the price paid for being supported” (42).

In keeping with Jackson’s important call to reassess the role of public art in terms of support, I am not only invested in critiquing the ways in which choreographers—along with built city spaces and their various structuring regulations—regiment movement, although this is certainly part of my project. I am also invested in the forms of reciprocity between bodies and sites enacted in the alternative movement practices that are embodied and elicited by site-based dance performances. These various chiasmic relationships allow me to examine a larger sense of reciprocity. Borrowing from Jackson again:

Through social art projects that provoke a reflection on the opportunity and inconvenience of our enmeshment in systems of labour, ecology, able-bodiedness, social welfare, public infrastructure, kinship and more, expanded artworks might induce a kind of ‘infrastructural avowal,’ that is,

an acknowledgement of the interdependent systems of support that sustain human beings, even though we often feel constrained by them. (“Working” 10-11)

Moving Publics takes as its premise that site-based dance’s felt “sensuous correspondence” (to adapt Levin’s term) to ground (36), its capacity to form temporary publics around particular gestural hailings, and its complicated relationship to discipline and subjectivization combine to model an aesthetic and embodied understanding of publics and performance as both contingent and relational, supportive and constraining. The formal particularities of these aesthetic public addresses—the various orientations, arrangements, gestures, facings, and so on—determine the politics of each iteration, a politics that expresses itself differently in the different bodies solicited to watch, to frame, and to perform. Zaiontz is right to observe that when audiences are choreographed by a piece—when they are invited into specific relations of participation—“[they] do not simply perform their part or task but embody and produce the relations and forces of power that underpin the work” (“Stagehands” 6). It is to an investigation of the power relations audiences are asked to perform, embody, and produce that I bring a movement interpreter’s insights into taking on and taking up movement—*putting yourself into it* and *making it your own*, in the parlance of the studio—even in the act of fulfilling directions. Site-based dance’s insights into these nuances of delegated aesthetic labour and the collaborative copresence of choreographers, dancers, audiencing bodies, and site has the potential to retune our understandings of how we move in and through our city spaces.

I begin with a dance that crystalizes some of the issues central to my larger project: site-based dance’s choreography of its audience, the productive potential of kinetic attention to choreographic topographies, and the constant movement that constitutes site. This is a dance I “arrived too late” to see in person (Blocker xii), a dance multiply concerned with memory, history, and trace in its reanimation of the buried stream. Unique in its rootedness in a buried landscape and in its under-documentation, Karen Jamieson’s *The River* (1998) literalizes the “againness” of place and performance both, even as it foregrounds the place-making capacity of performance.

Chapter 2.

Following

Western dance relates to its ground only through the ground's leveling, through its demise, its forgetting. ... [T]he flattening of the ground is the first condition for dancing to emerge on an ahistorical surface that must never interrupt, disrupt, distort, distract, and challenge the dancer in her pirouettings and in his glissands. This leveling of the ground into a blank entity, into a flat presence to which quivering has been denied, annihilates the possibility for dance to attend to the grooves of the particular terrain where dance presents itself. Indeed, Western dance must not have a particular terrain. Such is the condition of its repetition, the condition of its rehearsal, of its transmission and presentation. This lack of relation to the ground makes it impossible for dance to listen to the historical, cultural, and political accidents reverberating kinesthetically and acoustically throughout the lie of the land; it prevents the onto-historical ground from quivering up into the bodies of the dancers, and from mobilizing them otherwise. It prevents the dancers from receiving and producing unforeseen modes of presence by the means of unexpected oscillations.
~ André Lepecki, "Stumble" 52

Dusk sets on Vancouver's only cemetery, perched on top of a sloping and dipping landscape that tilts north through the city's first suburb, Mount Pleasant, to meet the ocean. The flow of the visual field toward the sea signals a crucial topographical function: this is the headwater of one of Vancouver's historic waterways, Brewery Creek. On this cool April evening in 1998, the sky is beginning to darken; reds and oranges seep from behind the sharpening silhouette of the North Shore mountains. A crowd has gathered. (I am not there; three years will pass before I move to Vancouver from Toronto.) Contained by a set of blue-green cloth banners held by volunteers, the tangled group waits—on the lookout for what to watch. And then the scene comes into focus: seven bodies stand pressed against the cobbled cement wall that borders the cemetery. They are dressed in the tattered remnants of what might once have been a crinoline or a fine suit, each a shade of grey that fades into and juts out of the cement. Their faces,

their bare hands, are exposed to the cold, to the rough hardness of the stone and the concrete, to the cool and cooling spring air. They seem to stand there for an eternity, their movement a certain sort of stillness. And yet, slowly and subtly they melt down toward the loping, grassy ground, a ground filled with so much buried history. Where just now they were standing, they begin to soften, slip, linger, and descend. Their succumbing to gravity takes many minutes. It takes ten minutes. It takes twenty. It takes half an hour. Or else it feels extended and stretched inside of only a few beats. It began before I arrived. It is a revival of yesterday's melt and another before it, and so on.

This is a provisional sketch of the opening scene of Karen Jamieson's *The River*, an almost entirely undocumented site-specific dance choreographed and performed before the term "site dance" and its permutations, "site-based" and "site-specific," were in circulation.⁴⁵ Involving over one hundred performers—a combination of professional and amateur dancers—*The River* marked Brewery Creek's flow, now buried beneath residential and commercial developments. Performed in four evening-length "Acts" over four consecutive nights, from April 30th to May 3rd of 1998, *The River* followed the diagonal flow of the culverted creek through a series of neighbourhoods crosshatched with gridded streets. The fifth and final portion of *The River* was a staged performance at the Roundhouse Performance Centre. Featuring Jamieson along with the seven company members, this ticketed performance rearranged and re-performed much of the material from the outdoor acts. Because I am primarily interested in the ways Jamieson's

⁴⁵ Jamieson has been a Vancouver-based artist for decades, with the exception of five years spent training and performing in New York City in the 1970s. She was among the first instructors in the Simon Fraser University dance program, and she was a cofounder of Terminal City Dance (1975-82) before she founded the Karen Jamieson Dance Company in 1983. Jamieson's many evening-length works have been presented widely, both nationally and internationally. Among her numerous accolades, Jamieson has been awarded a Chalmers Award for Creativity and Excellence in the Arts (1980), a Vancouver Mayor's Arts Award (2013), and her *Sisyphus* (1983) was hailed by Canada's national dance archive, *Dance Collection Danse*, as one of ten Canadian Choreographic Masterworks of the twentieth century (2003). One of her first site-based and community engaged choreographic projects, *The River* marked a departure from conventional theatre-bound dance for Jamieson. Today, her practice is defined, in part, by her continued exploration of non-theatrical spaces. Her emphasis on the local within her choreographic and social practice has made itself manifest in her involvement of local residents—particularly residents of Vancouver's oft-discussed Downtown Eastside (DTES)—in her community-based dance projects, as well as in her longtime engagement with First Nations communities and philosophies, and her numerous mentorships under First Nations elders.

choreography interacted with the outdoor, urban sites in which they were set and with how her particular procession choreographed the audience along its route, I will not treat the stage performance. Each outdoor act corresponded to a distinctive feature or flow phase of the creek. Act 1, “The Headwaters,” drifted through the loping grasses of Mountain View Cemetery. Act 2, “The Swamp,” sprawled and swirled through what was historically called the “Tea Swamp,” now a residential neighbourhood and the grounds of a secondary school. Act 3, “The Ravine,” tumbled through the fastest-moving section of the historic creek, now a bustling commercial stretch of Main Street. Finally, Act 4, “The Sea,” pooled into the historic drainage of the creek, “False Creek Mud Flats” on the map below, which was filled mid-century to support development. Each section of the dance, like the waterway, had a specific sensibility, a particular movement vocabulary, and a distinctive relationship to the landscape and to the audience. The acts were woven together not only by their contouring of the historic creek, but also by the recurring cast of seven company dancers,⁴⁶ a ceremonial welcome performed by members of the S’pak’was Slu’lum group from the Squamish First Nation, a fringe of volunteer amateur dancers and ushers, the presence and conversation (sometimes casual, sometimes scripted) of two local historians, and a mobile audience following, *en masse*, a sustained physical emphasis on the gravitational pull downhill.

⁴⁶ The professional dancers who performed *The River* were then Karen Jamieson Dance company members Shinn-Rong Chung, Laura Crema, Allan Dobbs, Caroline Farquhar, Peter Hurst, Hiromoto Ida, and Rulan Tangen. They were variously featured in different sections of the piece.

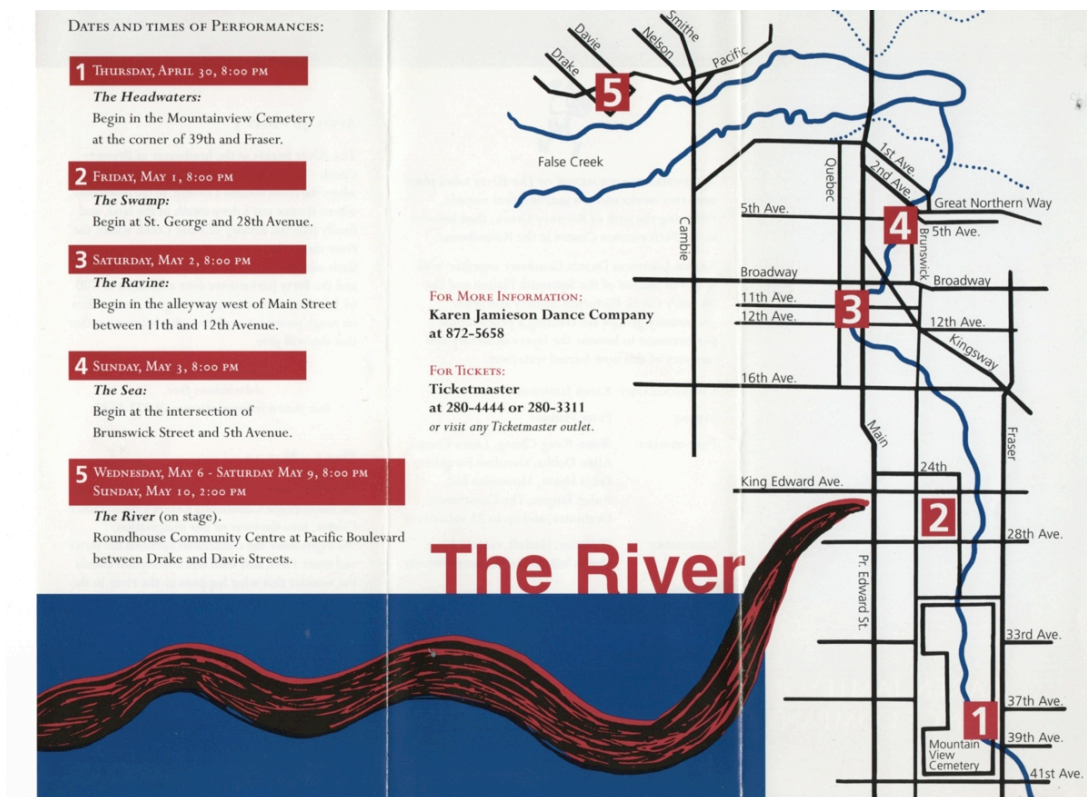


Figure 2.1. Karen Jamieson Dance, *The River* program (Vancouver: Roundhouse Community Centre, 1998; print). Courtesy of Karen Jamieson Dance.

Note. Note the five-day, northward migration of the dance along the historic Brewery Creek corridor: from Act 1 at the Mountain View Cemetery, the dance travelled downhill to Act 4 at the False Creek estuary. The fifth and final act was performed three times indoors, on the Roundhouse Performance Centre stage.

In this chapter, I pair *The River's* thematic and physiological emphasis on the history of its landscape with my own relationship to the piece as a buried moment in Vancouver's dance and urban history. Taking up recent calls in performance theory to attend to both the archival function of performance and, reciprocally, the performance inherent in archival work, I bring what Rebecca Schneider calls the "againness" of *The River* to the fore in this chapter (*Performing* 6). I trace the contours of *The River* through my own performance of archival research, an interview-based collection of oral histories, and a site walk of the more than thirty-block trail that both the ambulatory dance and the buried creek once followed. In my archival retracing of *The River*, I construct a trail of memory; I leave gaps and holes along the route. This chapter intervenes in discussions of performance's remains, its effects and affects, by transposing this inquiry into the

public context of site-situated dance and considering the form's relevance to local histories. With attention to the under-documented historical importance of both the urban and dance landscapes of Vancouver, I reanimate *The River* as a memory that both is and is not mine, dragging into the present a past that was, itself, an echo of something that came before. Situating my inquiry in the midst of one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods, I ask what performance's "leak[y]" relationship to time (and its consequent exposure of time as, itself, "leaky") (10) can offer to considerations of urban development and lost-and-found micro-histories. A notion of site as flux anchors Jamieson's practice. *The River*, as an ambulatory dance, functions to bring past and present together by drawing sustained physical attention to present urban landscapes and past topographies. This kinaesthetic tracing of the contours of ground exposes its site, a material transect of an ancient place in a one hundred and thirty year old settler city, as unfixed and in a constant flux that is both human-driven and, crucially, otherwise. By inviting its audiences to attend to the movement of the seemingly static concrete, *The River* does not achieve an unfixing so much as it reveals site as *unfixable*.

I link this multiple "againness" of *The River* with Laura Levin's notion of an aesthetic of "sensuous correspondence" of the performing body with its environment (36). I analyze how the historic creek directs Jamieson's choreography, and, in turn, how the dance choreographs its audience along the historic creek. In attending to the literal ground of dance in an effort to establish a "politics of the ground" and of *shifting* ground, I develop a theory of "choreographic topographies" that is at once specific to my study of *The River* with its choreographic preoccupation with ground and productive in the context of my larger study of the public work of site dance and the uneven spatial and social politics of the form. My analysis of *The River* supplements theories of place as a social construct by emphasizing the role of ground in (re)directing movement. I ask: what does it mean to understand the body topographically? To understand topography choreographically? What does it mean to move—to *be moved*—along the ground's cracks, folds, and depressions? I argue that by attending so kinetically to an historical landscape—specifically, one that shaped life and movement pre-colonization—*The River's* choreopolitical function (to call on André Lepecki's formulation) is to initiate a collaboration between ground and body that reveals an alternative history of Vancouver.

That this exploration occurs in the context of a unison, *en masse* procession prompts questions about how audiencing bodies relate to one another while they navigate their way along the sloping landscape. Investigating *The River's* invitation to its mixed and temporary public to follow performers along this sloping trajectory together as an unindividuated group, I examine the possibility of difference inside choreographic sameness. I am invested, here, in the productive possibilities of *following*—following the tilt of the land, following the formal choreography, following the flow of the group. By following the grooves and cracks in a seemingly even surface *The River* asks us to re-think and re-feel how we relate to the ground on which we stand: how we move through, in, and with the urbanscapes that precede us—and the overlapping and conflicting publics that exceed us.

“Up of the Dead”

It is mid-morning. Karen Jamieson and I have met with an ambitious plan for the day: we intend to walk the entire route of *The River*. When I arrive at her house in Mount Pleasant, the Vancouver neighbourhood in which this site dance was devised, rehearsed and performed, Jamieson has an enormous map of the dance's route stretched out on her living room table. This map—which local historian Bruce Macdonald custom-made for her during the research period for the project—represents the four-day long migration of her piece.⁴⁷ Jamieson also holds a series of smaller maps printed out and stapled together. She has been digging, she tells me, through the physical remnants of her long dance career to prepare for our meeting. But the pieces are hard to put together, she admits. As Jamieson transcribes the route (to the best of her recollection) from the large map onto the smaller ones, she makes provisional, hesitant pen strokes. She grasps for a faded and fading memory. She writes and rewrites; she tweaks and edits the route we will walk as her memory shifts and settles.

⁴⁷ Macdonald has been involved with the Vancouver Historical Society, the Heritage Vancouver Society, and numerous other local historical organizations; he was also president of the Brewery Creek Historical Society.

When I first ask, Jamieson is not entirely sure how many dancers performed the opening image against the graveyard wall. (All of them danced this section, she later decides: all seven.) Or what, exactly, they were wearing. Or precisely how long their melting descent took. But she shows me what she remembers. We are in the graveyard now, at the headwaters. On this chilly November day capped with a bruised, grey sky threatening rain, Jamieson walks along the wall, searching for the precise site of the opening image. She teeters and sways—a human divining rod, pulled along the wall to a spot some quiet part of her remembers through the years. When she arrives, she presses herself against the wall, as if to feel for confirmation in the shape and texture and memory of the cement blocks. In our re-walking of the route of *The River*, Jamieson grasps for a doubly tenuous memory, a memory of a memory: her choreographic retracing of an older history of the buried creek. In the midst of my efforts to excavate the dance, I cannot forget that *The River* performs an archaeological, social, and topographical dig of its own. Jamieson considers the history and morphology of the space itself, especially with attention to Coastal First Nations interrelations with these lands. She poses hard questions about territory and colonialism with her forays into site dance. Jamieson’s effort to reveal the “temporal tangle” between past and present (Schneider, *Performing* 10) insists on the lingering and eruptive existence of a pre-Contact topography, but it does more than that too; Jamieson’s collaboration with Coastal First Nations dancers also challenges what Mique’l Dangeli identifies as pervasive stereotypes of First Nations dance practices as “old, unchanged, and ... without relevance to the present” (“Dancing” 8-9).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Jamieson has focused even more acutely on these questions with *Gawa Gyani* (1991)—in which she travelled between First Nations communities throughout British Columbia seeking permission to enter via the proper protocol that our colonial ancestors failed to follow—her *Stone Soup* tour through Northern British Columbia (1997), and *The Skidegate Project* in Haida Gwaii (2005). For more on Jamieson’s collaboration with First Nations peoples as well as the politics and traditions of protocol in northwest coast First Nations dance, see Dangeli’s excellent dissertation “Dancing Sovereignty: Protocol and Politics in Northwest Coast First Nations Dance” (2015).



Figure 2.2. Karen Jamieson at Mountain View Cemetery, photograph by author (November 2012).

Note. Here, Jamieson is feeling for the opening image of Act 1 of *The River*. Jamieson's careful attention to the nuance of touch depicted in this image is indicative of her close kinetic correspondence to the topography of the Brewery Creek corridor both in her choreography of *The River* and in our return to re-walk the route.

The River is among the most slippery of the more than eighty dance works Jamieson has choreographed in a career that spans four decades and counting. Because it was situated outside a theatre space and because of a gap in the documentation of company material during the late nineties, this dance has gone virtually unmarked. Despite the fact that *The River* “is one of the largest pieces ever mounted in the city” when ranked by “the sheer size of the stage” (Dafoe n. pag.)—a breadth of scale amplified by the involvement of over one hundred volunteers and a draw of more audience members than the structure of the piece could easily handle—the piece has slipped through the cracks of Vancouver’s dance history.

Part of the reason that *The River* has disappeared so quietly from Canadian dance history can be traced to its poor peer-reception. The piece met with disdain and dismissal from the dance community of its day and, as such, it set Jamieson in poor stead for the next round of public funding. Indeed, in the year following the production of *The River*, the company's British Columbia Arts Council (BCAC) operating budget was entirely eliminated (Jamieson, Personal site walk interview; BCAC).⁴⁹ An informed review of the piece was impossible in a peer-review structure that, at the time, had neither a mandate nor a rubric to measure the quality of site-based or community-based dances. Assessed within a review system that had not yet left the stage, the merits of this site-based dance found no purchase with its reviewers. Indeed, the BCAC's project evaluators focused exclusively on the indoor, stage version of *The River*, without taking into account its four-night site-based procession. Even those who attended and assessed the site-based portions of the piece ran up against the difficulty of analyzing community-based work within a set of aesthetic standards developed for professional stage productions.

This combination of poor peer-reception and a gap in company documentation meant that record of the piece was only scantily and haphazardly amassed. The collection of photographs in the company archives is meagre and largely uncredited. The only existing video footage is incomplete and misdirected: it was filmed by a friend of the two historians who facilitated a historical walking tour for the audience alongside the dance; the footage favours the historians over the dancers at every turn. Subject to these assorted variables (placement, management, and peer reception), *The River* is

⁴⁹ Annual Reports from BCAC show that while the Karen Jamieson Dance Company was supported with operating budgets between \$35,000 and \$45,000 from 1996-98, the company's operating budget was cut to \$0 in 1999. The company subsisted on only project assistance (roughly \$17,500 per year) until it began to receive specifically allocated Community Arts Development funds in 2004. This was a crucial year for the company: no longer categorized alongside the other dance companies in BC as a recipient of Operating Assistance or Professional Project Assistance, the Karen Jamieson Dance Company was the first and only dance company to be funded under the Community Arts Development umbrella in 2004 (BCAC 68). This pattern was roughly consistent with the company's funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (Jamieson, Personal site walk interview).

almost entirely absent from accounts of dance history despite recent efforts—both nationally and internationally—to chronicle foundational site-based dance works.⁵⁰

Of course, in dealings with performance, questions of presence, disappearance, and archive are complex and interweaving, and have, themselves, a long history. Foundational to this discussion is the oft-affirmed theory, most influentially and eloquently articulated by Peggy Phelan, which posits an ontological relationship between performance and disappearance. Attending to the dynamics of visibility inherent to performance, Phelan suggests that live performance rehearses an ontological disappearing act again and again, each time it comes into and fades out of existence: “Performance and theatre,” Phelan argues, “are instances of enactments predicated on their own disappearance” (*Mourning* 2). The inevitability of impending absence, of the closing curtain, of the end of the performance, is crucial to Phelan’s theory: “Performance is the art form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance. Poised forever at the threshold of the present, performance enacts the productive appeal of the nonreproductive” (*Unmarked* 27). Crucially, there is a politics inherent in this propensity to disappear, one that—in Phelan’s equation—pushes back against a commodity economy and its ideology of accumulation.

Phelan’s theory has met with contestation on many fronts. Her suggestion that performance has the potential to escape the commodity market via “*active vanishing*” is disputed by those who study the role of affective labour in the rise of the service economy—a criticism Phelan anticipated even as she generated the theory (*Unmarked* 19, emphasis in original).⁵¹ Despite criticism, however, Phelan’s premise that performance’s ontological condition is one of disappearance has been the subject of

⁵⁰Focusing on what they call the growing “EcoArt” movement, a Creative City Network of Canada newsletter profiles the piece (2007), but even here the coverage is cursory.

⁵¹ See especially Shannon Jackson’s “Just-in-Time: Performance and the Aesthetics of Precarity” (2012) and Sianne Ngai’s *Our Aesthetic Categories* (2012). In contradistinction to Phelan, Jackson insists, “capitalist incorporation of immaterial product is not only possible, but also an historic pre-post-Fordist occupation” (19-20); indeed, performance, Jackson argues, is “the central scaffolding of a service economy” (12).

prolonged fascination and debate in performance theory.⁵² This preoccupation with performance's disappearance, what Lepecki has called performance's "hauntology" (*Of the Presence* 127), has become something of a fixation, with a particular haunting in dance—perhaps the most ephemeral and contingently archived of the time-based performance mediums.

Captured by the romance of the trace like Phelan, but critical of the presumption of linear time that underpins Phelan's theory, Rebecca Schneider offers a different perspective on the relationship between performance, pastness, presence, and disappearance—the issues at stake in Jamieson's *The River*. First in her essay "Performance Remains" (2001), and then again in her more recent book-length study of historical reenactment, *Performing Remains* (2011), Schneider proposes a queer notion of time that troubles a logic of temporal linearity that has been the basis of an entire lineage of "ephemerality studies" within the discipline of performance studies (*Performing* 94-96).⁵³ (Illustrating her theory of time as "messy" and multiple, Schneider embeds a "re-do" of her 2001 essay within the third chapter of her 2011 book project.) Her book builds on previous explorations of performance's strange staying power, including her essay "What I Can't Recall" (2006), in which Schneider sets out to write about a performance she had forgotten—a project she describes in another essay as an attempt to attend to "what remained in and of disappearance" ("Reactuals" 141). In a move that resonates with my effort to reanimate Jamieson's *The River*, Schneider seeks to explore "the way a live event accrued to itself with time, carried on the afterlife of flotsam and jetsam, strutting and fretting on the street or in the home long after any curtains might have come down in the theatre or worn off in the cool down of actors

⁵² See Diana Taylor's understanding of performance as "repertoire" in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003); Philip Auslander's notion of "mediatized" performance in his *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999); Alan Read's proposition of performance as "hide and seek" in his *Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement: The Last Human Venue* (2008); and Matthew Reason's examination of performance as an "archive of detritus" in his *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2008). See also the notion of dance's "hauntologies" developed by Judith Hamera in her *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection* (2007); I will return to Hamera's "hauntologies" in my Afterword.

⁵³ In her use of "queer," Schneider draws from Elizabeth Freeman's notion of "temporal drag." Freeman develops her analysis of "queer asynchronies" in her book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010).

backstage” (“Reactuals” 142). She posits performance as “reappearance” rather than *disappearance*. In direct response to Phelan’s insistence that performance “becomes itself through disappearance” (*Unmarked* 146), Schneider argues that:

performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive reappearance, challenging, via the performative trace, any neat antimony between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence through the basic repetitions that mark performance as simultaneously indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining. (*Performing* 102)

She calls attention to how performance’s reverberations and “sedimented acts” erupt into the present and proposes a notion of cross-temporal time focusing on “the temporal tangle, ... the temporal leak, and ... the many questions that attend time’s returns” (*Performing* 6-7, 10).⁵⁴ She insists that the present and the live always already contain within them instances and echoes of other times. That is, the present is never self-identical; rather, it is a composite of temporal slides into and out of various pasts. This troubles any easy division between performance and archive—a division on which the discipline of performance studies has been built. Archive and performance, Schneider argues, are imbricated, one with the other. She proposes a chiasmic citationality between performance and archive, between absence and presence, and between past and present: performance cites the past even as it becomes the past, and these various pasts continually resurface *in* and *as* present. Performance, then, serves an archival function in its propensity to both generate and perform memories. Both the structure—that is, the repetition and rehearsal process inherent to performance—and (very often) the content of performance are, themselves, restagings of a history that refuses to stay put in the past.

Structured by histories that refuse to stay put, by eruptions of past into present, *The River* performs Schneider’s insistence that the present is never self-identical. That the past *The River* performs contours a pre-Contact landscape functions to lay bare the political stakes in the multi-temporality of the present. What performance’s enmeshing of past with present effects, as Schneider establishes, is a troubling of imperialist,

⁵⁴ Schneider borrows the term “sedimented acts” from Judith Butler, who, in her foundational essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1990), presents the body as an entity constituted by the repetition of a series of acts and behaviours (274).

“patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural)” systems of knowledge that privilege the visual, the material, and the written word (*Performing* 97). Schneider goes on to explore the ways in which the document has been used historically to affirm the authenticity of the material archive while “arrest[ing] and disable[ing] local knowledges ... [by] scripting memory as necessarily failed” (100). According to this logic, memory fails precisely because it is messy and multiple, whereas the document upholds the myth of singular and knowable history. “In privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain,” Schneider asks, “do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently” (98)?

Messy, incomplete, and composite, the historical trajectories embodied in *The River* offer a choreographic corollary to Schneider’s understanding of queer performance time. The kinetic attention to urban micro-histories and the pre-development topography performed in and facilitated by the dance likewise troubles imperialist systems and structures. Indeed, that Jamieson elects to re-tell the history of Brewery Creek in a medium defined by its transience constitutes its own politics of the ephemeral. It is significant, for example, that Jamieson frames her piece with opening and closing ceremonies performed by members of the area’s First Nations peoples—a people with a tradition of history transmission that has long practiced alternative ways of knowing rooted in performance. Oral culture (songs and stories), non-linguistic visual culture (totems and other carvings), and embodied performance (dance, in particular) have been foundational to North American First Nations’ transmission of histories—modes of transmission structured by a belief in the staying-power of performance.⁵⁵ Although a nuanced examination of the presence of First Nations bodies and movements in *The River* exceeds my project, the incorporation of Squamish song and dance throughout the piece, and particularly in the final site-based section, signals an anti-imperialist politics of ephemerality. That Jamieson’s interest in Indigenous understandings of the land shaped her approach to *The River* is evidenced by her choice to frame each outdoor performance with a traditional welcome from members of the S’pak’was Slu’lum group,

⁵⁵ See Miranda Johnson’s “Honest Acts and Dangerous Supplements: Indigenous Oral History and Historical Practice in Settler Societies” (2005) for an approach to the archive versus oral history debate that is grounded in First Nations land rights claims in a Canadian context.

and by her collaboration with First Nations dancers in the fourth and final act of the outdoor procession. In *The River*, the past not only remains in invisible and immaterial ways, and it is not only etched into the foundation of the developed (and redeveloped) Main Street/Brewery Creek corridor; it is also performed by bodies whose ancestries extend into the land for thousands of years. In the context of Vancouver, where the clash between settler-culture imperialism and the traditions of the First Peoples is so prominent an issue, Jamieson sides with a traditional Indigenous approach to history: one that finds a function for dance and story-telling in keeping the past present. Jamieson's dance reanimates a pre-Contact topography, to be sure, but it is a resolutely peopled topography; in this respect, it complicates notions of an urban wild that rest on an uncritical division of land from society.⁵⁶ For Jamieson, as for Schneider, "time flips and buckles" and past, present, and future fold strangely together (*Performing* xii).

Nowhere is the folding together of past and present more evident than in the cemetery setting of *The River's* first act. The nearly one hundred and thirty year old cemetery, which sprawls over one hundred and five acres of prime real estate, is an important site of Vancouver's civic history. The organization of the graveyard tells a story of Vancouver's mixed heritage: for example, the cemetery is divided into twelve "neighbourhoods," including areas allocated specifically for Masonic and Chinese burials. The city-owned graveyard has felt pressures of redevelopment in recent years and was almost sold to a private buyer in the mid-1990s.⁵⁷ History is inscribed in the names, dates, and epigraphs on gravestones, in bundles of flowers, in the scattered mourners visiting loved ones. In a crucial way, this opening environment sets the tone for the four-day long progression down the buried creek: its placement above buried bodies foregrounds the blurring between body and land that *The River* so keenly explores. Jamieson's choreographic tracing of the flow of the buried creek calls attention to the living dynamics of the ground beneath the surface, and to the (perhaps)

⁵⁶ For more on the false and colonial distinction between "nature" and "urban" see William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (2005) and Neil Smith's forward to Nikolas C. Heynen et al.'s anthology *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism* (2006). For a historical perspective of the colonization of British Columbia, see Cole Harris' *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (1997).

⁵⁷ For more on the recent efforts at Mountain View Cemetery, see Shelly Fralic's article in the *Vancouver Sun* (2014).

uncomfortable fact that the ground is literally peopled. Jamieson talks about the experience of witnessing “a history of Vancouver in its dead,” and about the graveyard as a space that allows for “this up of the dead” (Personal site walk interview).⁵⁸ Of course, given the ceremonial First Nations framing of *The River*, combined with Jamieson’s long-standing concern with the history of British Columbia’s First Nations Peoples and the situatedness of the opening act of the dance in a contemporary graveyard, there is more to be said about Schneider’s theory of performing remains as it pertains to this dance. For example, the context of the dance calls up (even if it does not confront) the contentious issues linked to the ancestral bones of First Peoples which have a long history of being disturbed by development and/or disinterred and “archived” in First World museums of anthropology.

Dancing in this space—a space so personally and profoundly inscribed—was a challenge for some involved in the project. Dancer Caroline Farquhar describes the discomfort she experienced dancing in an environment so rife with the personal. When I ask her to recount her memories of the rehearsal and performance process of *The River*, she begins with what she describes as her strongest memory: set in the graveyard, Farquhar remembers the disquiet she felt at seeing an audience member push her baby carriage over the inset gravestones to get a good sight line (Skype interview). This question continually resurfaced for her and others throughout the process: “How do you choreograph sensitivity to space in an audience setting?” “Especially,” she continues, “with *The River*, where you’re tracing a very underground element of the story of the space.” Throughout, cast members struggled with the ethics of performing in a space that was so deeply and personally marked—discussions about which became part of the creative process.

If Jamieson’s choice of route does not make obvious her investment in choreographically joining Mount Pleasant’s past with its present, her decision to involve local historians Bruce Macdonald and Charles Christopherson in her performance makes the archaeological impetus clear. Indeed, the group linking the two men, the

⁵⁸ For a theory of the performing body as a “medium for raising the dead” (80), see Joseph Roach’s *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996).

former Brewery Creek Historical Society, was the partner organization for *The River's* application for the Canada Council for the Art's Artists and Communities Program grant. Throughout each Act, the two historians carry on a casual (but miked) banter about the history of the creek, the early settlers, and the development of the city of Vancouver as they walk amongst the audience members (Karen Jamieson Dance Company, "Revised").⁵⁹ To ground *The River* in the pastness it sought to retrace and reanimate along the historic banks of Brewery Creek, I will rehearse just such a history here.

Shifting Ground

In many ways, Brewery Creek and its estuary were foundational to the development of the city. The settlement and resettlement of what we now call Vancouver relied in part on the nutriment offered by Brewery Creek, both pre and post-Contact; a significant geographical feature, the creek's freshwater was an important habitat for salmon, trout, and a litany of other aquatic and riparian life. First Nations presence on the land stretches back beyond recorded history; crucially—and this is something Jamieson attends to in *The River* and in her choreographic career more broadly—to this day, the area is claimed as part of the unceded traditional territory of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil'waututh First Nations. Historically, the creek flowed from its headwaters to a flat opening mid-way along its route to the ocean where—during the early days of the resettlement of the Lower Mainland by European, American, and eastern Canadian settlers—a beaver dam plugged the creek and formed a huge swampy area with rich and productive soil. Further downstream, in what is now an active consumer section of Main Street, the dynamic flow of the creek formed a ravine that ran up to forty feet deep and surged downward toward the ocean. Despite its distance from the heart of Vancouver's downtown, the creek was integral to the city's growth: early settlers flumed the freshwater of the dammed creek across False Creek and piped it into

⁵⁹ The Karen Jamieson Dance archives show that Jamieson made some effort to script Macdonald and Christopherson's conversation, but ultimately they settled on an improvised banter that would reflect Jamieson's own initial exposure to the history of the creek on an historical walking tour with the two men ("Revised").

the Gastown area, literally feeding the flow of development (Macdonald, *Mount Pleasant* 2).

Reciprocally, the development of Vancouver very literally shaped the creek. The Hastings Sawmill, located in South False Creek at the foot of Brewery Creek, was a company town and a focal point of historic Vancouver from the 1870s forward. Joined by an upsurge of breweries that gave Brewery Creek its name, sawmills would remain a central presence in Mount Pleasant for over one hundred years, with the last sawmill closing as recently as 1983 (Macdonald, *Vancouver* 54-5). The presence of primary industry in the heart of so large and urban a city—a trait that earned it the nickname “Terminal City” in the boom that ensued after the construction of the terminus station of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1880s—set Vancouver apart from other North American Cities. It was not until the mid-1980s that post-industrial Vancouver officially rezoned False Creek for residential use (59). With the explosion of growth in Vancouver that began in the late nineteenth century and continues to this day, the shape of the land and of the river has been actively changed: the waterfront surrounding the foot of Brewery Creek, which had been punctuated by a chain of pedestrian-accessible beaches and tidal flats, was filled in to support the city’s growth; the remaining intertidal land later became the repository for soil removed to form the Grandview Cut. Indeed, *The River’s* four-day long procession along the creek concluded not at the present-day ocean edge, but at the creek’s historic fluvial outflow point. Like many other creeks in Vancouver and in cities throughout North America, the body of Brewery Creek was, by steps, culverted and paved over, such that it literally became built into the foundation of the growing city.

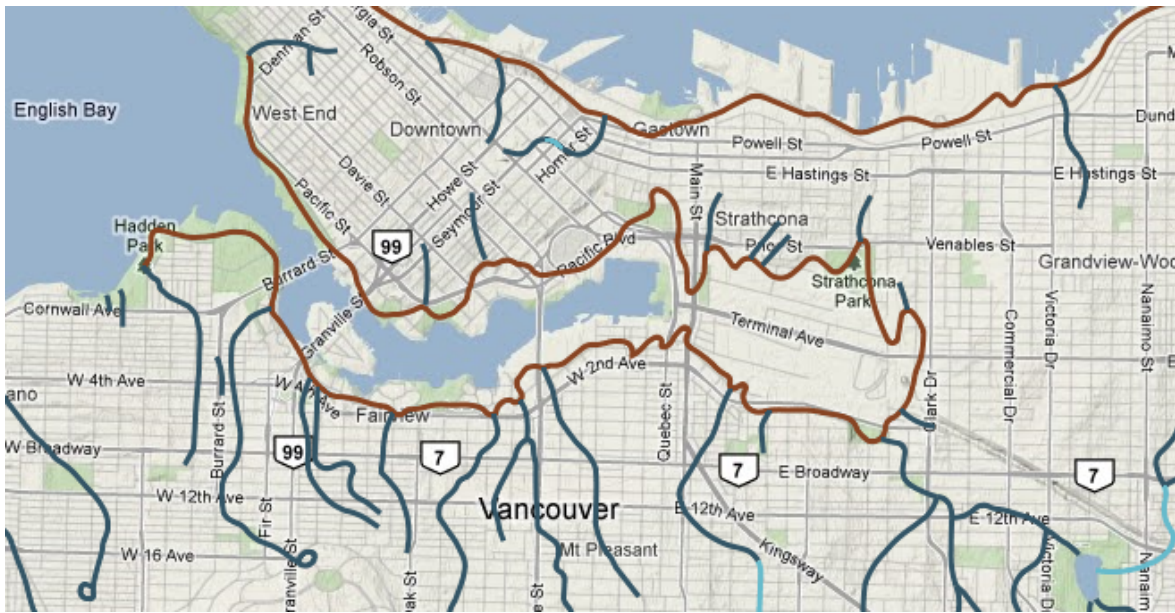


Figure 2.3. Vancouver’s Old Streams, map modified from Paul Lesack and Sharon J. Proctor’s “Vancouver’s Old Streams, 1880-1920” (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2011, web, 25 July 2013).

Note. In this map depicting the streams that cut through Vancouver’s topography between 1880 and 1920, the blue lines indicate culverted streams and the red outline contours the original shoreline.

During my retracing of the route of Act 3 with Jamieson, the shifting state of the urban landscape took on another sedimented layer. Historically, this stretch contained the most forceful flow of water along the creek: here, the creek water ran fast and cut as deep as forty feet into the land. Informed by the historical topography, Jamieson’s choreography for this act was intense and dramatic: it was like so much water squeezing aggressively through a small passage. The dancers’ movement quality was big, wild, and dynamic—indeed, there was even a choreographed skirmish that caught bystanders and audience members off-guard with its performance of violence. Jamieson recounts an anecdote about the impact of her violent choreography: during a rehearsal of this altercation, “a distraught Van-Kam truck driver who was pulling into the alley shouted, ‘You guys better be kiddin’, because I was just about to get out of this truck and clobber ya!’” (qtd. in Johnson). Responding both to the historical surge of the creek and to the abrasive urbanscape, her choreography resonated with the noise, rush, and push of the proximate city centre. After leading their audience through the bustling blocks of Mount Pleasant’s business district, the group pressed east for the Act’s finale. Along the way,

the dancers explored both the clash and mesh between the human body and the urban landscape. Reviewer Gail Johnson describes the scene: “In the alleys, performers clamber over garbage bins, fling their bodies off metal garage doors, and drape their torsos over cement barriers.” This insertion of the dancing body into and onto the built structures en route culminates when the dancers descend roughly fifteen feet down into a pit in the lane behind a restaurant on Main Street. This pit, Jamieson and others speculate, is one of the only remaining stretches of Brewery Creek’s basin, a patch of “dried-up creek bed” (Johnson n. pag.). Farquhar agrees that the alleyways just south of the intersection of Main Street and Broadway Avenue were where the history of the city—of the creek—was most clearly felt. Fifteen years later, one of her sharpest memories of *The River* features the series of pits that reached down to where the base of the river might once have been. The presence of the absent stream was clearest here, Jamieson and Farquhar agree: in Farquhar’s words, “the geography echoed” (Skype interview).

When we retraced *The River*’s route in November of 2012, Jamieson and I paced back and forth through the lane, searching for the pit that housed the final portion of choreography in Act 3—a feature that should have been obvious. But it, too, has almost disappeared. What was, in 1998, a significant cavity is now only a sliver, less than a foot in width. In the time that has elapsed between the performance of *The River* and our revisiting of the site, the pit has been levelled and developed, indicative of the new stage of redevelopment that has come recently and rapidly to the Mount Pleasant area. It was not until the 1990s that “the groundswell of rebuilding that had already happened around the rest of False Creek” made its way to Mount Pleasant (Macdonald, *Mount Pleasant* 20). “In Vancouver,” Farquhar comments, expressing no surprise that the pit has been filled and articulating what my re-tracing of the course of *The River* has made clear, “development is so fast. It’s a bit mind-boggling, really” (Skype interview). Indeed, Jamieson and I were also unable to access a portion of the route on which Act 4 was sited because of the changes effected by recent development—in this case, a rush of

construction at the shore of False Creek designed to support Vancouver's 2010 Winter Olympic Games.⁶⁰



Figure 2.4. Left: dancers in rehearsal for Act 3, “The Ravine,” along the Main Street corridor, unaccredited photograph (1998). Image courtesy of KJD. Right: the same site in 2012, photograph by author.

Note. The dancers rehearse in a pit behind the strip of storefronts on Main Street in Act 3 of *The River* (“The Ravine”). In 1998, this was one of the only remaining patches of creek bottom along the Brewery Creek corridor. Jamieson talks about the feel and the smell of the freshwater that lingered here. Upon our return in 2012, this pit had been mostly developed and filled in, leaving only a very narrow cut down to this remaining creek-bottom.

As I established in my previous chapter, cultural geographers and art theorists working at the intersection of art and urban studies recognize that willingly and wittingly or not, artists often serve as a first wave of an ensuing upsurge of gentrification. With what geographer David Ley calls their “aesthetic appropriation of place,” artists render formerly working class or impoverished areas freshly attractive to developers and those who can afford to buy in an economic context of gentrification (2540). This is precisely the situation in *The River*'s Mount Pleasant setting, where the particular breed of gentrification in the South Main Street area (currently being marketed as “SoMa”) is linked with the emphatic presence of artists in the area, initiated with the establishment

⁶⁰ For more on Vancouver's performance community and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, see Peter Dickinson's *World Stages, Local Audiences* (2010). For an examination of site-based dance in the context of VANOC's Cultural Olympiad, see my Chapter 4.

of the artist-run centre, The Western Front Society, in 1973 (Macdonald 21).⁶¹ Mount Pleasant was home to the first of Vancouver's artist live/work studios, which cropped up in the early 1990s at the front edge of the gentrification creep in the area, forcing a vexed question about the relationship between art, artists, and urban redevelopment (and its resulting displacements, replacements, attractions, and evictions). As Peter Dickinson notes with regard to the jostling for culture space prompted by a recent and controversial RIZE development at Main Street and Broadway, arts organizations in the area (including the Western Front) have both benefitted and suffered from the dynamics of development: "The grunt, Western Front, and VIVO are all artist-run centres of long standing in the city, and there is some irony in the organizations benefitting from what many lament is the accelerated gentrification of Mount Pleasant while also claiming to be its victims" ("Vancouverism" 11).

Indeed, while the history of art and performance in Mount Pleasant can be linked to the area's "renewal," so too is the *performance of history* bound up with the ongoing gentrification. Mount Pleasant is the oldest suburb in Vancouver: it was the first to develop and grow and it was also the first to age and deteriorate. As the onslaught of redevelopment began in the 1990s there arose a concomitant investment in showcasing the area's history. Shortly before the performance of *The River*, the historic business core of Mount Pleasant was granted revitalization funds that supported a kind of costuming of Main Street in historical garb: "Main Street was dressed up with features to emphasize its heritage, including an old-style cast-iron clock and a series of bronze Brewery Creek cairns with plaques" (Macdonald, *Mount Pleasant* 20). In fact, the City of Vancouver incentivized commemorating the creek by reducing the bureaucratic red tape

⁶¹ The Western Front is one of the first and foundational artist-run centres in Canada and home to one of Canada's most important dance companies, EDAM Dance (1982-present), the co-founders of which have gone on to shape the Canadian dance scene. It is housed in the old Knights of Pythias Hall building that had been constructed on top of Brewery Creek in the 1920s. A multimedia gallery, performance, and workspace, The Front has a strong national and international reputation for honing and showcasing cutting edge art. The building was also host to the early dance classes in the 1970s—some of which were taught by Karen Jamieson—when western Canada's first dance program at Vancouver's Simon Fraser University was taking shape (Gerecke, "Dance"). The links between The Western Front and Jamieson's *The River* are worth noting here, as Jamieson's interest in Brewery Creek was seeded in part by Western Front Society member Hank Bull, who brought The Front's collaborative *Brewery Creek Project* (1986) to Jamieson's attention.

involved in development if the proposed project visibly acknowledged the buried creek: as stipulated in the 1996 City of Vancouver Planning Department's Brewery Creek Guidelines, monuments commemorating the creek were rewarded with "relaxations benefiting their proposed new developments near the route of the creek" (Macdonald 20). Performed daily by monuments that, paradoxically, end up serving the enterprise of commercial development, the creek has been reimagined and reconstructed as a curving stretch of sidewalk here, a bronze marker there. Jamieson is overtly critical of the rapid developments that have changed the shape of Mount Pleasant. But despite her expressed criticism of rapid development, *The River* is recruited into a narrative that supports the very forces that foster the development the piece seeks to undermine. After all, in a city that has made strategic investments in showcasing its history, and, indeed, a neighbourhood wherein monuments commemorating the creek have been rewarded development easements, Jamieson's dance—a moving monument to the creek—exposes a contradiction inherent in public art: even in its efforts to criticize the development and gentrification of the area, *The River* is necessarily entangled in the re-branding and marketing of Mount Pleasant as desirable in its historical and cultural richness.

And yet, the complex choreopolitics of *The River*'s embodied insistence on the sensation of the past inside the present moment hinges on exposing the link between ahistoricism and colonialism. As Neil Smith and others have demonstrated, a cultivated blindness to the past has long paved the way for colonization and development; but the forgetting, un-landing, and flattening of topography in Vancouver's urban landscape is a particular issue in Jamieson's dance.⁶² Somewhat nostalgic, she sees her danced homage to the lost creek as a way of honouring the cut and flow of the landscape that preceded the built city of Vancouver. Indeed, when she discusses the current state of development in the city, she refers to the built infrastructure as "just a scab" on the surface of the landscape (Personal site walk interview). Choreographically, Jamieson emphasizes contemporary Mount Pleasant as a re-building, a smoothing over, a covering up, a subverting of textured and generative histories. The self-reflexive and

⁶² For more on the strange relationship between gentrification and history, with particular attention to North America's west, see Neil Smith's discussion of the "urban frontier" in *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (1996).

physical meditations the dance models and manages, combined with *The River's* (failed) efforts to dissect a gridded set of streets with a diagonal trajectory, call on us to attend to how our physical environments, both built and “natural,” direct us along certain pathways while blocking access to others along various lines—colonial-settler lines, in this case.

Buried under layers of land and concrete and asphalt, the water-body that was Brewery Creek is now almost imperceptible; but Jamieson’s dance draws out those traces with mechanisms of theatricalization. Grounded on the shifting surface of the Brewery Creek corridor, *The River* performs the present as a porous thing that leaks and seeps with history. For, as Jamieson insists, “[a]s long as the rain falls, as long as the land slopes downward, as long as the sun shines, the stream isn’t gone. It’s still there, still participating in the eternal cycle of water raining down, flowing to the sea, evaporating, raining down” (qtd. in Scott, “*The River*” C5). Indeed, community efforts to revive Vancouver’s buried streams are starting to show success as fish return to many waterways that have long been dormant (Holdsworth n. pag.).⁶³ Like the pavement along the Brewery Creek corridor, time buckles, bends, and leaks; and whether brash and virtuosic or covert and underground, the past has a way of erupting into the present.

Choreographic Topographies

Predictably, the buried creek serves as an imperfect, unstable foundation for the developments along its corridor. When I walk with Jamieson through the route of Act 2 toward the site of the old Tea Swamp, she gestures toward the deterioration of the asphalt, the sidewalks, the dipping fences bordering leaning houses. Subtly, but visibly, asphalt buckles, bends, and cracks; sidewalks lilt, heave, and mound; properties tilt and sink and rise. The slow shifting of the neighbourhood signals the creek that runs beneath

⁶³ Pauline Holdsworth’s article in *The Tyee* features Rita Wong, a Canadian poet who explores the “poetics of water” and of buried urban waterways in Vancouver, particularly in her efforts with the collaborative and interdisciplinary project *Downstream: Reimagining Water* (“Rita” n. pag.).

the ground.⁶⁴ Jamieson tells me that her choreography here was a quiet sort of burbling: a soft but active flow that challenged and pushed against the seeming stillness of its surface and surroundings. Following the deepest bends in the route, she and I try to track the route *The River's* dancers and audience followed as they allowed themselves to be funnelled along the pavement by way of the lowest ground, their path charting the depressions along the sidewalk, grass, and street.



Figure 2.5. The state of the asphalt along a stretch of the site of Act 2, “The Swamp,” in November 2012, photographs by author.

Note. Notice the buckles, bends, and cracks in the pavement.

In a dance-based intervention like Jamieson’s, the physical limitations generated by an uneven ground surface determine the contours of the choreography. Farquhar elaborates on the quality of exposure and risk that came of dancing along the buried creek. Detailing the contrast between the four-evening long site-based portions of the piece and the final mainstage version at the Roundhouse Performance Centre, Farquhar emphasizes that each required a “different sourcing and embodiment” (Skype interview). She focuses on her relationship to the floor. Indoors, Farquhar comments, “You’re much safer to drop on the floor, to slide on it, to roll on it, to crash into it. And that changes drastically when you’re out doing site-specific work.” With the move out of doors, Jamieson’s dancers encountered the physical risks of dirty, rough, wet, rusty, slippery,

⁶⁴ Even in his official history of Mount Pleasant, Bruce Macdonald notes the evidence of the creek in Mount Pleasant’s current landscape: to this day, he points out, “[t]he route of Brewery Creek is obvious because it is usually at the low point of the east-west streets, while the streets in the Tea Swamp such as 16th and 17th Avenue east of Main are lumpy and bumpy because of the mushy soil” (*Mount Pleasant* 22).

hard, and sharp surfaces. After the outdoor portion of each rehearsal, the cast of *The River* would return with the movement material they had developed to “the safety” of the studio where, as Jamieson puts it, “[y]ou really begin to see what a sanctuary a studio is” (Personal site walk interview). In a review of Jamieson’s piece, Ross McLaren highlights the possible perils of site-based work: “Jamieson admits moving outside the traditional four walls of a theatre makes for challenging, and at times scary, work. Dancers have to avoid hypodermic needles and distractions” (21). Indeed, Jamieson’s site manager swept the site for needles and other potential dangers prior to performances and rehearsals, particularly for Acts 3 and 4 (Jamieson, Personal interview). Outside of the safety of the studio with its hardwood or marley floor surfaces, the support of the ground comes at higher physical cost.

Even when a surface is clear of dangerous paraphernalia, the site dancer must negotiate the physics of outdoor ground surfaces differently from those more commonly used in training, rehearsal, and performance. The physical dynamics of traction and slippage on a grassy graveyard lawn, for example, or a cracked pavement street, fundamentally change the way a dancer can land, turn, run, slide or perform any number of choreographic tasks. The ground surface also dictates the parts of the body a dancer can use to articulate choreography—the top of an unclad foot is not an easy option on a gravel surface, for example, nor is an unguarded forearm or knee.⁶⁵ Performing on a variety of different surfaces, *The River* dancers constantly tweaked the choreography with a range of micro and macro-adjustments: not only did the ground dictate the possibilities of the movements performed, but even within the set movement vocabulary, the dancers fell more softly, turned more aggressively, jumped more conservatively than they would have in a studio or stage space—as they must if they hope to both achieve the choreography and finish the project uninjured. In the sparse footage that remains, it is evident that even in Act 3 when the dancers were tasked to move with a kind of wild physical abandon, they perform the choreography with the rough edges of the space in mind: they pick their way gingerly down a steeply pitched hill slope; they use their hands to navigate around telephone poles and along wire fences; they catch palm-first when

⁶⁵ Sometimes, site-based practitioners elect to use costuming to protect the dancers: knee and elbow pads, gloves, hats, or shoes. Of course, these various materials mitigate a dancer’s relationship with the surfaces she engages.

they throw themselves against brick walls; and, throughout, their eyes linger downward, actively scouting the ground in front of them.



Figure 2.6. Left: Dancers in rehearsal for Act 1, “The Headwaters,” in Mountain View Cemetery, unaccredited photograph. Right: Dancers in rehearsal for Act 3, “The Ravine,” along the Main Street corridor, unaccredited photograph. Both images courtesy of KJD.

Note. Company dancers share weight in a relational and kinetic exchange that echoes the downward tilt of the graveyard. Note also the dancers’ “sensuous correspondence” with the built environment of the Main Street corridor. In both images, note the dancers’ many layers—protection against the cold winter rehearsals outside.

The necessary adjustments *The River* dancers must make in order to physically interpret Jamieson’s choreography on the sinking and broken surfaces of the Brewery Creek perform a version of land-body reciprocity that the dance both models and elicits. Recent turns in performance theory that attend to the co-constitutiveness of material culture and physical movement are instructive here.⁶⁶ Invested in unsettling the dichotomy between archive and repertoire, Robin Bernstein proposes the notion of “scriptive things”—items of material culture that act on their users to shape “dances between people and things” (73). “Scriptive things,” Bernstein qualifies, operate “like a play script, broadly structur[ing] performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations” (69). Transferring Bernstein’s theory into Toronto’s Dance Collection Danse archive, Marlis Schweitzer adapts the concept to her material encounter with turn-of-the-century (Canadian) dancer Maud Allan’s famous

⁶⁶ See Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) for a foundational iteration of this new materialist perspective that recognizes all matter as agential or “vibrant.” For analyses of recent applications of new materialisms to performance scholarship, see Schneider’s introduction to *The Drama Review* 59.4 (2015).

Salomé costume, a beaded bra-top and skirt. Struck by the weight of the costume, Schweitzer builds her speculations about how the costume must have shaped Allan's movement pathways into a theory of "choreographic things." Referring both to the body of the dancer and the bodies of those who later encounter the material object, Schweitzer argues that "A costume develops an intimate relationship with the body: shaping, moulding, protecting, disguising, or transforming the physical form, while marking gender, class, age, and various other identity categories" (37-38).

I find both terms useful, but neither quite describes my interest in *The River's* engagement with Brewery Creek: invested, as I am, in site-dance's capacity to draw out the scriptive or choreographic potential of ground, I propose a notion of "choreographic topographies" which is at once specific to site-based dance interventions in public spaces, and also has important applications to broader understandings of how bodies move through, over, and across land. The creek bed, which rises up and sinks low to reshape the ground beneath the houses and sidewalks along its corridor, is a co-choreographic agent in *The River*. This buried topography is the "thing"—the main thing—that Jamieson engages in her choreography.⁶⁷ Recall Bernstein's claim that "An object becomes a thing when it invites a person to dance" (70). In *The River*, it is with the creek bed that Jamieson asks her audiences to dance. Historic Brewery Creek functions as a choreographic topography in *The River*, directing the movement of Jamieson's dancers and her audience, alike, even while its submersion below ground indexes a colonial flattening of the land.

If we follow Lepecki, there is a politic—indeed, a choreopolitic—inherent in a choreographic engagement with uneven ground.⁶⁸ In his effort to "rethink a politics of

⁶⁷ Following Martin Heidegger and a lineage of "thing theory," Bernstein asserts that whereas an "object" is simply a means to an end, "a thing forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing" (69-70).

⁶⁸ The citational politics of Lepecki's theory of uneven ground are worth raising here. In working with Paul Carter's critique of ground in dance, Lepecki draws indirectly from the Indigenous Australian ways of knowing that inform Carter's analysis. Thomas DeFrantz critiques what he identifies as Lepecki's tendency in *Exhausting Dance* to "poach" from unrelated lines of philosophy and to decontextualize arguments from their historical context (191). In her *Unsettling Space* (2006), Joanne Tompkins, who also offers an analysis of "methexis" (to follow the curves and folds of the land), does so within the context of urgent aboriginal displacements and spatial "unsettlements."

movement” in *Exhausting Dance* (2006), Lepecki offers a reading of American artist William Pope.L’s series of over forty performed “crawls,” in which the artist lies prone, belly-down, on the ground surfaces of urban areas and arduously pulls himself through the city.⁶⁹ Lepecki calls up Paul Carter’s “politics of the ground,” which recognizes “kinetic practices that highlight the body in motion as always already an extension of the terrain that sustains it” (100). After Carter, Lepecki takes as a premise the intimate and causal connection between ground and the moving body, the basis of a “political kinesis” (100)—a principal Lepecki explores extensively in his essay “Stumble Dance” (2004). Carter, Lepecki tells us, draws a link between colonial ideology and the representational mimetic practices that have long defined Western art. Carter attends to dance in particular, insisting that the Western choreographic tradition is especially ensnared in colonialist ideology in its demand for a flat, smooth dancing surface. For Carter, as Lepecki articulates in the epigraph that opens this chapter, “Western dance relates to its ground only through the ground’s leveling, through its demise, its forgetting” (“Stumble” 52). That Western dance techniques require for their development, rehearsal, transmission, and presentation the flat, smooth ground surface characteristic of studio and stage “annihilates the possibility for dance to attend to the grooves of the particular terrain where dance presents itself” (52). I quibble with the sweeping finality of this point; it overlooks the site specificity of each flattened but nonetheless deeply contextualized stage space, and the nuanced but definitively *felt* fluctuations between even the smoothest of stage and studio surfaces. Consider, for example, the economic disparities indexed by how well or how poorly a studio or stage floor is maintained—differences that Lepecki perhaps too quickly glosses over in his generalizations about Western concert dance floors. The stickiness of a certain marley floor compared with another, or the give on a specific hardwood finish, determines a dancer’s experience of the choreography and even the subtlest characteristics of a dancing surface can be enough to throw a show. Foundational to a dancer’s interpretation and articulation of choreography is precisely the ability to “attend to the grooves of the particular terrain where dance presents itself.” But I agree with Lepecki’s claim that, in general, the job of the dancing

⁶⁹ William Pope.L’s practice of crawling through city streets has a Vancouver connection: it resonates with Korean-born Vancouver-based artist Jin-Me Yoon’s practice of dragging herself through various major international cities on a wheeled flatbed that is concealed under her prostrate body.

surface is to be unremarkable: it “must never interrupt, disrupt, distort, distract, and challenge the dancer in her *pirouettings* and in his *glissands*” (52, emphasis in original). The smoothed over, quieted down specificity of a given dancing surface excises certain components of social and historical context, foreclosing the possibilities of movements that would respond to these material nuances.

In a move that undoes or at least qualifies his claim that Western dance’s insistence on unblemished rehearsal and performance spaces “annihilates” the possibility of the form to attend to the particularities of the terrain, Lepecki examines how proximity to and engagement with any ground surface reveals the “cracks” in its foundation. Following Pope.L, Lepecki drops his critical gaze to ground level, where he notes: “even the smoothest ground is not flat. The ground is grooved, cracked, cool, painful, hot, smelly, dirty. The ground pricks, wounds, grabs, scratches” (99). Invested in a choreopolitics of uneven ground, he reads Pope.L’s crawl series as a powerful example of “choreopolitical challenges that can illuminate with particular force the conditions of mobility on the colonialist terrain” (100). While cleared and flattened ground is experienced as even and smooth for those who are advantageously situated amidst a variety of axes of cultural, social, political, and historical power, the same seemingly flat ground is exposed as always already riddled with cracks and catches for other (and Othered) bodies. Rendering these cracks and catches invisible and unfelt is, as numerous spatial geographers have illustrated, symptomatic of privilege. Edward Soja reminds us of Henri Lefebvre’s insistence that:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. (qtd. in Soja 210)

I read Lepecki (and Lefebvre) to suggest that Jamieson’s focused and sustained physical attention to the sometimes subtle, sometimes conspicuous troublings in the ground stakes a historical, a cultural, and a political claim—one which takes the

“quiverings” of the land (in Lepecki’s sense) as impetus for movement. Drawing attention to the ground, the choreography of *The River* alternates between heightened caution of the physical process of navigating rough and uneven surfaces (the dancers pick their way gingerly along the urban hillside in Act 3), succumbing to the shifting ground (the dancers slowly melt downward against the fence of the cemetery in Act 1), and violent clashes between body and rough ground surface (full-body throws against the cement in several acts). Like Pope.L, though differently, Jamieson “kinetically grounds the question” of uneven and shifting ground in her procession along Brewery Creek, the hidden flow of which continues to shape the landscape above (Lepecki, *Exhausting* 90). The dancers’ repeated contact with rough concrete surfaces insists that it is precisely by burying its topographical structure that the “texture” of the land, to return to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s formulation, offers up its colonial history.

But even more compelling is the relationship to ground cultivated in *The River’s* audience. Intimacy with ground and with landscape was both the artistic vision for and the choreographic effect of *The River*. As *The River’s* audience is guided down the historical creek, it is asked to feel, not ignore, the grooves, dips, and imperfections in the surface—to physically follow the unevenness of the terrain with a focused attention on the historical shape and shaping of the urban landscape it follows. Jamieson describes her effort to choreograph her audience into the interior of the landscape: “I wanted the audience to identify with Brewery creek rather than look at it as something outside them and apart from them. ... I wanted the audience to experience the river within their own bodies” (Jamieson, “The River” 1). The bodies she directs along the waterway are themselves, Jamieson points out repeatedly during my site walk with her, predominantly made up of water. In the process of walking the course of the stream, Jamieson wanted her dancers and audience alike to “experie[n]c[e] the physical sense of it ... and experience the landscape—wet or dry, cold or warm, steep or flat” (“*The River*” C5). Reviewer Michael Scott articulates the experience from his perspective in the audience: “Where water once met a bottleneck at the beaver dams, the crowd meets the impediment of a small school yard gate. Instead of wavelets, people eddied around, waiting for a chance to go through the spillway” (“Karen” F4). Jamieson’s funnelling of the audience down the slope of the buried creek is framed by the constant murmurings

of the two attendant historians who repeatedly point out current-day evidence of Brewery Creek’s flow etched in developed landscape.

In its kinetic effect (and affect, too), *The River* casts the historical creek as a co-performer in the dance. Throughout the first two evenings of the dance, the audience’s progression along the route of Brewery Creek is periodically paused by the two historians leading the group. Pointing down toward the culverts embedded in the close-mowed cemetery grass and in the cracked roadways, the historians drop their microphones down to the grates, amplifying the sound of the still-running historic creek gushing below. On the third evening, dancers clad in ambiguously antiquated costumes drop to the ground and dig with their hands into a patch of earth near Main Street where, those involved in the production contend, a patch of original creek bed remains still exposed, as yet uncovered by development. Throughout each of the four acts, community volunteers contain the audience inside banners of blue cloth, offering a visual reminder of the water that once ran where they now stand and literally framing the audience as the water, as Brewery Creek.



Figure 2.7. Community dancers carrying river banner in rehearsal for Act 4, “The Sea,” photographs by Vincent Wong. Images courtesy of KJD.

Note. The audience was guided along the Brewery Creek corridor within the boundaries of this blue cloth.

In these ways, *The River* both models and elicits a version of the “sensuous correspondences” Laura Levin has recently theorized. Levin chronicles a series of “camouflage performances” wherein—in different ways and with different raced, classed and gendered significances—performing bodies are positioned and performed in

reciprocal relationships with their physical environments. “What might it mean,” Levin asks, “to present the self not as an atomized individual moving *within* an environment, but rather as the environment itself, as something that is coextensive with its surroundings?” (6, emphasis in original).⁷⁰ Attendant to the ethical stakes inherent in aesthetics that propose porosity and proximity between the body and environment, Levin calls up larger, environmental implications that come of this “different kind of creativity,” one that locates humans in the midst of an actively “performing world” (131–132). Levin’s investment in the reciprocity of body and environment is echoed in Jamieson’s description of her choreographic impetus: *The River*, Jamieson asserts, “began with the desire to explore the possibility that what is written on the land is written on our bodies. Land is a central concern to me. An ancient function of dance, as an art form, has always been to create a ritual connection between the community and the land that it rests upon” (“The River” 1).⁷¹

In the spirit of bends and folds, I return to Paul Carter’s theory of ground—but directly this time, not filtered through Lepecki. In his *Lie of the Land* (1996), Carter argues that a disassociation from the ground reaches beyond the Western tradition of representational arts. For Carter, we live in an “ungrounded” culture (3). In his words: “We may say, ‘But we walk on the ground’, yet we should be aware of an ambiguity. For we walk on the ground as we drive on the road; that is, we move over and above the ground. Many layers come between us and the granular earth—an earth which in any case has already been displaced” (2). Rather than walking with the ground, rather than “align[ing] our lives with its inclines, folds and pockets,” we glide above it, on the smoothed and “passable” surfaces we create (2). He insists that it is only because our culture exists at a remove from the ground that the possibility of ground movement “constitute[s] a threat” and an impediment that blocks possible journeys (3). In order to live more harmoniously with one another and with our environment, we need to rethink this relationship; we need to “learn[...] to ground ourselves differently” by learning “to move differently” (5). Re-grounding or restoring our relationship with the ground, Carter

⁷⁰ I will return to Levin’s related theories of the politics of “enframement” and “backgrounding” in subsequent chapters.

⁷¹ This appears to be a draft response to questions posed by reporter Wendy Appleton.

argues, “does not mean treading it down more firmly or replacing it; it means releasing it for movement” (5).

It is in this turn to movement that dance, a form entirely comprised of *moves*, has a particular and important role. Precisely because the tradition of Western dance has long demanded a flat and smooth surface, it has the unique potential to meditate on the relationship to ground with a move to rough, broken, and uneven terrain. When it is bound to a flattened surface, dance operates as a “conditional” form, dependent on the labour of “the colonizing explorer” and “the surveyor” (292): in its spatial demands, “it inhabits the realm of the ‘as if’” (292). Site-based dance is a form defined by its inclination to take its ground as it comes, and to take it seriously. When the choreography functions to “releas[e the ground] for movement” with the care and nuance that *The River* manages, it invites the ground to make a claim on our attention. To be sure, Jamieson’s approach is inflected with nostalgia for a lost landscape, and yet the dance also insists on how this landscape remains even beneath layers of development—or, to call on Schneider’s formulation, *remains differently*.

On Unison, Or: Together, But Not As One

In her creation of *The River*, Jamieson sought to develop a project that would function “as a kind of initiation that would take the audience into a new kind of relationship to a dance event” (Jamieson, “The River” 1). Motivated by her preoccupation with the social role of dance, *The River* was Jamieson’s embodied way of asking: “What is dance good for? How does it fit in? What is its use? What is its function?” (“The River” 1). In a review of *The River*, *The Georgia Straight*’s Gail Johnson further situates Jamieson’s decision to move outside the theatre: “With just handfuls of people going out to see dance performances in Vancouver theatres, Jamieson’s approach is to take the art form out into the community herself.” She quotes Jamieson: “‘We have to stop waiting in our little enclaves, hoping that people are going to come to the theatres. We have to go out there and take it to people ourselves.’ ... ‘When people do stumble across dancing bodies in the middle of intersections, the reaction is intense. But it’s also a reaction of delight, of brightening up. It’s an electric response’” (n. pag.). Jamieson’s move, then, is part dance-based archaeological dig, part aesthetic and social choice,

part pragmatic audience-building, and part re-thinking of the choreopolitics of moving together.

Indeed, the work did, very literally, bring people together. Company records show that the official attendance at the outdoor shows exceeded one thousand, with between two hundred and three hundred and fifty audience members present each night (Karen Jamieson Dance Company, “Audience Breakdown”). Of course, for an outdoor and free public showing where pedestrians are conscripted as audience members and can drift into and out of the fray of the show, it is nearly impossible to track true attendance numbers. Indeed, others present speculated higher attendance: Louise Phillips of *The Vancouver Courier* reported that over two thousand people were present over the run of the show (23). Jamieson remembers there being more audience members than she had expected, and more than could easily fit around the dance. She remembers *The River* being overwhelmed with people, numbers growing each night of the run until they overwhelmed the capacity of the site and the dance to host them (Personal site walk interview). *The River* very literally brought people together: people who might normally pass each other, unnoticed, on the sidewalk—or who might not have any cause to pass each other at all. Audience members, volunteers, and performers alike were positioned beside one another, in front of and behind one another as the ambulatory audience followed performers, and as performers followed the historic creek. They got close; they touched; they processed together and huddled together. The structure of the piece demanded that they reorganize and come together differently and repeatedly with each brief migration along the historical creek and with each pause along the route to witness the next dance sequence.

As I detailed in my previous chapter, proponents of site-based work are quick to point to the ameliorative function of publicly situated site-specific art, and the response to Jamieson’s piece is no exception. In his review of *The River*, Ross McLaren affirms, “the benefits are enormous: Jamieson felt her work put her art in touch with a community” (21). The dance brings together an improvised and temporary group of moving, dancing bodies on slowly shifting land; notably, this is a cross-generational, mixed ability, inter-racial group, and one that both features and is framed by members of a First Nation with unceded claim to that land. To be sure, an accusation of easy togetherness can be

levelled against Jamieson's dance: in the context of a rapidly gentrifying Mount Pleasant, *The River* focused on coming together in ways that might support Miwon Kwon's framework of public art as a "'soft' social engineering" that functions "to defuse, rather than address, community tensions and to divert, rather than attend to, the legitimate dissatisfaction that many community groups feel in regard to the uneven distribution of existing cultural and economic resources" (*One Place* 153). And yet, recall also Shannon Jackson's proposition of performance as a model of inter-dependence and cooperation. There is immense value, Jackson argues, in aesthetically imagining ways of working together and supporting one another in spite of difference, even—maybe especially—when that coming and working together feels strained, inconvenient, and uneasy (*Social* 14, 42).

Indeed, by virtue of its formal properties of audience distribution, the togetherness of *The River's* temporary public is cut through with difference: the audience is always arranged unevenly around the dance. The size of the group, combined with the architecture of the sites used (the flatness and narrowness of the streets and sidewalks, for example), generated fissures in the temporary public called together by the dance. Farquhar comments that she had a difficult time corralling the audience, particularly through the busy South Main corridor in Act 3. After the show, she received feedback from frustrated audience members who felt like they had "missed" important moments in the choreography. With bodies layered dozens of rows thick, some bodies inevitably blocked the view. And the bodies that trailed at the end of the ambulatory procession often arrived too late to see the choreography proper. "Some images," Farquhar admits, "dissolved before everyone got to see them" (Skype interview). The mass of moving bodies that constitutes *The River's* audience structures the possibilities and limitations of engagement with the formal choreography and the surrounding environment.

Cast into the thick of a moving mass, audience members are not simply transformed from "conventionally immobile" into mobile spectators; rather, to draw from Keren Zaiontz's analysis of site-specific theatre, they are transformed into "a portable collective" ("Ambulatory" 168). *The River's* audience is cast, *en masse*, as a unified group, seemingly coherent in its own right. In her study of walking in performance, Fiona Wilkie notes: "claims are made for collective walking in terms of objectivity and

sociability. They are also made in relation to power: collective walking is an enduring form of protest, found in both rural and urban situations” (23). However, Wilkie also cautions her readers against the dangers of universalizing walking experiences that are necessarily circumscribed by a set of cultural and physical identifiers and histories (*Performance* 44)—the same point that undergirds Lepecki’s reading of Pope.L’s crawls.

Although Jamieson’s dance does not explicitly examine the various social groupings it brings together—notwithstanding how it choreographs its audience together, as a single, moving mass—the experience of processing together along the uneven terrain of the Brewery Creek corridor functions kinetically to bring both the sameness and the difference of those processing to the fore. Each body (differently built, able, aged, gendered, racialized, and trained) navigates the uneven ground with its own nuance, and thus the dance’s casting together of such disparity, paired with its kinetic attention to the nuance of ground, generates a sense of variance.⁷² Susan Leigh Foster articulates just such an experience in her recollection of a public event protesting the invasion of Iraq in 2003:

I sense a certain optimism that comes from having made the decision to commit the day to this activity. Why? My body, white, middle-aged, post-hippy, queerly female, and those around me are learning to trust public space and what one might encounter in it. We are reading each others’ differences, apprehending the disjointedness of the body politic that marks our distinctive histories; yet we are moving shoulder to shoulder together down the street. (“Choreographies” 411-12)

Embedded, paradoxically, in the unidirectional and processional choreography of sameness is a kinetic acknowledgement of individual difference.

Of course, navigations of ground have different implications, significations, and kinetic experiences along raced, gendered, ablest, classed and other lines. As Lepecki’s reading of Pope.L’s crawls demonstrates, to be prostrate and dark-skinned is to call on a history of systemic violences with important social and spatial consequences—an analysis nuanced by T. Nikki Cesare Schotzko’s reading of her young, white, male,

⁷² Of course, disability studies offers another important perspective on the experience of those for whom navigating even smooth spaces is not easy, an issue to which I will turn in my Afterword.

Québécois student's Pope.L-inspired crawl along nearly two kilometres of Toronto pavement (188-199). Kwon, Jackson, and Levin's respective analyses of Mirele Laderman Ukeles' *Washing Tracks* series (1973) expose the connections between a female body situated at ground level and gender(ed) (and classed) subjugation.⁷³ Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological study of her experiences re-learning to walk with a prosthesis emphasizes how for the "differently abled ... the world is not your dance floor" (62). And a tacit acknowledgement of the uneven relationship between falling and class is built into Aeriosa's *In Situ*, the aerial work that forms the basis of my analysis in Chapter 4.

By asking its mixed and diverse temporary public to follow the gradual but insistent downward slope of the Brewery Creek corridor from the graveyard to the sea, *The River* foregrounds a kinetic paradox of correspondence. Cultural and urban theorist Paul Virilio compares walking on a slant to walking on even ground: on a slant, one is always working against the ground, trying to stabilize on a surface that would pitch the body forward or back; whereas on a perfectly horizontal surface, one can walk without additional attention to weight and gravity (52).⁷⁴ Virilio's "politics of the slant" suggests that when "one stands on an inclined plane, the instability of the position' affirms that 'the individual will always be in a position of resistance'" (qtd. in Lepecki *Exhausting* 95). The physics of walking undergoes a transformation when the walker moves from level ground to an upward or downward slant. To walk up a slant, the body must exert extra muscular effort to gain elevation; whereas walking down a slant, following a gravitational pull downward, one's momentum speeds up. Jamieson's dance, however, does not permit its audience to cede to the momentum built into the landscape it traverses. *The River's* mobile public is asked to follow slowly at a pace set by the dancers ahead and

⁷³ Each critic forwards a different reading of Ukeles' performance of maintenance art—in which she washes the various floor surfaces of the museum that hosted her exhibit—analyzing the event as "de-materialized" art, a demonstration of infrastructural support, and a gendered blending with ground, respectively.

⁷⁴ For another kinetic reading of uneven ground, see Hayden Lorimer's "Surfaces and Slopes" (2012).

maintained by the volunteers who flank the processing group.⁷⁵ The very act of casting its audience together into a large crowd modifies the possibilities of its “sensuous correspondence”: caught in the thick of a mobile unit, audience members are structured into a shuffle-stepping procession that relies on bodies ahead, behind, beside—both proximate and just out of view (recall Figure 1.1 in my Chapter 1). As such, the migration of *The River*’s temporary public is characterized by a paradoxical resistance against the very landscape to which it seeks to yield—a move that foregrounds how choreography is always already mitigated by embodied social forces, even as it is also directed along topographical lines.

While there is validity to the critique various artists and performance theorists have mounted against pieces that “herd” their audiences by directing them along discrete trajectories—and while *The River* is, in some respects, subject to this critique—I argue that *The River*’s emphasis on “sensuous correspondence” with the ground models a kinetically complex approach to *following* that troubles easy notions of a controlling lead.⁷⁶ Audience members follow the dancers, they follow the volunteer ushers, they follow the momentum of the processing group, they follow the tilt of the land, and they follow the flow of the historical creek. Indeed, every constitutive part of *The River* is deeply invested in following: in the midst of this manifold *following*, a clear leader dissolves.⁷⁷ Folding together Levin’s sense of “sensuous correspondence,” Zaiontz’s attention to “ambulatory audiences,” Schneider’s understanding of “againness” into my own theory of relational kinaesthetics, I arrive at an argument that *The River*’s facilitation of a surface-level exploration of uneven ground casts its participants in continuous relationships of interdependence—landscape to body, body to landscape, and each audience member and performer one to another. Together, but not as one, Jamieson’s

⁷⁵ In my Chapters 4 and 5, I will turn to a more in-depth analysis of how audiences are, in Zaiontz’s terms, “put to work” in instances of participatory performance. In particular, I will examine the quality of audience participation with respect to the physical imperatives imbedded in the structure of a given performance.

⁷⁶ For example, Allan Kaprow, famously associated with the ‘Happenings’ of the 1960s art world, claims that pieces that “herd” their audiences “ask very little of the whole notion of participation” (qtd. in Levin *Performing* 103).

⁷⁷ I will return to this issue with an examination of Lepecki’s (use of Erin Manning’s) “*leadingfollowing*” in my Afterword.

piece is predicated on a grounded, environmental relational kinaesthetics, a reciprocity between body and body, land and body, and past and present.

Walking shoulder-to-shoulder with Jamieson, I notice my weight shift into my heels in order to negotiate the slope of the ground, lingering behind my centre. The physical exertion required to move slowly through the tipping landscape generates a sensation of backspace. Even as I walk forward, some fraction of my weight trails, dwelling for a moment behind me in the moment that has just passed. The effect is not so much nostalgic as it is a carrying forward of the back-body, bringing into the present the moment just before. Even at the level of the individual—my body, performing an archival duet with Jamieson’s—the ground choreographs a somatic understanding of the bind between past and present. As *The River* choreographs its mixed public down the historic Brewery Creek corridor, it asks them to flow together, move together, and be still together. The dance invites them to work out the sometimes challenging physical logic of the processional dance, to rely on each other to sort out where to look, and to contain and—indeed, choreograph—one another by virtue of bodily proximity as they are tipped downstream, from headwater to fluvial output. With its attention to the pastness of Brewery Creek erupting into the present—the topography reclaiming its grooves against the veneer of fabricated smoothness—*The River* both calls up and challenges models of individualist, cartographic, and temporal knowledge that rest altogether too easily on false notions of stability, permanence, chronology, and coherence. It models a way of knowing that is grounded in the movement of land and bodies, both. In its exploration of the ground, the sidewalk, the street, the graveyard, choreographically and as *choreography*, *The River* pitches the ground along the Brewery Creek corridor not just as dancing surface, but as, itself, a living, dynamic entity in a long enactment of a set of fraught social, spatial, historical, and political moves.

While this chapter has argued for Jamieson’s exploration of the productive possibilities of choreographic topographies, my next chapter asks how a dance that is disconnected from its physical site can operate to expose a different set of social and spatial dynamics at play. To this end, I analyze the relationship between Paul-André Fortier’s *Solo 30x30*, which is not at all invested in cultivating a “sensuous

correspondence” with the physical properties of its site, and the embodied viewing dynamics fostered by the formal particularities of what I call the “urban proscenium.”

Chapter 3.

Turning

What does it mean to be oriented? How is it that we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn? If we know where we are, when we turn this way or that, then we are oriented. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or to that. To be oriented is also to be oriented toward certain objects, those that help us find our way. These are the objects we recognize, such that when we face them, we know which way we are facing. They gather on the ground and also create a ground on which we can gather. Yet objects gather quite differently, creating different grounds. What difference does it make what we are oriented toward? ~ Sara Ahmed, "Orientations" 543

It is the height of summer, and the predictable rush-hour bustle of pedestrian commuters—a kinetic force in and around Vancouver’s Library Square—is, today, interrupted. In the midst of the plaza’s brick-surfaced amphitheater, a lean, black-clad man moves with careful concentration inside a frame of black theatre tape. Each day, for thirty days, he returns. Each day, he moves in the same patterns, in the same place, in the same ways. His hand stirs the reflection in the collecting puddle as he settles his bare palm on the slick brick surface. He hovers for a moment, his torso suspended by a few inches, before he lowers his body slowly onto the hard, wet ground. Again. This time the sun beats down on his bald head, on the red bricks, on the parched sidewalk. He feigns a struggle for balance at the edge of his space. And again. This time in the dim, overcast thick of the late afternoon, the man drops, his bare hand meets ground, body suspended a few inches above. A long moment passes before he lowers himself completely. And again. Up from down now. City transit buses weave through car traffic; groups of pedestrians walk past, some allowing their gaze to linger with the man as they keep pace; pigeons swoop; library patrons mill about, dissect the space, pause to watch, or ignore the dancing man as, again and again, he lowers onto the wet brick, the dry brick, the hot brick, or the cool brick, in turns, day after day.

Montreal-based dancer and choreographer Paul-André Fortier's *Solo 30x30* performs exactly what its title proclaims: in successive sites in different urban centres around the world, he executes the same dance movements for thirty minutes each day for thirty consecutive days.⁷⁸ Since the premiere of *Solo 30x30* in 2006, Fortier has performed the dance more than four hundred times in outdoor sites in fourteen cities in North America, Europe and Asia. Exposed "to the vagaries of the weather and the gaze of passersby—their indifference or their curiosity, their admiration, mockery or desire," Fortier has offered free performances to mostly unsuspecting and passing audiences in rain, sun, wind, and snow ("*Solo 30x30*").⁷⁹ After ten such performance stints worldwide, the Dancing on the Edge Festival (DOTE) brought Fortier's piece to Vancouver in June and July of 2009, Fortier's slim silhouette moving with linear formality against the imposing backdrop of the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library during the late afternoon rush hour.

⁷⁸ Paul-André Fortier is a Canadian dance icon. A recipient of Canada's 2012 Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in dance, Fortier's much-celebrated dance and choreography career has taken place mainly indoors, in dance studios and on theatre stages. Fortier has been dancing, choreographing and teaching professionally for decades. Fortier established his company, Fortier Danse-Création in 1981. He co-founded Montréal Danse in 1986. In addition to dancing and choreographing, Fortier taught dance at UQAM for ten years. The relationship of his aesthetic to his specific Montreal context—and to French-language dance studies discourse—is beyond the scope of my project, though it is, in itself, worthy of study. Here, I will focus on how the dance operated in a Vancouver context.

⁷⁹ Fortier's project is characterized as such by dancer and Associate Professor at UQAM, Michèle Febvre, in a quotation pulled from the program for the 2008 Festival TransAmériques, which featured the only indoor staging of *Solo 30x30*.



Figure 3.1. Paul-André Fortier’s *Solo 30x30* in Vancouver, photographs by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création, Blogspot*, 1 July 2009, web, 13 March 2012). Image courtesy of Fortier Danse-Création.

Note. Fortier, dressed in black, hails the (momentary) attention of passing pedestrians.

As numerous performance scholars have argued, the ritual of going to the theatre shapes how one sees and experiences a performance (Schechner; S. Bennett; McKinnie). Buying tickets to a show, dressing to whatever the venue’s unspoken theatre-going codes, perhaps going out to dinner with friends before the show, arriving at the theatre, receiving a program, and finding a seat—all of this, combined, of course, with one’s class and educational background, geography, exposure to the performing arts, and so on, choreographs one’s horizon of expectations (125-39).⁸⁰ Although it was situated outdoors, Karen Jamieson’s *The River* (the subject of my previous chapter) honoured many of these rituals: most people in the audience knew about the performance in advance and made a special effort to attend, and Jamieson distributed programs with site maps and descriptions of the piece to her gathered audience. In terms of what Richard Schechner has called a “gathering/dispersing” matrix (*Performance* 190), *The River* had many of the trappings and fixings of theatre-based

⁸⁰ For more on the “horizon of expectations” as it was initially conceived of within the context of reader-response theory, see “Theories of Reading and Viewing,” the second chapter of Susan Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (1997). Bennett transfers this concept to a performance context from Hans Robert Jauss’ reader reception theory work.

performances. However, often, site-based dances forego these theatrical rituals in favour of the spontaneous, the accidental, and the incidental. This begs the question: what happens if the rules of the performance event change? What if a performance bypasses the ritual associated with preparing for a theatrical experience and, instead, comes into the streets and grabs its audience members out of the midst of their everyday activities? What if it comes, unannounced and unexpected (except, perhaps, within a small circle of performance insiders), at rush hour on a busy street, and demands curbside attention?

This is precisely the point of Fortier's solo. The piece, says Donna Spencer, DOTE's Artistic Director and Producer and presenter of the dance's Vancouver iteration, is "all about capturing people on the street" (Telephone interview). Vancouver dance critic Janet Smith makes a similar observation in her review of *Solo 30x30*: "The piece seems less a fully realized work than an abstract series of gestures—almost as if designed to catch the attention of passersby" ("Dancer" n. pag). Fortier agrees: "This choreography is not meant for a captive audience whose members paid for their seats, it's made for a public made up of passersby who choose whether or not to stop to share this moment of dance with me" (*Diary*).⁸¹ The structure of Fortier's choreography wanders. Rather than a progressive development of movement motifs, Fortier meanders through one movement study after another. At times stark, linear, and mechanical and at other times lanky, smooth, and winding, his choreography is an experiment in form. Indeed, as I will argue, the function of the solo is not contained in the content of the choreography; instead, the solo's meaning resides in the relationship between the choreography and the ever-changing spaces in which it is set. The very premise of the solo—that is, the impossible and perpetual effort to repeat, precisely—ends up linking the dance with its site in unexpected ways. Smith is right to observe that: "the most fascinating thing about veteran choreographer-dancer Paul-André Fortier's free shows—on all month in Library Square—isn't so much the performance itself. It's how the city

⁸¹ *Diary of a Nomadic Dancer, or Journal d'un danseur nomade* (2008) is a documentary film chronicling the first international tour of *Solo 30x30*. It follows Fortier from his world premiere of the piece in 2006 in Newcastle (UK), to Nancy (France), to Yamaguchi (Japan), to Ottawa (Canada), and finally to Fortier's home, Montreal (Canada) in 2007. The documentary's narration is derived from Fortier's journal and edited for screen by director Yannick B. Gélinas.

becomes a part of the work, and the way you become aware of things you might not notice if you were, well, hurrying home from the office” (n. pag.). Of course, the constantly morphing surroundings of the choreography and the ever-flowing public spaces into and against which the dance is set frame the movement in specific and shifting ways that I will attend to here; but even more significant to my study is how Fortier’s dance, itself, functions as an inverted frame, calling attention to the embodied and everyday choreographies of its surrounding public.

In this chapter, I analyze the spatial and social implications of *Solo 30x30*, a highly formalized contemporary dance piece, crossing the boundary from the theatre stage to public plaza. Attending to how the solo calls together, organizes, and positions its audience in its Vancouver iteration, I explore what Fortier’s performance can tell us about the relationship between the formation of a temporary public and the address around which that public coheres. With a choreographic analysis of the process of identifying oneself as part of *Solo 30x30*’s public, I attend to the dynamics of membership in the dance’s temporary community. Anchored in my suggestion that Fortier’s Vancouver site functions as a readymade urban stage, I tease out the degree to which Fortier’s dance both belongs to and pushes at the boundaries of a sub-category of site dance I call “urban proscenium” dances—site-based dances that retain key formal characteristics of stage-based works. Intervening in discussions of site-based dance as a form that effects a democratization of performance and the public sphere in equal measure, I draw out a tension between the impulse to make dance accessible by moving it outdoors on the one hand and the formal constraints of the urban proscenium on the other. Fortier’s dance, I argue, consciously occupies this ambiguity, calling attention to the acts fundamental to the form: claiming space, demanding attention, and casting on the public a theatrical lens. Fortier’s reoccurring performance points to the tension inherent in every bodily act, and a tension that is exacerbated in the practice of site-based dance: the aesthetic and ethical volatility that comes of *taking place*. I argue that, taken together, the performance’s geographic and choreographic addresses effect a pedagogy of context that situates its temporary public self-consciously and kinetically in the midst of a larger public scene, raising still more questions about the particular value of publicly sited performance’s specific brand of appeal for curbside attention.

Curbside Attention

In his site-selection for this globally itinerant solo, Fortier's requirements were basic: the space needed to be large enough to contain his dance and generally flat. In addition, he insisted that his performance site be situated in the midst of regular foot traffic so that the public would encounter his dance in the midst of their everyday routines (Personal interview). Avoiding parks and art galleries, Fortier sought out "surprising urban locations where no one would expect to see a man dancing" (*Diary*). Indeed, Spencer recalls that she was drawn to the piece because of its potential to "wake people up to the value of dance" and to "involve everyone passing through the space in the experience"—most of whom would never go to see a ticketed contemporary dance performance (Telephone interview). The impulse toward open access runs through the various production elements that supported the solo: not only was *Solo 30x30* sited in the midst of a busy, everyday space, but it was also free to viewers and unticketed. Neither Spencer nor Fortier have a clear sense of who comprised *Solo 30x30*'s audiences: passersby, customers and workers in neighbouring stores and buildings, users of the library plaza, and drifting intentional and accidental attendees of the show tangled together into a possible and unknowable viewership. And yet Fortier and Spencer agree that, because of its placement, *Solo 30x30* functions to build new and broader audiences for Fortier's practice and for the form of contemporary dance in general (Fortier, Personal interview; Spencer, Telephone interview).

As Karen Jamieson also noted in my previous chapter, contemporary dance tends to be characterized by its small and specific audience following. Indeed, many theatre-based forms of performance suffer the reality of low attendance peopled in large part by those who share a socio-economic and educational background (Gagné Leclerc;

Hill Strategies; Petri).⁸² Of course, this is sure to fluctuate along a spectrum of performance genres: consider, for example, the large and broad draw of Broadway-style musicals and contemporary cirque performances—differences these data sets tend to overlook. Contemporary dance’s reach is small enough that it has only prompted one (Québec-based) study of audience composition and attendance in a Canadian context (Gagné Leclerc 153). Even more than other forms of theatre-based performance, this study suggests, contemporary dance’s audience is comprised of those with particularly high levels of income and education: “The proportion of those who attended dance shows in 1998 was higher among Canadian university graduates, as well as those whose declared income exceeded \$80,000” (Gagné Leclerc 159). That the data analyzed here draws only from a Québec context is significant, particularly given the site-specific nature of my research. While there is no data on the municipal or provincial breakdown of dance audiences across the country, a Statistics Canada survey tells us that performance attendance rates in British Columbia beat the national average: whereas the national average of the population that attends performance is fifteen percent, in BC, that average jumps to twenty percent (Canada 6). The varying compositions of dance audiences in individual Canadian cities would, I cannot help but speculate, frame audience reception of Fortier’s solo differently. (Perhaps publics were more—or less—amenable to Fortier’s performance in Vancouver than other stops on *Solo 30x30*’s tour?)

This recent Canadian survey-based data supports earlier research into the compositional politics of theatre audiences. As Susan Bennett once phrased it: theatre “is not culturally innocent” and it “occupies a central place in bourgeois society” (*Theatre* 93). The effort to reach new and more mixed audiences is often a guiding principal of site-based performance work. In her 2000-2001 survey of site-based performance

⁸² Studies show that university graduates and those with high household incomes comprise the largest proportion of theatre audiences, and that attendance drops in correlation with decreasing incomes and education levels. Putting aside the ways in which the mode of survey selects for particular results (i.e., the uneven reach of telephone surveys), it is worth noting that even when dance is specified apart from other forms of performance—most commonly, it is folded into other forms of the performing arts without distinction from theatre, music, etc.—it is understood broadly. Failure to differentiate between classical, contemporary, traditional, “ethnic,” street, and other forms of dance compromises the data.

activity in Britain, Fiona Wilkie notes that the majority of site-specific practitioners in her study identify audience development and increased audience reach as a primary motivation driving the practice (“Mapping” 151-52). In their American study of site-based dance, Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik share similar anecdotal findings. They insist that:

regardless of their aspirations, a characteristic that links [site-based dance] performances is their ability to connect community members from outside of the dance world. Due to the fact that the majority of site work resides in the public square, not in a sequestered theatre space, site dance boasts a level of accessibility seldom associated with dance performances. For many theatrical productions of dance, ticket prices, a lack of familiarity with dance as a discipline, and/or societal assumptions about a theatre-going public tend to curtail attendance by a larger public. But site-specific dance typically exists in spaces that anyone can and will frequent. ... As such, the numbers that access site-specific performances can far surpass the typical dance performance, and the audience often boasts a much more diverse public with viewers who may never consider going to a theatre. (4)

A founding premise of site-based performance in general and of site-based dance in particular, then, is that it is more accessible than staged performance and, as such, draws together a wider and more mixed composition audience.

This is certainly the set of ambitions with which DOTE approached the production of Fortier’s *Solo 30x30*, along with other site-based works in the festival. DOTE has a history of presenting site-based dance works through its Dusk Dances series.⁸³ That audience development has always been a motivation for the series was rendered explicit and structural recently. In 2014, DOTE launched its “Dance Passport,” a system by which repeat attendees at Dusk Dance performances can collect stamps (in exchange

⁸³ One of Canada’s first site-dance presentation series, Dusk Dances was founded by Sylvie Bouchard in 1993. For years, it was sited at Trinity-Bellwoods Park in Toronto and was incorporated as a satellite event of the Fringe Festival of Independent Dance Artists (fFIDA). The series grew into its own event co-directed by Bouchard and David Danzon and produced by CORPUS. It gradually started to increase its geographical reach, branching out into other Toronto parks and then touring around Canada. Today, it operates as its own festival with various sites in and around and numerous regular touring destinations within Ontario. After attending a presentation of Dusk Dances in Toronto in 1998, DOTE’s Artistic Director and Producer, Donna Spencer, brought the series to Vancouver for DOTE in 1999. Since then, the series has become one of the most popular components of the festival.

for registering with on-site volunteers) for each free, site-based performance they attend; three stamps entitles audience members to a free ticket for a stage/theatre-based performance. With this move, site-based dance becomes an explicit attempt to draw new audiences into the Firehall Theatre (DOTE's home). There are, of course, many reasons beyond audience draw motivating dance and performance festivals (including DOTE) to program outdoor, site-based performances, not least of which is the aesthetic innovation that can come of the shift off-stage—these should not be underestimated. And yet, Spencer also acknowledges that the site-based works function as “a marketing tool” for the festival (Telephone interview). In the case of Fortier's *Solo 30x30*, this is expressly so. An unticketed show, there is never any box office revenue from *Solo 30x30* directly—in Vancouver or elsewhere. Instead, the performance functions as publicity for its presenting entity. Indeed, Fortier acknowledges (with a laugh) the fact that *Solo 30x30* has served as free (or at least cheap) publicity for each festival and institution that has presented the work (Personal interview).

In an effort to expand the reach of contemporary dance and develop new audiences for the form, a report produced for the Canada Council for the Arts prescribes some key formal shifts that align with site-based dance practices. The report suggests that dance artists tweak their presentation habits, placement, and ticketing structures in order to grow audiences. The report also suggests that dance presenters “Revisit the issue of free admission as an audience development tool” (Gagné Leclerc 168), and identifies “the show format, which often is difficult to adapt to the technical conditions of various venues” as “one of the main obstacles between dance and the general public” (167). Further, the report goes on to acknowledge another hindrance to the development of dance audiences that is particularly relevant in a consideration of the accessibility of site-based dance, a form that boasts of its enhanced openness to audiences. The study finds that contemporary dance “is often prejudged to be an ‘esoteric’ and ‘intellectual’ art form” and points to the various axes of access at play in the determination of dance audiences, identifying the issue of dance illiteracy as a fundamental factor in dance's notoriously small audience base (167). Although site-based dances are removed from the social and spatial architecture of the theatre, they are still fettered by many of the same social structures that regulate access to theatre spaces.

The paradox of accessibility was a driving curiosity for Spencer in her choice to program *Solo 30x30*. “I was really intrigued,” she says, “by how the audience or community would respond to this piece that was not accessible, really, in any way other than its placement” (Telephone interview). Unsupported by music, lighting, or other trappings that might make it immediately intelligible as theatrical, Fortier’s piece did not try to make its audience comfortable. The thread of the piece was hard to follow; fragmented and meandering, there was no clear through-line. Like most contemporary dance, there was no guiding narrative. The movement was dancerly, to be sure, trained and precise; but it was not virtuosic in a way that might let an audience relax into a distanced appreciation of Fortier’s movement facility and technique. *Solo 30x30* operated unapologetically as a transplant from the stage without making overtures to set new and accidental audiences at ease. Indeed, elements of Fortier’s movement vocabulary seemed designed to foster ambivalence in both address and response, inviting those who circulated through Library Square to puzzle over his address, choreographic and locational, and to consider what is at stake in accepting or refusing, heeding or ignoring (or simply missing), his call to join the dance’s temporary public.

Of course, all public addresses, danced or otherwise, operate within a predetermined field of reception. In his treatment of the question of address and reception, social theorist Michael Warner insists that although public address is defined by its availability in that “Public discourse ... promises to address anybody [and] commits itself in principle to the possible participation of any stranger” (422), the structure of every public address delimits its potential public. The “genre, idiolect, style,” and tone, among other factors, function as “constraints of circulation” that include some and exclude others from the potential public of a given address (416). In instances of site-based dance, when both the “address” proffered and the reception of that address are rendered legible on bodies in physical space, the fraught and specific relationship between a given address and the temporary public that heeds it is not only enacted; indeed, the call-and-response formula constitutive of every public is actually *performed* visibly and kinetically in public space for those both within and beyond the dance’s temporary public to observe, register, and—potentially—question.

And yet, this formula relies on a degree of recognition of self-as-audience that may not always exist. In her discussion of the different audiences for theatre-based and site-based performance, Wilkie poses an important question about the readability of outdoor, site-based performance, including dance: “Does the spectator, who may have happened upon a performance in a public space, even put the two experiences in the same category?” (152). She goes on to suggest that, “site-specific performance may create an audience that doesn’t know it is one” (152). If potential accidental audiences fail to recognize themselves as such because they lack the exposure to performance and dance requisite for its identification (never mind its literacy), to what degree is a performance sited in even the most accessible geographic location actually accessible? Differently put, if a dance is illegible to its audience as dance and if, therefore, the audience does not recognize itself as an audience at all, what kind of expanded reach does the practice really have? Does an audience that doesn't know itself as such actually constitute an audience? In such cases, what are the productive possibilities yielded by calling together a temporary public that lacks a unanimous self-definition: or, is there something socially significant in the constitution of a public that coheres around an ambiguous address?

Recall the claims Schechner makes for environmental performance: whereas audience members in an “orthodox” theatre setting are “snuggled” and have the option “to keep [their] reactions to [themselves],” in performance practices that explore alternative spatialities, “the lighting and arrangement of space make it impossible to look at an action without seeing other spectators who visually, at least, are part of the performance. Nor is it possible to avoid a knowledge that for the others you are a part of the performance” (*Environmental* 19).⁸⁴ Indeed, the architectural design of the plaza in which Fortier dances generates imbalanced lines of sight: its two-sidedness—an arch of graded cement that ascends, in steps, to the building on the south side sits opposite the busy thoroughfare that is Robson Street on the other—juxtaposes the seated in-the-know audience members with the happenstance passersby. Those seated end up, de facto, gazing out toward Robson Street and the sidewalks that line the road: their

⁸⁴ For a foundational account of how this inter-audience looking can shape the social politics of performances situated off-stage, see Frank Coppieters’ “Performance and Perception” (1981).

collective gaze continues past Fortier to the people bustling by, and sometimes pausing to look at Fortier. Simply by virtue of passing by, a pedestrian is conscripted, at least temporarily, into the sightline of the seated audience. The people traveling along Robson Street are faced with a seated and attentive audience (which varied in size, depending on the day, but ranged from about ten people on a quiet day to upwards of two hundred on the final afternoon). Situated essentially upstage of Fortier on his make-shift stage space, those who travel along Robson must reconcile themselves with the reality that they, like Fortier, are at the other end of the seated audience's gaze. And yet this gaze does not run only the one way. Those who occupy this "upstage" position are invited to return the seated audience's gaze. Fortier's choreographic emphasis on the container, combined with the architecture of the space creates a series of nested layers: Fortier inhabits the inside, framed by committed watchers who sit or stand nearby, and, further out, by those who pause momentarily on the far side of the sidewalk or behind the seated audience who are, in turn, framed by those further out still who watch from across the street or from within various insides (the library, surrounding cafes and shops, etc.).⁸⁵ This nested viewership is continually intersected by commuters and pedestrians often forced off the sidewalk by the ad hoc collection of audience members who have paused to watch mid-route. The uneven terrain of the performance space casts everyone in the complicated dynamics of belonging and performing that are so consciously foregrounded by the structure and the content of *Solo 30x30*.

Situated in the round in the middle of the brick amphitheatre, Fortier's dance literally turns its audience inward. Of course, the dance orients us inward so that we might attend to Fortier's performance. And yet, in doing so, it also invites us to follow the vectors of our gaze beyond the formal choreography and out to the gathered audiences that function to frame it. The dance thus invites its audience to examine itself as a temporary public—and also to witness the operations (the successes and failures) of Fortier's continued efforts to hail audiences. Even as we watch one another watching Fortier, we also watch those who look away, those who pointedly ignore, and those who fail to see Fortier's bid for curbside attention. What are the consequences of Fortier's

⁸⁵ The impact of *Solo 30x30* on the various "neighbours"—proprietors of surrounding shops—was of ongoing interest to Fortier, who hoped to become familiar to them over the duration of each performance stint as yet another worker in shared space (*Diary*).

choreographic emphasis on attention for a larger theory of social relations in urban environments—where too many of us consciously look away from the lives all around us? How does Fortier’s invitation to physically turn inward challenge our everyday inward orientations and cultivated disinterest? How does *Solo 30x30* call attention to the act of *framing* itself by orienting us inward to examine the dance’s multiple performances of frame: its taped borders, its choreographic fixation on spatial boundaries, its positioning inside a ring of audience members, and its unexpected emphasis on the continual everyday goings-on that, themselves, frame *Solo 30x30*’s various frames?

A Choreographic Hail

Surrounded during most days of the Vancouver run by a thin but attentive crowd of seated spectators, Fortier strides across the square marked off by black theatre tape on the brick surface of the plaza. He slices the space with straight arms, drops into an introspective sequence of brick-bound floorwork, and, repeatedly, stands at the edge of his demarcated space, looks out at the rush-hour bustle that surrounds him, and raises his hand in a vague, undirected, and mostly unreturned wave. For me, this wave—I think of it as a bluff wave—condenses many of the issues central to site-based dance more generally: I read Fortier’s bluff wave as a small-scale version of the larger bid for attention that his public performance (and all public performances and addresses, more broadly) must make. In order to garner attention, unexpected and unticketed performances like Fortier’s extend a kind of invitation to those who happen into the vicinity. Fortier’s performance of generating an audience meditates on what is at stake in the process of hailing, and heeding, and gathering to watch. By situating itself in the midst of an everyday place, by surrounding itself by people who do not expect to see performance, and by repeatedly addressing its viewers with this bluff wave, *Solo 30x30* asks: who are you who watches, how do you watch, and where do you watch from?

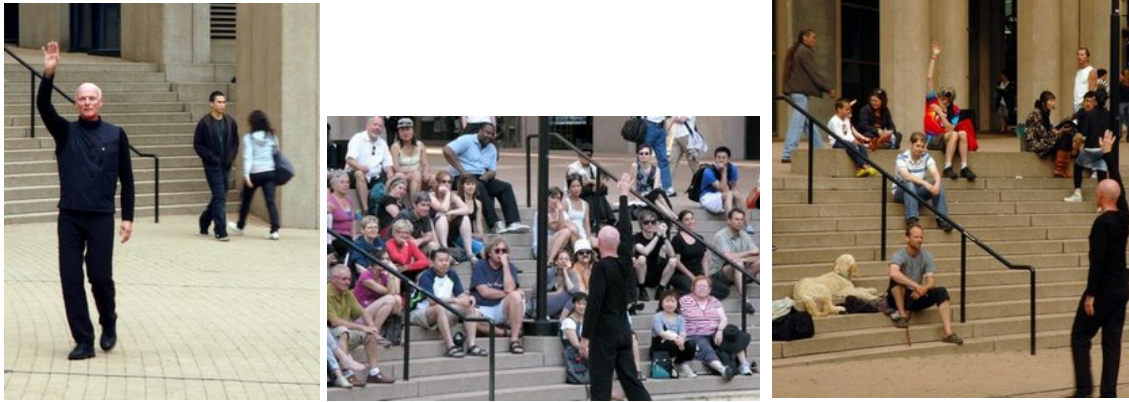


Figure 3.2. Paul-André Fortier’s repeated “bluff wave” in his Vancouver performances, photographs by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 12, 18, 14 July 2009, web, 13 March 2012). Images courtesy of Fortier Danse-Création.

Note. While the rare audience member did reciprocate Fortier’s wave, most recognized the gesture for what it was: a bluff wave.

Throughout the run of *Solo 30x30*, I operated as a kind of undercover researcher. I positioned myself in various locations around the dance: sometimes I sat on the concrete steps with the small seated audience; sometimes I stood on the sidewalk opposite the steps and felt the press of the seated audience’s gaze; once, I stationed myself surreptitiously, I thought, in the Starbucks across the street and watched from the patio; I even set up to watch *Solo 30x30* on the seventh floor of the library, by a window with a view of Fortier’s performance. I watched Fortier, to be sure; but I admit that I was preoccupied with the responses of those who surrounded him. A certain sense of disorientation was legible in the body language of those who happened past the library square during Fortier’s dance. Double-takes, furrowed brows, hushed whispers, uneasy and uncertain grins, side-long glances: the temporary audiences generated by Fortier’s performance cohered around this brand of anxious disorientation.

Fortier’s performance, predictably and intentionally, disrupted what Erving Goffman refers to as “civil inattention”—that is, an interpersonal choreography delicately balanced between acknowledgement and ignorance that both signals and confers an assurance of normalcy and safety between strangers in public spaces (83-88). Goffman parses the physical choreography of civil inattention: “In performing this courtesy the eyes of the looker may pass over the eyes of the other, but no ‘recognition’ is typically allowed. Where the courtesy is performed between two persons passing on the street,

civil inattention may take the special form of eyeing the other up to approximately eight feet, during which time sides of the street are apportioned by gesture, and then casting the eyes down as the other passes—a kind of dimming of lights” (84). Fortier’s dancing body, his misbehaving body, vied for acknowledgement. Not only did Fortier invite scrutiny of his behaviour, but his infraction of the rules of propriety that underpin civil inattention also permitted (even prompted) onlookers to abandon their own mutual performances of inattention. From each of my vantage points, I heard echoes of the question journalist, Kevin Griffin, would later articulate in his review of *Solo 30x30* for the *Vancouver Sun*: I was surrounded by people inquiring (incredulously to another pedestrian, inquisitively to a barista, or in hushed tones to a fellow library patron): “what is that man doing?” The subtext of this continually reiterated question, I contend, has less to do with what Fortier was actually doing in the space and more to do with confusion about the behaviour expected of the one who asks the question. Underlying this question is an unspoken anxiety I often feel when I encounter unexpected public performances: is it me, is it my attention that the performance is trying to catch? How should I respond? What is my role in this? This is the moment when I try to reconcile whoever it is I think I am with whoever it is I sense the performance is *performing for*.

This is where Fortier’s bluff wave comes in: it is a physical address or hail, akin to an Althusserian interpellative “hey you!” Althusser theorizes interpellation as the institutional and ideological process by which a subject comes to understand herself as attached to a particular identity within a particular social order. Althusser is careful to point out that interpellation does not happen at any given time, but, rather, it is the condition of our existence; that is, we are always already (or never not) interpellated. But conjuring what he tellingly calls a “theoretical theatre” (174), Althusser uses an event to explain his theory and, as André Lepecki observes, “There is something uncannily choreographic in the way Althusser describes this mechanism” (*Exhausting* 8). Althusser’s “theoretical theatre” features a police officer who shouts to a (presumably suspect) pedestrian, “Hey, you there!” (Althusser 74). In the moment that the pedestrian turns around and thereby heeds the address, that pedestrian is interpellated as the subject of the police officer’s hail and subject to the law.

Whereas the hail in Althusser's example relies for its power on the pedestrian's immediate assumption that he or she is the intended recipient of the address—as Althusser puts it, “the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed” (74)—Fortier's hail is both delivered and received with less certainty: his wave reads at once as a declarative (“hey, you there!”) and a question (“Hey, you there?”). Gestural, ununiformed, and vague, Fortier's wave lacks the authority and clarity of the police officer's hail; pedestrians on the receiving end of Fortier's wave do not know for sure who is being addressed. Fortier's static wave has a quality of retrospection; it is as though Fortier is waving to the present from the past, perhaps from a photograph. He makes eye contact, but without any trace of recognition. A performance of a wave, a physical quotation of a wave, it does not seek simply to confer or confirm the subjectivity of the person on the other end; rather, it calls critical and self-conscious attention to the moment of being waved at—of being hailed. Vacant, vague, and performed within the context of a contemporary dance movement vocabulary, Fortier's bluff wave both exaggerates the hail and turns it on its head.

For there is a crucial kinetic difference between Fortier's wave and Althusser's reading of the policeman's hail. In Althusser's formulation, the one who is hailed is called from behind; he must turn to face the addresser. This turn—the process of spinning around to see who called you—is the moment of interpellation; as Althusser puts it, “By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was really him who was hailed’ (and not someone else)” (174). This situation is fundamentally different in the case of Fortier's solo. Because it is silent, Fortier's wave can only reach those who already face him to see it. While this may seem a small physiological detail, it has important ramifications for the way that Fortier's hail operates. Here, Judith Butler's analysis of an Althusserian hail is instructive. Butler reminds us that those hailed by a police officer have no time to think before they turn to accept the address and thereby become interpellated. The one who turns does so before she or he has time to ask: “Who is speaking? Why should I turn around? Why should I accept the terms by which I am hailed?” (“Conscience” 7). Fortier's wave operates differently: because the recipient must already face Fortier in order to even notice his silent address, his wave invites those who see it to ask the very questions Butler insists an

Althusserian hail precludes: who hails me, why should I respond, and under what terms will I respond? Instead of implicating his viewer in what Butler identifies as a “misrecognition, a false and provisional totalization” characteristic of Althusser’s policeman’s hail (11), Fortier models a version of a hail that spurs subjective uncertainty. Those on the other end of his wave are prompted to consider who is waving, to whom, and why. Writ large, *Solo 30x30* invites its viewers to ask: who am I in relation to this dance, to this place, and to the people around me?

Although Fortier’s hail does not require the “one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion” that Althusser identifies as the moment of interpellation, turning is, of course, pivotal (if you will) to both the social and spatial function of Fortier’s dance (not to mention central to his choreography—a point to which I will return).⁸⁶ After all, turning, orienting and reorienting, determines how we inhabit our physical world and what we can sense of that world. The direction in which we turn, as Sara Ahmed illustrates, is many things at once: among them, a moment of subjective agency, a result of predetermined and well-trodden pathways, and a choreography that acts on the body even as the body enacts it. In her effort to propose a queer phenomenology, Ahmed “begins with the question of orientation, of how it is that we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn” (*Queer* 1). Fixated on the turn, Ahmed “reflect[s] on the difference it makes *which way subjects turn*” (15, emphasis in original):

Life, after all, is full of turning points. Turning might not only constitute subjects in the sense that the ‘turning’ allows subjects to misrecognize themselves in the policeman’s address, but it might also take subjects in different directions. Depending on which way one turns, different worlds might even come into view. If such turns are repeated over time, then

⁸⁶ The significance of the “pivot” in Vancouver dance culture is worth mentioning here, as it partially constitutes the company name of one of Vancouver’s most visible and celebrated dance success stories. The pivot receives special attention on Crystal Pite’s Kidd Pivot website: “Now imagine you are the fighter—unrestrained, irreverent, defiant. There is a brutal simplicity in your urge to move, but you also wield a complex machinery of skill: your task demands precise execution. You are a performing strategist, mercurial and spectacular. Your actions are pivotal—each change of direction extends your perspective of the possible” (n. pag.). For more on Pite and the pivot, see the coda to Peter Dickinson’s *World Stages, Local Audiences* (2010); see also Dickinson’s recent essay in *Dance Research Journal*, “Textual Matters: Making Narrative and Kinesthetic Sense of Crystal Pite’s Dance-Theater” (2014).

bodies acquire the very shape of such direction. It is not, then that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather, in moving this way, rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies *in turn* acquire their shape. Bodies are 'directed' and they take the shape of this direction. (15-16, emphasis in original)

In Ahmed's terms, for a person to find herself crossing or circumnavigating the south plaza at Library Square is a result of many other cumulative turns; for a person to heed Fortier's hail, to stop and watch, is likewise a result of previous orientations, exposures, and pathways inasmuch as it is a personal choice. To locate oneself (at and then) in Fortier's address is to take a turn in a route that extends both forward and backward in time—a pathway that both leads to and is determined by the moment of (re)orientation.

During the Vancouver run of *Solo 30x30*, it was unusual for passersby to locate themselves in Fortier's wave in the way of waves: that is, by reciprocating. In those rare cases when audience members did wave back to Fortier, the wave was not so much an acknowledgement of recognition; rather, it was a performed acceptance of the role of audience. Even when he waves at me, Fortier does not wave at me, specifically, but to the audience and passersby in general and, just by happenstance, in my direction. As I witnessed during my numerous viewings of *Solo 30x30*, predictably, Fortier waves in exactly the same direction at precisely the same time in each performance of the piece, regardless of who happens to be on the other end of his wave—or if anyone is there at all. In Fortier's own terms, his wave both "is a wave and it is not" (Personal interview). Fortier suggests that part of the significance of his bluff wave is simply offering the inside of his hand to his audience. He understands his presentation of his palm as vulnerable and his finger pads—with the coiled uniqueness of fingerprints—starkly intimate (Personal interview). Although I am drawn to the poetry of Fortier's suggestion, I understand the inside of the hand not as vulnerable so much as rugged, nimble, and tough in varying degrees depending on use. Hands do hard work—some more than others, of course.⁸⁷ Palms chafe and callous; they get cut and they get dirty. Indeed, it is with the inside of the hand that we most often physically engage with the city and other

⁸⁷ For more on hands and/as tools, see Carrie Noland's *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (2009).

people. Of course, we wave. But we also shake hands, tap another's back, hold onto the bus pole, the doorknob, the railing, the faucet. The inside of the hand is both a symbol of and a mechanism for our engagement with the material world. And yet, and this is perhaps what Fortier hopes to call up with his bluff wave, the hand is also the part of the body that is specialized to do our most delicate and intimate work: we touch our eyes with our hands; we touch our babies, our food, our lovers.

Folded together in Fortier's gesture, in his presentation of his hand, is the intimate and the abstract: even as it asks for public attention, it indexes private tendencies. In *Solo 30x30*, Fortier's wave is not prompted by the specific people around him; rather, it points to how entirely unimportant each individual person is within the context of his address: his wave, then, ekes out a role for—indeed insists on the presence of—the abstract and non-specified audience member, a notion key to broader theories of 'public.' If we return to Rosalyn Deutsche, we can see that Fortier's wave functions to foreground a process that underwrites all public address: the subject an(y) address calls is not—cannot be—identical to the subject that call reaches. In addition to her insistence that publics must be constituted in and of difference and diversity (as I detailed in Chapter 1), Deutsche, drawing again from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of antagonism, also insists that the subject addressed is never a discrete subject at all. The self is non-identical. Also recall Butler on the relational constitution of the "public" body. Instead, the subject who receives the hail is invited to stand in as an intended recipient—to temporarily perform as a coherent whole and part of a larger coherent public. Although it meets with a specific and embodied subject, the public address necessarily calls together a collection of abstract subjects, of stand-ins. In this way, a knowable public populated with specific individuals, Deutsche argues, does not exist.

It is on this premise that Deutsche revives and reworks Bruce Robbins' notion of the "phantom public" and its extension, the phantom public sphere, which Robbins defines as the impossibility of the public sphere as a site of consensus and social coherence. For Deutsche, "the traditional public sphere is a phantom ... because the ideal of social coherence, for which the term public has always stood, is itself irremediably deceptive and, moreover, oppressive" (320). Invested in the productive potential of conflict and antagonism both at the scale of the subject and of a public, she

suggests that the most “radical possibilities for democracy may lie in a public sphere that is precisely a phantom” (321). The term “phantom public,” then, comes to operate both as a critique of nostalgic notions of the public as a socially coherent and inclusive whole and as a model of a possible public structured by antagonism. Deutsche suggests that “the public sphere [is] structurally elsewhere, neither lost nor in need of recovery or rebuilding but defined by its resistance to being made present” (324). And, further, that “this particularity of the public—that it is not here”—is precisely that which makes it so socially and politically relevant (324).

Fortier’s bid for curbside attention, crystallized in his repeated wave, brings into focus the moment of subjective disorientation that structures all experiences of publicness. Reworking the physical language of “hey you!” into its interrogatory form, “hey you?,” Fortier’s dance rethinks the temporary public it calls around it as a phantom public. His silent, self-consciously performed, and vague wave treats its potential recipients not as singular—and Althusser, Butler and Deutsche agree on this—misrecognized individuals who fit neatly into the frame of the address. Instead, Fortier’s wave asks its audiences to experience the uneasiness of being-in-public when the functioning logic of publicness is structured by the absence of a specific and embodied individual. His bluff wave implicates his audience in the pull between abstract and specific; moreover, it asks those on the receiving end to feel the contradiction internal to being-in and being-of a public. For only a moment, Fortier’s happenstance and accidental audiences, these temporary publics, are asked to dwell in the uncomfortable tensions between recognition and misrecognition that constitute the solo’s phantom public. Caught within the theatrical mechanism of Fortier’s dance, this temporary public is also compelled to embody, enact, and *perform* that ambivalence.

Urban Proscenium

A temporary, month-long tenant in, as Miwon Kwon has put it, “one place after another,” Fortier’s work is intended for public placement in an abstract sense. Fortier calls the work “site-specific,” but in the true meaning of the term, *Solo 30x30* is neither site-specific nor site-adapted: it was neither created for nor in studied response to a particular location, nor does the dance change or “adapt” in any substantive way when it

is moved from site to site (Personal interview). More accurately, *Solo 30x30* is a site-situated or a “site-generic” dance in Wilkie’s sense of the term. That is, it was created for and can be transported between instances of a certain *type* of space—a flat space in the midst of foot traffic. *Solo 30x30* is performed in public spaces, but it was created in the studio and it is structured by its studio-based origins.⁸⁸ Fortier generated the movement material during half-hour long improvisation sessions in his Montreal studio. He worked in silence, alone most often, and with a camera. Then, with the help of his rehearsal director, Ginelle Chagnon, Fortier pieced together moments of his captured improvisations into a larger composition. Prior to the world premiere of *Solo 30x30*, Fortier did not rehearse the dance outside at all; the press photos for his premiere performance were taken outdoors, but his first full run of the dance outside a studio space was during the premiere performance in Newcastle, UK (Personal interview). The set formal choreography of the dance does not respond to its surroundings in any overt way; although Fortier made subtle adjustments to particular sites, the expressed project of each performance was to execute the same choreography in spite—even if also in the midst—of changing environmental circumstances.

Although *Solo 30x30* was developed in the container of the studio, its home is outdoors. In September of 2011, after years of touring the solo to various international outdoors sites, Fortier performed the solo indoors in the lobby of Place des Arts in his hometown, Montreal. As the promotional material for the event indicated, “After five years of being subjected to the elements,” Fortier would perform the solo for the first time “protected from the vagaries of the weather” (Danse Danse). Like his outdoor performances, the piece had a thirty-day run (same time, same place), and the choreography was virtually unchanged. When I sat down with Fortier in Vancouver to discuss his project, he expressed surprise at his experience of the indoor iteration: “I

⁸⁸ During a workshop with Fortier in which I participated, Fortier elaborated on the role of the studio in his choreography, saying: “Sometimes I think the work is hiding in the studio and my job is to find it. It is not in my head; it is in the studio” (Dance workshop). Biba Bell has recently offered a fine analysis of the role of the studio in contemporary dance in her dissertation, “Dancing There: Spaces of Contemporary Choreography” (2015). For more on the ideology and politics of the studio—particularly the visual artist’s studio—see *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists* (2010). Edited by Mary-Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner, the volume calls for increased transparency about the role of the studio as a site of production.

wouldn't do it again," he said. "That was a mistake" (Personal interview). I pressed him to identify what about the indoor version of *Solo 30x30* failed, and he immediately pointed to the various types of elemental lack indoors. "We didn't have the sky," he lamented, "we didn't have the rain; we didn't have the birds" (Personal interview). (I responded: "So it didn't feel quite right." He insisted on stronger language: "No," he says. "It felt wrong.") Although the solo does not formally adapt to its changing surroundings, those changing surroundings are fundamentally constitutive of the solo.

Performed on a series of readymade stages, Fortier's site selection establishes a circumscribed relationship with its public. For example, each of his initial sites was inaccessible to his audience: he danced on a roped-off and raised pedestrian overpass in Newcastle, UK; on a largely unused bridge in Yamaguchi, Japan; on the top of a bus shed bracketed by a parking lot on one side and a freeway on the other in Nancy, France; and on a raised, specially-installed dance floor behind a chain-link fence in Montreal, Canada. His performance spaces in London, UK and Bolzano, Italy were not sited on or behind inaccessible architectural features, but they were still bounded—quartered off with pylons and rope or flagging tape. In Lorient, France, the boundaries themselves became an object of aesthetic contemplation: the frame of Fortier's dancing space was painted onto the ground surface and left to fade away over the months after the performance was done, marking the absence of what once filled the square. In Vancouver, the black theatre tape that delimited Fortier's dance space left a legacy of its own—one that post-show crews had to scrub away.⁸⁹ Whether framed by pylons, flagging, paint, or theatre tape, the boundaries around each of Fortier's dance spaces functioned to limit (if not bar) public entry, and to announce its designation as a performance space. Fortier's response to the intrusion of an audience member into his demarcated square in Ottawa reinforces my reading of Fortier's intention to create a performance space that is meant to be framed by, but exempt from, the pathways of the everyday. Seemingly displeased, he remarks: "The passersby walk[ed] through my space without a care for me or for what [wa]s happening" (*Diary*).

⁸⁹ Donna Spencer notes that the presence of the tape on the brick for the duration of the thirty day run left a residue that the Dancing On the Edge festival had to pay to have removed in the wake of Fortier's performance (Telephone interview).

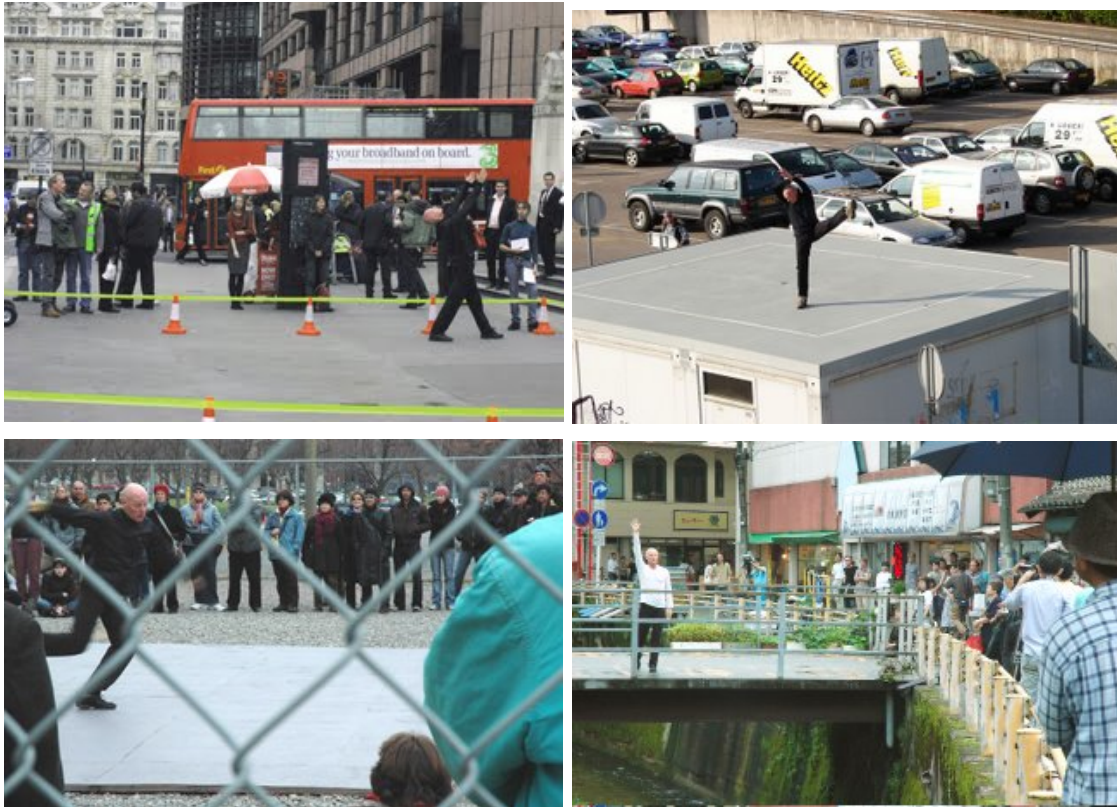


Figure 3.3. Top left: *Solo 30x30* in London, UK, photograph by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 5 October 2007, web, 6 February 2014). Top right: *Solo 30x30* in Nancy, France, photograph by Denis Lavoie (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 10 May 2006, web, 6 February 2014). Bottom left: *Solo 30x30* in Montreal, Canada, photograph by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 18 November 2006, web, 6 February 2014). Bottom right: *Solo 30x30* in Yamaguchi, Japan, photograph by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 19 July 2006, web, 6 February 2014). Images courtesy of Fortier Danse-Création.

Note. The spatial frame of *Solo 30x30* has shifted in important ways in Fortier’s various performances: pylons and flagging tape, an isolated building-top, a raised dance floor inside chain-link fence, and a pedestrian overpass are only a handful amongst dozens of different enframements. Each, of course, operates differently to hail the attention of passersby, signal itself as a dance performance, and choreograph its audience socially and spatially.

In Vancouver, the stagey feeling of the dance was exacerbated by the fact that the Moshe Safdie-designed Central Branch of the VPL is closely and multiply linked with entertainment. Indeed, Fortier himself was disappointed with the theatrical feel of the space (Personal interview). Located in the heart of downtown Vancouver, the plaza

outside the Central Branch, along with Robson Square and the steps outside the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), is an important outdoor gathering place and one of Vancouver's few approximations of a public square. Safdie intended for the library to "become as much a piazza as a building. It would be a focal point for the district, pulling the chaotic edges around it" (qtd. in Lees 334). Situated across from another building of Safdie's design—originally the Ford Centre for Performing Arts (The Centre)—and a short walk from the VAG, the CBC Regional Broadcast Centre, the Vancouver Playhouse, and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, the Central Branch of the VPL is an anchor in what might be thought of as the city's entertainment district. Piggy-backing on the gentrification of Yaletown for/with Expo '86, the Central Branch was conceived of as a catalyst for the gentrification of what was, in 1995, the eastern "fringe" of the downtown core (Lees 333). Changes in occupation and ownership in recent years continue to add to the complexity of this zone of the city: through Vancouver's Community Amenities Contributions program, for example, a portion of the CBC building has recently been refurbished and inhabited by a collection of non-profit arts organizations (including the PuSh Festival).

The Central Branch is also routinely used as an art space. Not only does the Central Branch display works on permanent loan from Government of Canada Art Bank and occasionally program performance (including dance) to supplement particular educational initiatives of the cultural programming department, but it also has a dedicated public art fund. As part of the construction agreement, the Library Square building project included a public art budget of over half a million dollars. A portion of this money supported the commission of Joseph Montague's mosaic pool. Interest accrued on the remaining funds has been allocated to ongoing projects, including two multi-year programs coordinated in conjunction with the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program: a collection of banners which hang in the VPL concourse; and a series of installations and interventions facilitated by the Inside the Library curatorial initiative, an exhibition

directed by professional art curators (“Public Art at VPL”).⁹⁰ While the Central Branch of the VPL has programmed public art and performance in house, as it were, it has also been a host site for public performance projects orchestrated by independent organizations. For a fee (sometimes exchanged monetarily and sometimes rendered partially or wholly in-kind), the Central Branch has served as an important venue for performance festivals in the city—the PuSh Festival and the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad in particular. Stop the Violence’s *Human Library* (which reoccurs annually) is only one of many PuSh Festival shows sited at the Central Branch. I will circle back to the competition for art space in the Central Branch’s library square in my next chapter, where I will consider more carefully the ways in which various public art works, including Aeriosa Performance Society’s “In Situ,” Ron Terada’s “The Words Don’t Fit the Picture,” and Christian Kliegel and Cate Rimmer’s “Walk In/Here You Are” cohabited with and combatted against each other during the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad. That Library Square was a more predictable venue for performance than Fortier intended is partly a function of the inhospitality of many public sites in Vancouver’s downtown core to dance.

The backstage labour involved in producing Fortier’s dance reveals the constrictive dynamics of ownership and management of the city’s public spaces. In her efforts to satisfy Fortier’s requirements for a site, Donna Spencer met, repeatedly, with resistance and confusion. After giving up on her pursuit of various plazas adjacent to corporate buildings—even when building managers were amenable to the project, they requested rental fees that were prohibitive for this non-profit, unticketed, and thirty-day long performance—Spencer shifted her focus to publicly owned buildings.⁹¹ She gravitated toward the VPL’s Central Branch because it had hosted site-based dance in the past—although even outside this publicly owned building, Spencer had to carefully

⁹⁰ *Group Search [art in the library]* (a collaboration between the Vancouver Public Library, the City of Vancouver Public Art Program and Other Sights for Artists’ Projects Association) extended from 2005-2010. Under the curatorial direction of Lorna Brown—a Vancouver-based curator and founding member of Other Sights—*Group Search* placed a series of “temporary public artworks” including performance-based interventions in and around the Central Branch (Brown).

⁹¹ Drawing on Nicholas Blomley’s *Unsettling Space* (2004), I will more fully examine the ways in which the realities of ownership, private or otherwise, are less fixed than they first appear in my Chapter 5.

negotiate use of the plaza with library employees who were ambivalent about the dance's possible disruption of other users (Spencer).⁹² These negotiations laid bare what Loretta Lees (a geographer who has published widely on the social and spatial dynamics of the VPL's Central Branch) establishes in her quotation of the library's chief of security circa 2007: "this is a private space owned by the City...who allow the public to use it" ("Ageographia" 338). In Vancouver, which as urban planner Lance Berelowitz has argued, lacks a traditional public square (241), the Library Square often fills this role and, as such, is not such an "unexpected place" for dance after all. Indeed, the grounds of public libraries throughout North America frequently host site-based dance, as Kloetzel and Pavlik's list of probable sites of dance reveals: site-specific dance, they contend, "may appear beside you on the sidewalk or in the water of a nearby pond; it may materialize over your head on a bank building or *on the steps of the local library*" (4, emphasis added).

But even if *Solo 30x30* had been performed in a less predictable space without a history of public art presentation, and even if the boundaries of the performance space had not been so clearly and materially delineated by tape and other means, the solo would still have conveyed a sense of the stage. Indeed, Fortier's dance is a performance of containment within a travelling, invisible, and in-the-round stage space. His choreography is all pitched toward the edges of his space: time and again, he approaches his boundaries and presses at the outer limits of his demarcated space, palms flat against a nonexistent pane, before backing away as though his efforts to advance have been forcibly redirected. Repeatedly, Fortier positions himself in a wide, outward facing, straddled stance at the very limit of his boundary and performs a mimed physicalization of being at-the-edge. Only an inch from his outer boundary, he sends his arms out to either side and waves them around in small circles, as though he is trying to maintain his balance. After a moment, he falls backwards toward the centre of his square, where he remains only briefly before he forays out to the edge again to test another boundary, his gaze focused on those outside the frame of his demarcated square. Fortier repeats the movement sequence in each quadrant of the square, physicalizing his entrapment inside the lines. His choreography is perpetually concerned

⁹² I will detail some of these specific concerns in my treatment of Aeriosa's *In Situ* (Chapter 4).

with its container, though, as crucially, not the specific details of his environmental placement: not the particular surface of the bricks outside the library plaza, not the vibrancy of the mariachi band that flowed past one day, not the difference between the street traffic on one side and the looming structure of the library on the other. Rather, Fortier dances a fixation with the fact of the container in an abstract sense.



Figure 3.4. *Solo 30x30* in Vancouver, photograph by Ginelle Chagnon (“Solo 30x30,” blog, *Fortier Danse-Création*, Blogspot, 26 June 2009, web, 3 March 2014). Image courtesy of Fortier Danse-Création.

Note. Fortier’s performance of container in the built amphitheatre of the Central Branch’s Library Square.

Rather than investigating the possibilities of co-choreography with its ground in the historical-kinetic way of “choreographic topographies” that I have argued Jamieson’s

dance models, Fortier arrived at Library Square with an established sequence of movements created in response to another space (a studio) and performed dozens of times prior to its Vancouver iterations. As a transplant from the studio to its outdoor sites, as a globally itinerant performance, as a set choreography with movement sequences that do not shift in response to site, and as a dance that multiply emphasizes its sequestration inside a temporarily designated performance space, *Solo 30x30* models (and also troubles, as I will proceed to argue) some of the key elements of what I call an “urban proscenium” dance.

The performance equivalent of what public art critics have derisively termed “plop” or “plunk art,” urban proscenium dances are perhaps the most common form of outdoor dance. Often developed to meet the requirements of performance festivals, which are increasingly reserving space in their line-up for dances situated outdoors, urban proscenium dances are frequently sited in readymade urban stages. These dances tend to imagine an audience of silent witnesses; they maintain some version of a separation between audience and performer; and, often without due attention or sensitivity, they cast the environments around them as backdrop. Although they are sited outside of theatre spaces, the formal properties of urban proscenium dances function to call together audiences that adhere to many of the unspoken rules of a proscenium stage space, including non-interference with the performance. Dances situated in the urban proscenium mode take the trappings of the theater outside with them. In many cases, they extend the claims of theatrical logic, spatial imposition, and social behaviour outward to the found stage spaces in/on which they are sited. With sometimes troubling colonial overtones and a lack of sensitivity to their host sites, urban proscenium dances express what Una Chaudhuri calls a “pantheatrical impulse” (45), temporarily imposing their theatrical apparatus on everyday spaces without examining the social and spatial stakes of this imposition. It is this complex set of dynamics, I argue, with which Fortier’s solo engages—reproducing and troubling it simultaneously.

In his timely and important reassessment of site-specific performance criticism, “Rethinking Site-Specificity: Monopoly, Urban Space, and the Cultural Economics of Site-Specific Performance” (2012), Michael McKinnie tries to account for site-based performances that impose on their sites. He lays out the field as such: critics have most

often categorized site-based performance as heterotopic, dialogic, or palimpsestic, and argued in each case for the ways in which a given performance more successfully levels social hierarchies than their stage-based corollaries (22-23). McKinnie defines heterotopic frameworks as those which, most often drawing on Michel Foucault, “operate through the simultaneous invocation of multiple but differentiated places, both physical and imaginary” (22); dialogic frameworks focus on the ways in which the performance works to cultivate a productive dialogue with site; and palimpsestic or “spectral” frameworks emphasize the past uses and/or narratives that have occupied a given site (22). While McKinnie’s distinctions serve his purpose—that is, to identify the need for a new analytical framework—I am not convinced of the discreteness of these categories. For example, I struggle to determine which of these three frameworks is most applicable to Jamieson’s choreographic exploration of Brewery Creek. However, I will echo McKinnie’s move to put aside these three categories in favour of a fourth.

In his analysis of site-based performances that function in none of the aforementioned ways, McKinnie proposes the category of “monopolistic performances.” Complicit with the economic instrumentalization of performance toward uneven urban development—an end to which (as I have established in earlier chapters) site-based work is particularly susceptible—monopolistic performances trade on the marketability of site-specificity, exploiting their sites for their uniqueness. While McKinnie maintains the three more optimistic analytical frameworks he identifies are useful for analysing a host of performance practices, he also argues that “monopolistic performance demonstrates that the relationship of performance to place is sometimes less interrogative, and more acquisitive, than is commonly acknowledged” (30). For, McKinnie continues, “site-specific performance does not always privilege place. Sometimes it uses place to privilege performance itself” (23). Although, as he acknowledges elsewhere (*City*), McKinnie’s formula is complicated by an understanding of performance (formal and otherwise) as partly constitutive of place itself, I think McKinnie is right: “some performance events [do] appropriate places for their own uses and on their own terms—they subsume them within the apparatus of the event as much as entering into a ‘dialogue’ with them” (30). In fact, I think that there is always a quality of monopolistic performance, with what McKinnie calls its tendency to “subsume” and its “ambiguous spatial politics” (32), in every site-based engagement. And yet, as McKinnie insists in the

conclusion of his essay, this political ambiguity has the potential to function generatively, opening up new avenues for the analysis of site-based performance (32). It is precisely inside this generative ambiguity that Fortier's solo operates. Structured by qualities of urban proscenium and monopolistic performances even as it challenges these configurations, Fortier's dance forces the question of the relationship between site and performance—and the tensions inherent in *taking place*.

What I have identified as the ambiguous politics of Fortier's *Solo 30x30* are bound up with Chaudhuri's articulation of the "uncomfortable political dimension" of performance-based experiments with placement, which hinges on her identification of a "politics—an imperialist politics" of conquering non-theatrical spaces (25, 26). This dynamic is hard to overlook in Fortier's performances. In fact, Fortier offers a self-reflexive analysis of his choreographic claim on space. Reflecting on his debut performance in Japan, Fortier comments: "I took my mark in this new space, which I have to tame over the next thirty days" (*Diary*). Unapologetic, but aware of the demands his dance makes of its spaces and publics, Fortier asserts: "I'm invading your space. I'm inviting myself onto your bridge. I'm imposing myself. I'm invading your space" (Personal interview). Later, in Montreal, Fortier comments on how the dance becomes easier with each daily repetition: "I just begin to become familiar with the city's noises and to build on them. I conquer the urban space, its smells, its energy" (*Diary*). Although Fortier certainly does not imagine himself to be on a worldwide circuit of conquest in any material or martial sense, this language of conquering, taming, imposing, and invading lays bare an operating ideology that is not entirely benign. And here, paradoxically, is the productive possibility of Fortier's performance, for his dance poses questions foundational to all instances of site-based performance: what does it mean to *take place*, to impose oneself, to demand attention? Fortier works with the structure of repetition at various scales—over thirty minutes, over thirty days, and over a globally-reaching itinerary—to generate an ambivalent politics of emplacement that points repetitively and self-reflexively to its own ethically complex acts of taking place and demanding curbside attention.

An Ambivalent Pedagogy of Context

Fortier is explicit about the fact that he did not aim to create a dance specifically for a particular place; rather, his underlying interest was to repeat his unchanging choreography in the midst of a dynamic and changing set of environments. For, of course, as scholars of urban space have argued and as any urban dweller can discern, the city is replete with visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile distractions; insistent and demanding, the city continuously reframes, refigures, and interrupts any artistic vision. Although Fortier's choreography remains virtually unchanged throughout hundreds of performances, the everyday occurrences that frame his solo radically alter both the (re)production and the reception of the dance. It goes without saying that the context of *Solo 30x30* shifts starkly with each re-placement in a new city. But even once the dance has set up its temporary camp in a given site, the choreography is continuously made new by its constantly shifting surroundings. Scholars have long argued that all public art is defined by its radically contingent relationship to its platial context: as Deutsche puts it, "site-specific projects are based on the idea that meaning is contingent rather than absolute" (264). How does site-based dance, then, intervene uniquely in a consideration of this contingency? It is precisely by way of the form's complicated relationship to the theatrical frame it drags outside of the theatre with it—one it overlays on its selected site—combined with the emphatic and embodied "everyday" goings on that both frame the dance and structure the audience's response to its hail to attend. In her discussion of a site-based dance that, like Fortier's, placed set and unchanging choreography in an outdoor context, Susan Leigh Foster observes that "[v]eering away from the controlled ambiance of the proscenium, and challenging the proposition that there is a preferred point of view from which to observe the art event, [the dance] asks both dancer and viewers to attend intensively to their specific surroundings" (*Choreographing* 181).⁹³ Fortier's *Solo 30x30* does not attend to its ground or surrounds with adjustments in choreography; but its structure of repetition—nested within each thirty-minute performance, each thirty-day run, and each placement in its global itinerary—encourages its audiences to temporarily inhabit the gap between context and content. It

⁹³ Here, Foster offers an analysis of Tanya Lukin Linklater's site-based dance, *Woman and Water* (2011).

is, paradoxically, Fortier's adherence to his choreographic script in the midst of changing environments that draws out his pedagogy of context; that is, we are invited to acknowledge the ways in which the dance changes precisely because of its choreographic endeavour to remain the same.

Even as Fortier's dance attempts, with each new beginning, to recuperate the performance that came before and the performance that came before that in a chain of hundreds of nearly identical performances, each physical iteration of the piece is a tacit acknowledgement that the last performance and its precise spatial context has already transformed. Premised, as it is, so explicitly on the impossibility of repetition, *Solo 30x30* is a danced investigation of how changeable and ever-changing urban environments frame Fortier's embodied revival, each day, of what he did the day before, the month before, or the year before. (Indeed, Fortier's original idea was to perform an endurance piece that would run for a full year rather than a month—three hundred and sixty-five consecutive days rather than thirty.) The movement remains the same while the context changes. This impulse toward sustaining the presence of the dance in the midst of change is echoed in the rich material archive that supports *Solo 30x30*, which has generated more documentation than most Canadian dance projects manage. A book, a blog, a documentary, numerous YouTube clips, hundreds of photographs taken by more than a dozen renowned dance photographers, and a wide array of local and national press all carve out for the solo an archival space. Fortier's exaggerated attention to repetition and his creative team's preoccupation with documentation adds new resonance to performance scholar Matthew Reason's reworking of Peggy Phelan's ontology of performance. For Reason, "the act of documentation makes disappearance visible" (27). This exploration of contingency is available not only to those who follow the development of the project over years, or even those who happen past the site of his performance more than once during a given run: repetition is built into the thirty-minute long stretch of choreography itself.

Fortier strides to one corner of his square and sinks into a deep lunge, his arms cutting the air around him with stiff precision; he rights himself and walks a broad half-circle at the outside edges of his square before he strides to another corner, into another lunge, and repeats this pattern until each corner has been momentarily filled. Another

movement motif: he runs through a mechanical sequence of arm work—hands flipping palmward and back, over and over again—pivots on the spot to orient himself in a different facing, and runs through the same sequence again; and again. We can recall Sara Ahmed on orientation here.⁹⁴ Throughout the piece, Fortier explores how slightly different platial contexts (facings or corners or levels or orientations) frame the repeated movement differently. And with this structural insistence on the role of shifting context in the performance of repetition within difference, Fortier calls attention to the spatial and social borders that structure the busy hub that is the plaza of the VPL's Central Branch despite—in fact, by way of—his choreographic indifference to his surroundings.

In his fixation on the effects of platial difference on choreographic sameness, Fortier lays bare an understanding of movement that, consciously or not, structures all site-based dance. Although it operates in/on a different platform, Kate Elswit's analysis of framing is instructive here. In her examination of the "alternative pedagogy of reception" that structures *So You Think You Can Dance?* (134n1), Elswit emphasizes how the model of dance adjudicating and interpretation in the show is fundamentally shaped by its removal of dance from a conventional live theatrical context. The formal apparatus of presentation guides audience interpretation of choreographic content: Elswit's theory intervenes in dance studies discourses by insisting that it is not the movement that *moves* audiences so much as the "extended choreography" of the production—from rehearsal footage and performer interviews to the response of the judging panel (134-35). An investment in a similar shift—away from the power of the movement itself and toward an emphasis on how the framing devices shape the meaning of the choreography—drives Fortier's dance. With each failed effort to repeat, Fortier performs a pedagogy of reception that emphasizes the way a changing context determines the physical and affective force of the same moves.

Indeed, *Solo 30x30* is radically contingent—sited precisely here, in only this moment—and yet, it also expands beyond the current temporal and platial context. Fortier's emphasis on repetition makes clear Randy Martin's assertion that

⁹⁴ For an analysis of "body-oriented" versus "frame-of-reference-oriented movement" (108-09), and of "spin" (109-10), see Francis Sparshott's *A Measured Pace: Towards a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance* (1995).

“Performances are, after all, derived from many other times—of rehearsal, of training, of touring; they gather together movements from myriad locales, experiences, and sources to recalibrate and recompose them for a given intervention” (“A Precarious” 75). By the time *Solo 30x30* makes it to Vancouver, the dance carries within it hundreds of other performances at other locations on other days. In this way, Fortier performs an understanding that site is, itself, a layered and mobile force—one that accrues in the actions of those who, in passing through it, also constitute it. By way of its repetition, both internal to each thirty minute performance and (far more forcefully) that comes of its structural thirty-day endurance, the dance functions against its own urban proscenium address (in both senses of the word) to frame its environment. Indeed, the more you watch the solo, the more you watch the surroundings.

Vancouver dance critic Janet Smith observes how Fortier’s dance directs attention beyond itself in all directions:

Fortier’s soundtrack becomes a rhythm of revving motors, punctuated by honking horns and whoops from a patio where the after-work crowd is just getting into its cups. Flocks of pigeons swoop over his head and up into the space above. And then there’s the constant parade of passersby: the guy who’s sucking back a Slurpee but stops for five minutes to ponder what he’s witnessing; the suits who point and laugh; the preschooler with the pink Dora the Explorer backpack who becomes transfixed and refuses to budge when her father tries to coax her home. (n. pag.)

Fortier’s in-the-round staging, his in-the-midst site selection, and his repetition at various scales ends up inverting the focus of the performance: instead of simply sequestering curbside attention, *Solo 30x30* functions to emphasize the very act of bidding for attention even as it also literally orients its audiences to witness the (mixed) reception of its bid. As I have argued, the same choreography is made new by its changing surroundings: by the mariachi band that passed through the area one day, or the wedding party, or the flood of uniformed hockey fans that swarmed around the performance on another; by the rain, or the clouds, or the sweltering sun. But moreover, Fortier’s choreography of bodily attention and his insistence on turning inward also positions us to attend to those processes by which his particular aesthetic intervention both succeeds and fails at disrupting the urban flow and gathering an audience. What is the composition of the pedestrian flow around and through Library Square? Who hurries

past? Who stops to watch? What physical negotiations must newcomers make to join the accidental audience? What is the choreography of avoidance?

Fortier's dance ends up, in spite of its site-generic performance of container, calling attention to the lived activities that constitute its site, even against the imposing "Disney"-esque and imperialist edifice of Central Branch.⁹⁵ The building, an ersatz replica of the Roman Colosseum, is an architectural spectacle designed to dwarf its users and its surroundings. (Though, despite the clear echoes of the Roman coliseum in the architecture of the Central Branch, Safdie repeatedly and vehemently denies that the ancient European edifice had any influence on his design.) In his scathing critique of the structure, Clint Burnham argues that "Vancouver's old racist heritage" and "shallow Eurocentrism" combine to prop up the colonial references that structure the Central Branch ("Late" 36). Moreover, Burnham provokes: "why did a Pacific Rim city, with its own history of aboriginal settlement and Asian demographics, choose (or foist upon itself) a design for a major public library that nostalgically harkens back to a European empire? The question provides its own answer: the library design compensates a city which fears both its First Nations past and Asian future" (36). Versions of this question have haunted the Central Branch. Burnham quotes Peter Davey's article "When In Vancouver, don't do as the Romans" (1987): "Why, when building an institution devoted to civilization and learning, choose as a model the Colosseum—a place devoted to bloody destruction and the gratification of humanity's basest instincts?" (qtd. in Burnham 45). It is against this backdrop, then, that Fortier's dance—conscious of and unapologetic about its own temporary colonization of the space—is set.

Solo 30x30 complicates the ongoing debate that holds "plop" art against more responsive forms of site-based art by exposing the tensions inherent in even the most dogmatic structures. Although the solo is choreographically "plopped" into Library Square without responding choreographically to its platial setting, its focus on the complex dynamics of garnering (and failing to garner) curbside attention invites its audiences to attend to the local flow that frames the dance. Susan Bennett's analysis of

⁹⁵ *Toronto Star* reporter, Christopher Hume, described the design for VPL's central branch in the early 1990s: "It is pure Disney, an instant ruin that seems intent on turning visitors into Christians and lions" (qtd. in Lees 321).

the “Bilbao effect” is helpful here.⁹⁶ In her resistant reading of Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum—a franchise of the New York “original” built in Bilbao, Spain and the ensuing characterization of Bilbao as an empty symbol of global capital—Bennett insists on the triumph of the local. She cites an exhibition by local artists designed to speak back to the “Bilbao effect” with images that:

interrogat[e] the city’s recent architectural transformation by showing this infrastructure as no more than a backdrop to people’s everyday activities—sitting under a tree, sunbathing, cycling to work, staging a wedding photo, and playing soccer. This was a Bilbao of people not buildings, active not static, diverse not singular. Together, the photographs and videos, past and present, reveal the history and experience of place as primarily affective. (32)

The curators of this exhibition tried, Bennett suggests, to depict “The public’s reconquest” of an overdetermined public space (qtd. in Bennett 33). By insisting on the everyday uses, the exhibition Bennett cites resists the limiting transnational approach that critics have reproduced in their depiction of the building as stiflingly “world class” (29). As Bennett insists, rather than “contrive to make a building all that matters, it is surely more productive to consider its everyday architecture—the performances and experiences the built environment makes possible and for whom” (33). Although Fortier’s *Solo 30x30* ended up sited outside the Central Branch by way of an accident of pragmatics, the dance functions, alongside its imposing backdrop and in spite of its choreographic autonomy from its site, to foreground the complicated social choreographies of its surroundings.⁹⁷

Placed as it is in the midst of a controversial social and architectural edifice, Fortier’s dance foregrounds the capacity of Library Square to engage and support a wide

⁹⁶ After Andrew McClellan, Bennett defines “the Bilbao effect” as “an urban ‘improvement’ model [... describing] the new economic activity and significant global recognition generated by the opening, in 1997, of the Guggenheim art museum in the eponymous northern Spanish city” (“Everyday” 28).

⁹⁷ “Social choreography” is Andrew Hewitt’s term. As he defines it in his book by the same title, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (2005), social choreography “denote[s] a tradition of thinking about social order that derives its ideal from the aesthetic realm and seeks to instill that order directly at the level of the body” (3). My use of the term is perhaps more literal than Hewitt’s.

variety of individuals and communities even as it also calls attention to the different vectors of use that are divided along classed, raced, and other lines. Conceived of as “a ‘people’s university’ for the citizens of Vancouver” (Graif 20), the library calls together a mixed public. It hosts students (university, college, and high school students, as well as adult learners and ESL students who make use of the Adult Learning Centre); tourists (Safdie’s building is an international tourist draw); members of the service class who staff the shops inside the Library Square concourse and nearby coffee shops, restaurants, stores, and hotels; “suits” who work inside the Federal Office Towers and other nearby offices; and a host of other intersecting groups who make use of the VPL for different ends: to borrow library materials, of course—but also to socialize, to shop, to eat, to learn English, to use free wifi, to use the bathroom, to play in the children’s area downstairs, to stay warm, to work.⁹⁸ However, the space does not necessarily host these different groups evenly. For example, whether or not the interior of the building is hospitable to homeless Vancouverites is up for debate. Lees indicates that although it is inclusive in theory, library policy selects against those without a home: “if a person’s personal hygiene is a problem for other library users, the person will be asked to leave and given addresses of places where they can get a shower and soap” (339). Set against the promise of open public access to both space and knowledge for which libraries are celebrated (and sometimes critiqued for failing to achieve), the manifold different emplacements that overlap and compete at Library Square become framing activities for Fortier’s solo.⁹⁹ The relationship of the dance to its everyday framings is ambivalent: although its accidental audiences are oriented toward an examination of the dynamics of inclusion in, exclusion from, and self-identification as part of the performance’s public, the group also coalesces around a bourgeois understanding of the boundaries of art.

⁹⁸ For more on the charged public discussions surrounding the construction of the Central Branch, see Linda Lewin Graif’s “The Paradox of Public Discourse: Designing Vancouver Library Square” (2000). For efforts to understand, empirically, how library spaces are used, see Lisa M. Given and Gloria J. Leckie’s “‘Sweeping’ the library: Mapping the social activity of the public library” (2003). For more on the relationship between this public institution and the interests of the (private) market, see Gloria J. Leckie and Jeffrey Hopkins’ “The Public Place of Central Libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver” (2002). For a theoretical study of the various uses of the Central Branch, see Loretta Lees (1997).

⁹⁹ I will return to more fully examine the ethical implications of theatrical “backgrounding” in Chapter 5.

Indeed, Fortier's insistence on a physical frame for his dance resists, even as it invites, a choreography of intrusion. Returning to Janet Smith's review: after Smith makes note of the various passersby that frame Fortier's solo, she continues: "Everyone carefully avoids Fortier's square until the inevitable happens. A homeless person, a junkie—whoever he is, he steps inside the square, and for a moment you see that both, in a way, are transgressing a space. Fortier stays immersed in his silent dance until the man drifts away" (n. pag.). Putting aside Smith's derogatory dismissal of this man as a "junkie," we can see from her observations that Fortier's solo functions to restage the socio-economic inequities that structure Library Square. Recall the various physical boundaries designed to protect the piece from intrusion into the frame, and recall Fortier's seeming displeasure with the Ottawa man who entered his dance space. In Vancouver, the parameters around the dance are intensified by the uneven and theatrical spatial arrangement in the south plaza—a feature that Fortier lamented (Personal interview). The social choreographies that play out within the theatrical apparatus that Fortier's dance imposes are, themselves, differently framed depending on whether they are situated with the seated audience on the cement steps (peopled mostly by in-the-know creatives who are tapped into Vancouver's dance scene), "upstage" along Robson street (commuters and shoppers), at the various peripheries (workers and patrons in coffee shops, neighbouring buildings, etc.), above the dance (students and patrons in the library), or "transgressing" inside the boundaries of Fortier's taped square. Even as the solo calls attention to the uneven dynamics of reception, it also reproduces those same inequities both socially and spatially. The dance choreographs its accidental audiences into an ambivalent performance of the various imbalances that structure the city and everyday uses of it.

As with all performances sited in everyday spaces, Fortier's temporary claim on the library square and the people who happen past is ethically complex. An artist whose career had unfolded almost exclusively inside theatres prior to *Solo 30x30*, Fortier is self-consciously concerned with this exchange of frames. Indeed, his solo is so preoccupied with its frame that the frame itself becomes the residue of the piece—beyond the sticky residue left behind when the black theatre tape was lifted from the south plaza of Library Square (or the white paint that lingered in Lorient, France) after Fortier's thirty day run. This emphasis on the dance's frame is worthy of note, for, as

Levin suggests, “we need to hold onto the frame if we are to make visible the operations of Enframing—its exploitative ordering of foreground and background, seer and seen, subject and object, past and present—and implicate ourselves within these processes” (*Performing* 94). It is by directing attention to its frame that *Solo 30x30* does the hard and imperfect work of considering its own limitations. Fortier both reaffirms and troubles his audience’s belonging in the library plaza, his own belonging inside his demarcated square, his dance’s belonging in the midst of the everyday, and performance’s radically contingent belonging in the ever-shifting present.

The various forces of repetition at work in *Solo 30x30* function to situate its viewers inside a gap characteristic of all site-based works: the tension between a theatrical “no-place” in Peggy Phelan’s sense and the dynamic lived everyday processes that constitute specific places. Phelan argues that theatre architecture:

stages the paradoxical desire to set aside a space to explore being out of place, to inhabit, however fleetingly, a kind of no-place. In this desire, theatre shares aspirations with utopia, the fantasy of an ideal no-place, an idealization made possible by its lack of specific location. ... Theatre architecture is fixed and ‘real’ ..., but it houses characters and situations intent on experiencing a dissolution into some ‘other’ space, indeed, sometimes into a kind of no-space. (“Reconstructing” 16)¹⁰⁰

While Fortier’s dance, with its non-narrative form, differs from the theatrical enterprises Phelan describes in that it does not attempt to remake Library Square into “a church, a court, a forest, a ship’s wet deck” (32), it does imagine the smooth, flat stage floor that Paul Carter (via André Lepecki) so roundly critiqued in my last chapter. And yet, it does so with a fixation on its own framing devices, its impossible effort at repetition in a changing environment, and its temporary seizure of public space. It asks: How does the machinery of the theatre migrate into the “everyday” world in instances of site-based performance? What is the effect—the affect—produced by directing audience attention to the often monopolizing overlay of the theatrical onto the everyday? The dance emphasizes its own unrequited and unrequitable longing for a theatrical ‘no-place’ in the midst of an ever-changing ‘real’ world.

¹⁰⁰ Phelan’s analysis is rooted in her examination of the Globe Theatre with its complex history of emplacement and reconstruction.

Self-conscious of the difficulty of choreographing a utopian theatrical no place in the midst of the very visible, material, and specific politics of place, *Solo 30x30* dramatizes the ways in which the “everyday” trumps the theatrical imaginary. In its necessarily failed effort to repeat precisely, Fortier’s dance exposes how outdoor sites like Library Square and its particular sets of non-theatrical uses resist being conscripted (that is, written over) into an artistic, utopian no-place. In other words, the solo meditates on the fact that while Fortier can move the proscenium outside and invite an audience to watch, Library Square is never going to be a no-place for everyone. In exposing the different frames at play in and around Library Square and in his self-reflexive application of his own theatrical apparatus to the site, Fortier’s dance gestures towards the ways in which this utopian goal of choreographing the audience can only ever be that—utopian.¹⁰¹ And this failure is productive, going back to Deutsche. The Central Branch is very insistently an important and meaningful place for a lot of people: a place of work; a place of learning; a place of shelter; and so on. That Library Square is a contested site of mixed and competing uses is a fact *Solo 30x30* highlights with its fraught and temporary occupation.

In some ways, Fortier’s work falls into the trap to which site-based work is so prone. Like many other artists working in public spaces, his solo fails to resolve “the question of who belongs within and who remains outside the bounds of th[e] imagined community” called together by the performance (Levin and Solga 49).¹⁰² And yet, *Solo 30x30* meditates productively on precisely this question, something that Smith gestures toward in her review. Even as Smith notes that the majority of passersby respected the frame of Fortier’s space, and even as she identifies a homeless man as the one rogue individual who trespasses that frame, she asserts, rightly, that Fortier’s performance also makes felt the question of his own dance’s belonging inside the demarcated square. For

¹⁰¹ The clashes between utopia and the real world become clear in Loretta Lees’ interview of the (then) chief of security at the VPL, who insists of Library Square: “It’s not a street corner utopia where we all harmoniously debate our biases...someone might pull out a gun and shoot someone!” (“Ageographia” 338).

¹⁰² Levin and Solga level this critique against Darren O’Donnell of the Toronto performance company Mammilian Driving Reflex in their provocative exploration of the role of performance (especially site-based performance) in the recreation of Toronto as an urban playground, or “Torontopia.”

a moment, returning to Smith's observation, "you see that both, in a way, are transgressing a space" (n. pag.).

Solo 30x30's fixation on its own frame, its rhetoric of repetition, and its preoccupation with its own bid for curbside attention (the bluff wave) combine to prompt its passersby to consider what it means to willingly join a public, to accept an invitation, enter a contract, to turn and heed a call. Going back to Chapter 1 and to Martin, Fortier's dance self-reflexively meditates on what all public art achieves: "Art's journey to the public provokes the question of context, of how people are to gather, of what they are to make of being together without any prescribed purpose, of how they are to relate the forms of work they encounter to the world around them" ("Artistic" 14). The dance's repeated "return" day after day, combined with the architecture of the gaze crafted by the solo and the plaza both, paradoxically directs our attention away from the dance and towards the site (and each other). *Solo 30x30* asks those who join its temporary public, as well as those who refuse the invitation, to consider issues of access and belonging that structure both the dance and Library Square. Directing our attention to its own (mis)fit in its platial context and to its varied audience reception, *Solo 30x30* prompts its temporary publics to ask, *returning* to Ahmed: "What difference does it make what we are oriented toward?" ("Orientations" 543). In doing so, the dance establishes a relational kinaesthetic—a sensory appreciation of the affective reciprocity between ground, bodies, and movement—that pivots on the knowledge that to orient, to turn, is to *be turned* by specific social and spatial possibilities. Simultaneously, the social choreography that *Solo 30x30* effects also summons its publics to embody the co-implication of site and movement: even as a turn is spatially (read: socially, economically, and culturally) determined, the act of turning also functions to bring social and spatial possibilities (sometimes productive and sometimes reductive) both into view and into being.

Set against this analysis of *Solo 30x30's* multiple turns, the power of physical orientation to shape social, spatial, and civic understandings tilts on its axis in my next chapter, which takes the same site (the Central Branch of the VPL) as its ground—and a very different orientation as its organizing principle. Orienting its temporary publics away from Fortier's occupation at street-level and up toward the sweeping and stately height

of the Central Branch, Aeriosa Dance Society's vertical dance on the upper walls of the library demands of its audiences an upward gaze (a *high lift*, even) that generates a sense of spatial slippage with productive possibilities. Aeriosa's *In Situ* (2010), which was produced as part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad, choreographs its audiences into a complicated relationship with a set of civic narratives that alternately contest and imagine the city as "world-class" in a global marketplace.

Chapter 4.

Lifting

[D]ancers are prized for their creativity, flexibility, absence of material needs—they can make work in spare rooms with nothing more than their bodies, often unshod, can purportedly subsist on few calories, and even among performing artists deliver more for less by garnering the most meager wages. Their love of art subsidizes their pursuit of perfection—making them the ideal laborers in an idealized creative economy. Dance is caught between the disavowal of the corporeality of laboring bodies and as a model of work without strife, complaint or much by way of recompense. Rather than accepting this nefarious dichotomy between the real and the fictitious said to distinguish industrial production from financial monetary circulation as separate sectors of the economy, dance might be taken as a key site to grasp the ways in which bodies in movement make value. ~ Randy Martin, “Of Dance, Derivatives, Decolonization, and Kinesthemes” 74

The ropes precede the dancers, extending downward from the metal crossbars at the joint of concrete wall and glass ceiling. And the casting of rope, thick bundles carried in hand and dropped down toward the collected crowd, is the first choreographic gesture of this elevated section, performed in a staggered canon—one rope after another—until all five dancers have dropped their lines (some fall easily; some tangle en route and require a shake to unfurl downward) and each dancer has taken her position just meters from the top of the building. We are gathered stories below. This dance started at ground level and we have been watching it elevate in increments. Until now, the ground was firm beneath my feet. The dancers were at height, yes, but they were oriented as gravity would have them: head toward sky, feet toward earth. But now this shifty world tilts on its axis. Up slips sideways; forward slides down. Dancers make a new ground of the wall. Slowly, softly, they loft laterally outward (their new “up”), into the air. These sustained jumps seem to float as time stalls between takeoff and landing—the dancers hang and drift away from and back toward the wall, their floor. Again and again, the five dancers waft back and forth together, while the theatre lights below them cast

shadows of the ropes that sway below each body. Their lazy, anti-gravity float unfixes my ground. I feel the strange sinking upwards of my perspective—a disorienting, dizzying slippage of my sense of up and down, of side, of forward and back.

Aeriosa Dance Society, the contemporary dance company whose performance on the walls of the Vancouver Public Library's Central Branch I have just been describing, defines itself by its tendency to cast a theatrical frame on city spaces. As the company's website announces, "Aeriosa transforms urban neighbourhoods into theatres" (n. pag.)—a different expression of the phenomenon I have just examined in Paul-André Fortier's *Solo 30x30*'s occupation and creation of an *urban proscenium*. But what, I ask, is at stake in Aeriosa's transformation, particularly given that it involves a recasting of vertical surfaces and walls into floors? In this chapter, I examine *In Situ* (2010), a full-length site-specific vertical dance piece conceived by Julia Taffe of Aeriosa, choreographed by Amelia Rudolph of Project Bandaloop (a vertical dance company based in San Francisco), and performed by Vancouver's Aeriosa dancers as part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad. A travelling dance made up of three acts, *In Situ* starts inside the concourse of the Central Branch before travelling outdoors to the library's north and then south plazas. Donning climbing harnesses and anchored by industrial riggers, the dancers traverse the walls of the Central Branch with a tilted orientation. This double transformation, city to stage and wall to floor, yields a curious, vertiginous experience of the relationship of body to built urban environment for dancer and audience both—one that spins together the spectacle of height with a queasy gravitational pull downwards, a sort of sinking, floating groundedness.



Figure 4.1. In rehearsal for *In Situ*, photograph by Colin Zacharias (2010). Image courtesy of Aeriosa Dance Society.

Note. The walls of the Central Branch function as floor for these lateral, lofting jumps.

Drawing on recent scholarship on performance and tourism, I examine how *In Situ* performs "Vancouver" as a marketable entity: does it support or challenge official efforts to brand the city? I also attend to the recent corporate absorption of contemporary dance for advertising purposes: as with dance's relation to official narratives of the city, I explore how these movement practices both support and challenge the models of capital they are invited to serve. I attend to the ways in which labour is performed in *In Situ*, and I bring this to bear on the often occluded labour inherent to dance. I argue that *In Situ* performs important civic work in the development of municipal identity in the context of the cultural tourism prompted by Vancouver's 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the city's pursuit of a reputation as a world-class city; moreover—and crucially—I argue that the dance renders that work decisively visible. While I attend to dance at height, I do so from a street-level approach: I consider my experiences of the physical sensations of watching Aeriosa's unsettling of ground with relation to conversations in dance studies about verticality, orientation, and the productive possibilities of falling.

Upward Mobility

A new form, and one with a still shifting name, vertical dance (alternately called “aerial dance”) is a sub-form of contemporary dance performed on vertical surfaces with the aid of rock-climbing gear. Although the form is only recently finding a place within the dance establishment—practitioners lament the difficulties they have faced obtaining funding and approval from within the dance world—dance set at height does have a precedent, even a prominent place, in the postmodern contemporary dance canon. Iconic of the Judson Church dance era and what has come to be known as its post-minimalist aesthetic, Trisha Brown’s *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) is an obvious example of canonical contemporary dance set at height. Performed first in 1970 and then remounted for a larger audience in the 1971 iteration that has made it famous, Brown had her then husband, Joseph Schlichter, walk off the roof and down the side of the building in which the couple lived, anchored by ropes and a winch system.¹⁰³ Peter Moore’s photo-documentation of this second performance of the piece still circulates widely and holds a prominent place in dance discourse; for example, it is the cover image of André Lepecki’s *Of the Presence of the Body* (2004). The piece lasted as long as it took Schlichter to walk the height of the building, ending when he reached the ground. It is worth noting, as Amanda Jane Graham does in her careful reading of the connection between Brown’s dance and its spatio-cultural contextual moment of the revitalization of New York’s “The Village”-turned-“SoHo,” that the dance was only visible to the invited crowd and a select few others with an appropriate vantage point. The audience gathered in a walled courtyard to watch the piece that would not have been visible from the street (62). It is rumoured that the group that gathered, drawn by Brown’s flyers advertising the piece, was confused at first, finding no performance in the designated spot between the two buildings; it was only when someone finally looked up that the dance came into view.

¹⁰³ More recently, the piece was performed again: with Brown’s sanction, Elizabeth Streb’s STREB Extreme Action Company mounted a historical reconstruction of *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* as part of *Off the Wall: Part Two: Seven Works by Trisha Brown* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2010).

In Situ and *Man* differ in many important ways, but Brown's experiments with verticality share with Julia Taffe's a starting point: both are motivated by a set of choreographic concerns about space, scale, gravity, perspective, and the refunctioning of architecture rather than a pursuit of extreme, nearly impossible physical achievements that characterizes many of the circus arts. As one reviewer of Aeriosa's *In Situ* puts it, "This is not a stunt, this is not a circus act. It is contemporary dance, in flight" (Lederman, "They fly"). In the only anthology on aerial dance—Jayne C. Bernasconi and Nancy E. Smith's co-edited *Aerial Dance* (2008)—*In Situ*'s choreographer, Amelia Rudolph, speaks to the distinction:

What distinguishes aerial and vertical dance from the circus arts is the intention that drives the work. Dance choreography places an emphasis on image, narrative (whether abstract or concrete), the craft of choreography, and the goal of making the work. Aerial dance can simply be good dance with an additional dimension. It can be dance that introduces an alternative relationship between gravity and movement. In dance, in contrast to most circus arts, there is intent beyond physical precision, strength, daring, and beauty. (58)

Of course, this distinction between dance and circus overlooks aesthetic developments in what circus scholars have referred to as the "new circus," a circus in the high art tradition that is steeped with dance and theatre and that allows for the physical interpretation of each individual performer—a form of circus for which Canada's Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil is internationally famous.¹⁰⁴

In many ways, then, this distinction between circus and vertical dance is crude and flawed, though still worthy of note—for the very insistence on difference (which runs through the sparse discourse on vertical dance) is, itself, both suspect and telling. The clash between the commercial tradition of circus and what is perceived to be an

¹⁰⁴ The body of scholarship on new circus, or *cirque nouveau*, is growing, including important work in a Canadian context: Jen Harvie and Erin Hurley's study of Cirque du Soleil's performance of "Québec" and "Québécois" (1999) and Susan Bennett's study of theatre and tourism (2005) are only two such examples. Louis Patrick Leroux and Charles R. Baston's forthcoming co-edited *Cirque Global: Quebec's Expanding Circus Boundaries* (McGill-Queen's University Press 2016)—which includes an essay by Bennett on the role of Cirque du Soleil in urban gentrification projects—will no doubt push the field even further. For a broader look at circus, see Peta Tait's *Circus Bodies* (2005), particularly her analysis of the aerial body's capacity to challenge hegemonic formulations of gender and nation.

autonomous realm of concert dance is part of the tension here. But that dichotomy is a false one. In her examination of commercial theatrical production, including that of Cirque du Soleil, Susan Bennett offers historical contextualization that points to the malleability of categories of “high” and “popular” performance when she draws a parallel between forms of performance currently derided as “lowbrow” and the commercial success of nineteenth-century English melodrama: “The adjectives that often attach to the commercial theatrical production—popular, spectacular, blockbuster, entertainment, crowd-pleaser, feel-good, lightweight—recall the emergence of other generally pejorative descriptors in theatre criticism some hundred years or so earlier” (“Theatre/Tourism” 407). Undergirding the desire to set vertical dance apart from aerial circus acts is a set of tensions at the root of the form—most acutely, the tension between aesthetic value and virtuosic achievement and the fraught relationship between contemporary dance and the private sector. I will return to treat each of these concerns later in the chapter. For now suffice it to say that Julia Taffe is well aware of vertical dance’s ambivalent position in the dance establishment. And she is savvy about her management of that ambivalence: “I will use whatever term gets the point across. And I will speak to my audience. I’ll use ‘circus arts’ if that’s the grant we’re applying for” (Personal site visit interview).

Although vertical dance is still defining itself, a compelling through-line characterizes the form, especially in its site-based manifestation: an overwhelming interest in exploring elements of site that are usually inaccessible and un(der)used. Echoing Trisha Brown’s oft-quoted impetus for choreographing at height—Brown says, “I have in the past felt sorry for ceilings and walls. It’s perfectly good space, why doesn’t anyone use it?” (qtd. in Kloetzel and Pavlik 13)—Taffe expresses a fascination with the underused vertical surfaces of the VPL’s Central Branch. This sentiment echoes throughout the sparse literature on vertical dance. Another pioneer of the form, Joanna Haigood of San Francisco’s Zaccho Dance Theatre, insists: “I am drawn to aerial work because I’m very interested in working the space more sculpturally, using lateral, diagonal, vertical, and horizontal lines as well as perspective and scale as primary choreographic tools” (Kloetzel and Pavlik 55). Further, she suggests that aerial dance “redirects an audience’s focus to areas that are often overlooked” (57). Describing Moshe Safdie’s architectural feat as a structure “dedicated to glorious, open, unusable space,” Taffe indicates that she was drawn to the Central Branch by her desire to

“repurpose” that space and to render it usable (Personal interview 15 January 2015). *In Situ* was *Aeriosa*’s fifth vertical dance set on the Central Branch in the past decade. As Kevin Griffin, of *The Vancouver Sun*, puts it, “Julia Taffe just can’t stop hanging around the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library. There’s something about Moshe Safdie’s colonnades and curving architectural walls that makes her want to dance” (n. pag.). Indeed, this is true. Taffe herself attests as much: “The building has personally inspired me to create dance in Vancouver. ... Without it, my art form would not have developed in the same way” (qtd. in Griffin, “*Aeriosa* Dance Hangs”).

Yet, there is more to the story. That this building features in two of my dissertation chapters is also, as I have argued, indicative of the difficulty of siting site dance in Vancouver. Recall Donna Spencer’s struggle to find a home for Fortier’s *Solo 30x30* and add to this the particular set of immensely complex practicalities and negotiations that accompany the form of vertical dance with its rigging requirements and safety concerns, not to mention the additional considerations that surface with *In Situ*’s opening placement indoors in the building’s atrium. Even when an appropriate and willing host for vertical dance is found, siting vertical dance is an encumbered process that involves the acquisition of permits and insurance, negotiation with other users of the space, the careful creation of a workable rigging plan, and the sometimes unexpected dynamics of ownership. Indeed, Haigood tells the story of her discovery that:

people don’t only own their actual buildings and lots, they own a certain amount of air space above the property. Once we were working at the site of a grain terminal. The landowner of the grain terminal had approved our plans and was familiar with the areas we would be using. One cable or fly line was to extend from one side of his property to the top of the grain terminal, about 400 feet away. For about 25 feet, this cable ran 40 above the NYPD’s vehicle evidence lot where they stored cars involved in criminal cases. They leased this land from the owner of the grain terminal. This 25 feet suddenly became a big problem because the police department was worried about what we would see when we flew over it. Who actually had jurisdiction over the air space? (qtd. in Kloetzel and Pavlik 57)

In this way, vertical site-based dance can lay bare the range of legal implications that always attend moving in public: the often frustrating efforts to find a place for site dance

expose the ways in which public spaces are regulated—the ways in which they are not so “public” after all.

But I should also qualify this. Because I do not mean to suggest that the various controls on public space are necessarily a bad thing: after all, I am not harkening back to an imaginary time when public spaces were absolutely free of regulation and equally accessible to all. Public space scholars have well established that no such time has ever existed. So while I do not lament a nostalgic and inaccurate notion of public space, I still think that there is valuable information in the difficulty of siting site dance in Vancouver. The fact that these dances (and other visible, performative, and aesthetic street activities) repeatedly show up in certain locations and types of spaces in the city should prompt questions about how the city is stage-managed. In Vancouver, certain sites and corridors like Granville Island, the Granville Street Entertainment District, various beaches and parks (especially Stanley Park), the Seawall, sections of Commercial Drive and Main Street, as well as areas in Kitsilano (and, of course, Mountain View Cemetery and the Central Branch of the VPL) serve almost exclusively as areas of exception and as loci for outdoor, participatory events—both aesthetic and community-based.¹⁰⁵ The fact that Taffe finds it far easier to stage her dances on privately owned buildings than publicly owned ones (when she operates in the private sector, she has access to the space as she requires it without incurring rehearsal and rental fees or the cost of hiring security that came to characterize her experience at the VPL’s Central Branch) raises the question of what it means for spaces to be “public.” “Public” is not, after all, synonymous with “freely accessible.”¹⁰⁶

In the context of the library, this is particularly true. Polly Argo, the Central Branch’s Library Square Coordinator and the liaison with Aeriosa during the staging of *In Situ*, notes that the Central Branch’s relationship with Aeriosa was circumscribed by the

¹⁰⁵ Lance Berelowitz examines commercial performance on Granville Island and the performative and often elitist dynamics of Vancouver’s beaches in his *City of Dreams* (2005). See also Peter Dickinson’s study of dance along the city’s waterfront and his notion of “the Vancouver sublime” in his forthcoming essay, “Choreographies of Place.”

¹⁰⁶ The attention *In Situ* draws to the top of the Central Branch might also serve as a reminder of limits of *publicness*: by looking up, the audience’s gaze is directed toward the rooftop garden that was designed to be open to the public, but which has been inaccessible since the building’s opening.

Library's mission to be "a free place for everyone to discover and share"—a place that is "free and accessible to all" (Telephone interview). That is to say, the rehearsal and performance process of Aeriosa's dance was regimented by the library's consideration of other users of the space. Programmers at the library are understandably concerned with the ways in which potential events, including performances, accord with city by-laws, overarching mandates guiding all library activities, and the needs of other users of the space. Because it tends to draw a crowd and is often accompanied by music, performance is carefully regulated when placed in or around the library to facilitate adherence with the City of Vancouver's Noise Control by-law.¹⁰⁷ When it does appear at the Central Branch, performance tends to be restricted to lunch-hour showings to minimize disturbance to patrons (Flaherty). Sound concerns, physical access, and the necessary restriction of public use that characterizes performance (and any work) at height meant that the dancers were limited to a rehearsal schedule sculpted around library hours. Each rehearsal and performance involved time and space for the riggers to arrive and set up, for the dancers to warm up, for the storage of climbing gear, and—as the rehearsals moved toward the finished product—for the live music and theatre lighting to be set up and run. Lighting was its own concern, both Taffe and Argo note, because City engineers had to be kept on to manage the building lights in accordance with the demands of the production (Personal interview 15 January 2015; Telephone interview). This intricate layering of demands on the Central Branch also required the attendance of a VPL venue representative who could grant access to the building and oversee the goings on. Referencing her notes from the post-show debrief with Taffe, Argo wonders if, in retrospect, the production was perhaps "too big" to mount on a "working public building" (Telephone Interview). It was a complex affair and a clear example of "infrastructural engagement" and "bureaucratic re-imagining" in Shannon Jackson's sense (*Social* 72, 73). That is, the pragmatics involved in siting *In Situ* in and on library grounds crystalized the terms of cooperative co-production that all public performances must navigate. Because the dance demanded a joining of aesthetic and civic forces, it

¹⁰⁷ Relevant to a discussion of public performance, the City of Vancouver's Noise Control by-law has been the subject of criticism in recent years for its pro-developer, anti-art phrasing and enforcement: "[Vancouver City By-law 6555] has a strong bias towards developer-friendly regulations, and shrouds musical/cultural sound policy in a cloud of ambiguity, hyper-regulation and selective enforcement" (Young).

laid bare some of the chaffing points between the two: issues, for example, of physical access to the space, compensation for work, and the necessary inconveniences of infrastructural support. And yet, precisely because Taffe and the library staff managed to negotiate a mutually agreeable arrangement, *In Situ* temporarily refigured what “public” might mean in both an aesthetic and a civic sense.

Even within the context of public art, there is fierce competition for public space and particular public placements at the VPL’s Central Branch. *In Situ* choreography was layered overtop of existing public art installations: not only did the dance occupy a different section of the same site that hosted Fortier’s *Solo 30x30* less than a year prior—an instance of Judith Hamera’s theory of a dance “hauntopia” (8), which I will return to flesh out in my Afterword—but the dance also shared tenancy with contemporaneous public art works as well. *In Situ*’s opening act played out in front of the banners that hang in the concourse (an initiative of the City of Vancouver’s Public Art Program); the outdoor portion of the dance was situated in the south plaza alongside Ron Terada’s *The Words Don’t Fit the Picture* (2010), which would become a permanent installation in Library Square. Indeed, the placement of *In Situ* was determined by this overcrowding of public art in and around the library plaza: the wires that support *The Words* made it physically impossible for Aeriosa to set up their necessary equipment in that corridor of the south plaza. And, even more challenging, two years into production and rehearsals, Taffe learned that *In Situ* would be competing for the north plaza with yet another public artwork, *Walk In/Here You Are* (2010). This yearlong installation featured Christian Kliegel’s built open-air theatre structure with a large screen featuring programming curated by Cate Rimmer. Divided into six programs, the works presented during the Olympics and Paralympics included imagistic film shorts composed by local artists. Although Taffe grudgingly relocated her work from the north wall of the plaza—the infrastructure of the screen made it impossible for Taffe to use the wall for which the choreography was designed—*Walk In/Here You Are* and *In Situ* still competed for audience attention. Despite meetings between Taffe, the library, and the *Walk In/Here You Are* production team, and despite Taffe’s requests to pause or at least mute the filmic material during the run of *In Situ*, both image and sound ran throughout Aeriosa’s performance and pulled attention from the dance performance (Personal site visit interview). This incident illustrates the ways in which dance is overlooked and even

displaced by broader public art initiatives in Vancouver—both visual art installations were supported by the Olympic and Paralympic Public Art Program, an initiative of City of Vancouver’s Public Art Program (CVPA) which has long favoured works that come out of a visual art rather than a performance or dance lineage. The reasons for the misfit of dance in a public art framework are manifold, including conflicting models of acknowledgement, creation, saleability, artist and interpreter compensation, and placement between the forms. These various overlapping demands for placement in Library Square during the Cultural Olympiad also expose the conflict, compromise and, sometimes, conquest required of cohabiting public spaces even as they also draw out the necessity of cooperation inherent within public structures.

Urban Ascension

Public spaces in Vancouver are contested and forces of gentrification and “revanchism” are rapidly changing the shape of the city (Smith)—especially in the run-up to the 2010 Olympics. And yet, as Loretta Lees notes in her quotation of local geographer David Ley, compared with the rapid contractions of public space south of the border, “abject pessimism about the demise of public space is hard to sustain” in a Canadian context (326). Following Ley and others, Lees lays out this distinction in order to challenge a widespread practice in her discipline of referring to the “North American City” as though it is a stable, uniform entity rather than one that “conflates American and Canadian cities under the same rubric” (326). In her reference to the differences between American and Canadian cities, Lees draws from S. Carr, M. Francis, L. Rivlin, and A. Stone’s *Public Space* (1992) to substantiate her claim that:

Economic changes specific to the United States have led to the demise and privatization of public space there, whereas in Canada, they claim (and they cite Vancouver specifically), Canadian traditions have encouraged a more positive public life, with greater stress on publicly provided goods and services, a larger public sector, more governmental control over individual liberties (that is, the government is more powerful relative to its citizens), and a better developed (and protected!) social welfare network. (326)

With specific attention to Vancouver, Lees cites Ley on the vastness of land designated to parks versus land designated for industry (326). But while Ley and Lees agree that Vancouver has been more successful than many other North American cities at maintaining public spaces, the city's public spaces are not straightforwardly *public*. Of course, an analysis of public space in Vancouver would do well to remember that Vancouver is radically contested in its occupation of unceded Coastal First Nations traditional territories. More to my point here, Lees critiques what she identifies as an invasion of private consumerism into Vancouver's public spaces. She asserts: "the kinds of public spaces that have been developed under Vancouver's livable-city ideology are not spaces for all the publics, nor are they necessarily effective political spaces" (335). This analysis echoes Lance Berelowitz's condemnation of Vancouver's public spaces as exclusively classed, and with Pier Luigi Sacco's assessment of Vancouver as a "dual city," divided along grossly uneven economic lines (29). Offering concrete examples, Lees points to False Creek (into which the historic Brewery Creek, the focus of my Chapter 2, flows) as a successful residential space, but stresses that it is not "a contestatory political space" (335). Likewise, she underscores the ways in which Granville Island public market, one of the most celebrated and tourist-friendly public spaces in Vancouver, is "really a space for yuppie consumers from the adjacent gentrified neighbourhoods" (335). "The same might well be said," Lees continues, "of the new public library" (335). The Central Branch and Aeriosa's performance on it crystalize some of the ways in which public and private have become nested together.

The Central Branch building itself is set back, away from the sidewalk and the surrounding streets and thus away from the flow of daily life that circulates around it. Lees (among others) notes how the curved architecture of the building suggests a private interior, not a public place at all: "The new library turns in on itself, away from the street, as if it were under siege. An artificial wall is wrapped around a glass-and-concrete box, protecting it from the outside. The library coils inward when (as a public and civic institution) one might expect it to embrace its fragmented surroundings. It appears

introverted” (334).¹⁰⁸ Attending to the dynamics of the indoor concourse and the “surrogate” street therein, Lees admits—and I agree—that while access to the sheltered arcade is theoretically open to all, it has the feel of a private space of consumption: you feel as though you need to be drinking a coffee from Blenz Coffee or a bubble tea from the shop next door in order to earn a spot at one of the tables outside the strip of shops that lines the southeast side of the concourse, running opposite the library. Of course, the ways in which this commercial concourse choreographs the publics who use it is significant: Lees points out that in its cultivation of “a Parisian scene, suggesting a cosmopolitan atmosphere of leisure, free from worry and work,” the concourse features and favours a version of the public that can afford to luxuriate. (What Lees overlooks are the ways that work can perform as leisure: many of those who sit at tables outside the Blenz use the space as a proxy office or extended school space: work, if white-collar or “creative” work, is precisely what brings them into the concourse.) A phenomenon that many public space theorists lament as, in Lees’ terms, a “pervasive privatization of once-public space” is in evidence in the library concourse, with the incursion of the private sector into the physical space of the public building (335).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, various forms of commercial concession were necessary to fund the Central Branch: with the opening of the building, Vancouver became the first city in North America to put corporate logos on library cards issued to patrons—that of Concord Pacific who paid nearly half a million dollars for the honour (333). (This seems to have been a limited-time agreement—my current library card bears no such logo.) Set in the midst of the commercial concourse, the first section of *In Situ* finds itself literally dancing between the commercial and the

¹⁰⁸ Peter Dickinson makes a similar observation in his “PuShing Performance Brands in Vancouver” (2014), where he notes the inward turn of another landmark building in downtown Vancouver, SFU Woodward’s, from its Hastings Street façade. SFU Woodward’s, Dickinson argues, “literally turns its back on the neighbourhood in which it is set, and, by extension, its residents” (142). Incidentally, the atrium of SFU Woodward’s is the site of another of Aeriosa’s performances, *REFUGIA* (2014).

¹⁰⁹ Though even in the commercial concourse, the City of Vancouver was careful to give favour to Canadian businesses rather than American ones where this was easily done—it is a Blenz, not a Starbucks, that exerts its pressure on patrons to purchase a drink in exchange for a seat in the concourse. As Lees notes: “city officials worked assiduously to promote (certain) civic values and public space in their plans for the new public library. Concerns about globalization and the creeping Americanization of Canada defeated the bid of Starbucks, the globalized US coffee corporation, to win a place inside the public library. Instead, the Vancouver Public Library awarded a lease in the library’s commercial arcade to a Canadian company, Blenz Coffee” (336).

public realms that overlap in the Central Branch: the scaffolding of the dance is the enfoldment of commercial with public.

Inside the concourse, the opening act of the dance situates its audience toward the strip of storefronts and away from the library proper. The dancers are suspended above Blenz, Flying Wedge Pizza and Bubble Tea franchises, and so to watch the choreography, you must accept these various other players into your field of view; shops become the backdrop. Indeed, the musicians, members of Redshift Music Society's Vertical Orchestra (Vancouver), are perched on small balconies that function as awnings above each storefront, each bearing a corresponding company name. Footage of the audience on a performance night shows the packed concourse, audience members all facing the storefront strip, an orientation echoed by a thick row of spectators outside—dozens were turned away each night in an effort to adhere to the fire code cut-off—plastered against the window peering in at the performance. A twofold sense of the private (both commercial and exclusive) is built into this free, public event. Granted, the placement of the dance and thus the orientation of the audience has more to do with the pragmatics of rigging logistics than it does with a conscious reflection on the politics of public space. Regardless, *In Situ* does not afford its audience the illusion of a public space unfettered by commerce. It physically orients its viewers toward evidence that public and private, public and commercial, are deeply co-implicated.

Indeed, beyond the many instances when commercial (infra)structures serve as vertical floor, vertical dance's courting of private sector interest invites a critical reading of the entwinement of the private sector with contemporary dance. Vertical dance has a unique relationship to funding: it is a misfit in the organization of many state dance funding bodies and celebrated by commercial backers, at once (*Aerial Dance* xi). Aeroisa has been approached by numerous corporations and has performed in a few corporate engagements—though Aeroisa has had many more asks than hires. Taffe speculates that this is because corporations are unwilling (or unable) to meet her high financial demands (which reflect the costs of production), a situation telling of the monetary undervaluing of dance (poor even among the performing arts) and of the

additional costs involved in vertical dance (Personal site visit interview).¹¹⁰ Taffe is forthright about her willingness to take on commercial work. Far from being concerned about compromising her artistic integrity, she sees these corporate commissions as independent of Aeriosa's artistic practice; for Taffe, these jobs are opportunities to supplement her financial ability to explore the physical and aesthetic limits of her work. Driven, as she is, by a populist effort to appeal widely and an arts activism imperative to draw people to the form, she is delighted that her work is attractive to those beyond dance and art audiences (Personal interview 15 Jan 2015). Some of Aeriosa's corporate gigs explain themselves: their contract to perform in Lululemon Athletica garments at the corporation's SEAWheeze Half Marathon (2012) was a live endorsement of the versatility of the clothing and a performative overlapping of Aeriosa's physical excellence and local "wow-factor" with the Lululemon brand.¹¹¹ Other engagements gear their commissioned performances toward less direct means of advertising: when Aeriosa performed at New Town Plaza, a mall in Hong Kong on New Year's Day of 2015, the idea was simply to draw bodies together inside the mall with the hope of parlaying audience presence into consumer activity.

The commercial interest in vertical dance is in even stronger evidence south of the border, where artists have long been encouraged to seek corporate partnerships in an entrepreneurial model that makes up for gaps in public funding. Many of Aeriosa's southern vertical dance counterparts—including San Francisco-based Project Bandaloop, the company that *In Situ* choreographer Amelia Rudolph founded in 1990—have well-developed corporate relationships. Bandaloop's funding (a combination of public funding and monies from foundations) is supplemented by the ongoing support of corporate sponsorships from the social responsibility initiatives of American Express Foundation and Wells Fargo Bank. In addition, Bandaloop regularly engages in advertising projects, including a performance promoting Reliant Energy's then-new "cap-and-save" program in 2010 (Janda), as well as filmed commercials for companies as

¹¹⁰ Drawing from 2006 census data, a Hill Strategies Research indicates that the median income for Canadian dance artists in 2005 was a mere \$13,167, making dancers the lowest paid of the arts occupations studied ("A Statistical" 9).

¹¹¹ Taffe notes with chagrin, though, that the clothing company made a portion of their payment—significantly, the dancers' fees—not with wages, but with gift cards (Personal site visit interview).

diverse as Japanese semiconductor manufacturer SUMCO Corporation and the Korean division of French clothing company La Fuma (“About Bandaloop”; Bandaloop). How, precisely, Bandaloop’s dances link to the content of the advertising goals is unclear, except that the vertical dance lends the corresponding product a sense of exhilarating achievement, and that aerial flight becomes a visual metaphor for lightness and even “freedom”—a word frequently used to describe vertical dance, and a paradoxical one given the extensive training, careful crafting of possible movement pathways, and substantial equipment required to achieve the ostensible “freedom” of the form.¹¹² (Paradoxical, too, given the illusion of consumer “choice” that undergirds such staged corporate events: promoting one brand over another, these events are designed precisely to circumscribe the possibility of choice.)

With my attention to the commercial interest in vertical dance, I do not mean to suggest that the other ground-bound forms of contemporary dance explored in this project are autonomous from the commercial realm. Indeed, even in Canada, where the bulk of monetary support for contemporary dance companies comes from a combination of box office revenue and public funding, there are increased efforts at national, provincial, and municipal levels to generate and grow the relationships between dance companies and for-profit corporations.¹¹³ For example, artsVest™, a match-funding incentive that Business for the Arts launched with the help of Canadian Heritage in 2013,

¹¹² See, for example Bernasconi and Smith’s sunny (if puerile) description of aerial dance: “There’s nothing that compares to swinging through space and feeling that moment at the top when you are near weightless, just before the flip of the downward descent. Who wouldn’t want to grow wings and soar over the mountaintops, looking down at the world below, hovering over rooftops, swooping down and then soaring back up again? Aerial dancing is the closest we’ve come to flying without the aid of machinery. Flying is freedom and it has universal appeal; everyone dreams of flying, regardless of race, culture, or economic status. When we feel joy, our spirit soars and, as the saying goes, we are flying high” (xvii). Setting aside their problematic claims to universality, Bernasconi and Smith, along with the many others who describe aerial and vertical dance as “free,” overlook the contradictions inherent in the very concept of freedom. For a rigorous exploration of the strictures of freedom with relation to dance, see Danielle Goldman’s *I Want to Be Ready* (2010).

¹¹³ A Business for the Arts report finds that, for the one hundred and eighty-four arts organizations studied in 2009-2010, revenue breaks down thusly: box office earnings constitute 40% of earnings, government funding comprises 25% of annual earnings, while private sources contribute 22%. The bulk of the private funding comes from individuals, foundations, and fundraising, with only a small margin coming from corporations—a situation the organization is mandated to change (“Report on Performing”).

attempts to stimulate investment in the arts from Canada's corporate sector. The program includes a "Sponsorship Training" arm that aims to equip arts organizations to successfully approach businesses for funding, a matching incentive that offers funds to cultural organizations contingent on their ability to secure corporate money, and an explicit emphasis on cross-sectoral networking that brings together government, business, and arts workers (Aydinya 2-3). Canadian artists (and their administrators) have had to add corporate-speak and private sector soliciting to their skill set in order to survive in today's increasingly entrepreneurial world. With attention to the PuSh Festival, Peter Dickinson examines the shift toward a corporate-funding model in a Vancouver context: "in the absence of a return to pre-2009 levels of funding for culture in the province, and in the wake of a number of high-profile institutional collapses (most notably that of the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company), the future of the performing arts in this city depends on growing not just individual donor bases, but also corporate ones" ("PuShing" 133).¹¹⁴ Dickinson goes on to note the difficulty of fostering arts/corporate relations in Vancouver, which stems at least in part from the fact that of the very few corporate headquarters located in Vancouver, most are in the mining industry and, as such, present particular ethical complexities to performance companies who might benefit from their subsidy, with concerns about complicity in environmental degradation compounding concerns about absorption into commercial structures (134).

The issue of corporate support is fraught and is often (accurately) framed as a top-down initiative. But, of course, a significant portion of Canada's dance ecology is immersed in the commercial realm, from dance work in music videos to reality television shows like *So You Think You Can Dance Canada* (which still managed to garner over a million viewers in its fourth and final season before it was cancelled due to declining viewership), to entertainment jobs in the cruise ship industry. And, indeed, there is an increasing urgency among some Canadian contemporary dance practitioners to recognize (even exploit) the links between commercial and publicly funded dance in an effort to build audiences and further nuance the form. Dancemakers, one of Canada's most influential contemporary dance companies, has just announced that preteen pop-

¹¹⁴ For more on the complexities of corporate funding in a Vancouver and/or PuSh Festival context, see Keren Zaiontz's "Performing Visions of Governmentality" (2014).

culture dance sensation Maddie Ziegler (made famous through appearances on Lifetime's reality show *Dance Moms*) will be engaged as Resident Artist for a three-year stint with the company, starting in the 2015-16 season. In the press-release announcing the appointment, Dancemakers co-curator Emi Forster reflects on the logic of this contentious decision: "We believe it is time for the contemporary dance community to acknowledge that it needs to look towards the commercial industry for inspiration and relevance" (Dancemakers). But although incursions or inclusions of the private, corporate, and commercial into the realm of contemporary dance are in increasing evidence across the various sub-forms, vertical dance is particularly suited to commercial uses.

Whereas many vertical dance works have been engaged in an effort to sell products, a more indirectly instrumental (and nearly ubiquitous) use of the form is specific to vertical dance. Linked, I argue, to the development of civic brands and the ongoing inter-city jostling for place-based recognition on an increasingly competitive global stage, vertical dance companies in both Canada and the United States have also frequently been engaged to "baptize" both public and privately owned buildings at their grand openings. Bandaloop has opened a range of buildings, from hotels on the Vegas strip to museums to philanthropic centres (Scherzer; Bandaloop). Aeriosa, too, has been commissioned to perform these choreographic baptisms, though more often than not, these performative anointings have been situated on public buildings. The company danced for the grand opening of Vancouver's first dedicated and purpose-built dance facility, the Scotiabank Dance Centre (2001), and for the openings of the Richmond Olympic Oval (2008) and the Kinnear Centre for Creativity and Innovation at the Banff Centre in Alberta (2010). These performances dance the city skyline in particular ways, drawing audience attention upward to the built contours of the cityscape and branding the city as creative, livable, vibrant, and cutting edge. It is no wonder that vertical dance initiatives are particularly successful at securing public funding in the run-up to mega-events like the Olympics (despite the fact that the form is, as I have mentioned, sometimes marginalized by funding bodies more immediately tied to the dance establishment). Reliant on tourist draw at an international scale, mega-events like the Olympics and Paralympics yield cultural programming that is carefully and strategically curated to maximize potential appeal. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters,

public art and performance are often instrumentalized in the service of gentrification projects and urban branding initiatives; this is particularly so in the case of vertical dance. Eminently visible and strikingly virtuosic, vertical dance performs important civic work in its development of a city's brand identity in Michael McKinnie's sense. That is, the frequent inclusion of the form in city-branding initiatives like the Cultural Olympiad renders the consumption of the performance as "civically virtuous" (*City* 49). Often suppressing or covering over the stark social inequities that structure public places, these performances are often strategically employed in an effort to present cities as unthreatening and aesthetically pleasing, *performing* a certain kind of (unique, tourist-friendly) desirability. In these instances, the experience of gathering to watch the performance is meant to generate a sense of togetherness and well being that, in the context of the popular Floridian "creative city" model of urban development, translates into economic benefit.¹¹⁵

Visually, vertical dance performs the city as affluent and aligns itself with ascension. The choreography of *In Situ* is emphatically whisked up and away from the city streets. It takes flight, hovers above the busy, loud, and (sometimes) gritty goings-on that characterize Vancouver's downtown core. In fact, *In Situ* choreographs its audience doubly away from the city: the upward gazing audience is oriented to face inward, away from the surrounding streets and toward the library. This is an inversion of what Berelowitz critiques in Vancouver's annual Celebration of Light fireworks festival's insistence on looking out onto the water, but one with the same effect: each orients its viewers with "their backs turned to the city" (258). Vertical dance's association with city branding initiatives via its placement at the tops of corporate buildings presupposes even as (I will argue) it challenges a distancing—through a separation of height—that distinguishes the titans in the sky (be they rich condo dwellers or CEOs with penthouse offices) from the everyday exchanges at ground level. Indeed, the verticality of vertical dance must be thought in relation to the urban aspirationalism evidenced by architectural and urban design—particularly in the context of Vancouver's glass tower aesthetic of "Vancouverism." That Vancouver's practice of downtown densification with its high-rise,

¹¹⁵ For more on Vancouver's particular positioning with relation to a Floridian creative city model, see Sacco, Williams, and Del Bianco's "The Power of the Arts in Vancouver: Creating a Great City" (2007).

residential towers has earned it an international reputation in urban design circles and a consistent spot at the top of global “livable city” lists is testament to the link between verticality and city branding. *In Situ*’s placement within this vertical regime aligns it with the sense of abundance and vibrancy that Vancouver works so hard to present on a global stage. (I will go on to trouble this equation shortly by pointing to vertical dance’s simultaneous embeddedness in and critique of such philosophies of urban development, but let me linger here for a moment.)

The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC)’s Cultural Olympiad was, even among Cultural Olympiads, an ambitious event; it was the first Cultural Olympiad for a winter Games that began three years prior to Olympic competition. Sold aggressively, it was hyped as a showcase of “performances and shows in theatre, dance, film, literary arts, new media and music the likes of which British Columbia has never seen” (Lee and Griffin). Although VANOC and the Olympics brought new arts money to Vancouver, it was viewed with varying degrees of suspicion in the city’s dance and performance communities. Artists were compelled to seek funding through Olympic channels during the run-up to the games: PuSh Festival Artistic and Executive director Norman Armour insisted that “It’s wrong-headed to think you can work outside of it during that period of time or in competition” (qtd. in Lee and Griffin). And yet, many artists wrestled with their relationship to the Olympiad. Not only did local artists sometimes resent being conscripted as part of the civic and national branding initiative that was the Olympiad, but the pragmatics around the funding were also objectionable to many: for example, the call for proposals in the first year of the Cultural Olympiad was released in June with a deadline of mid-July—not enough time to compile a rigorous application (Lee and Griffin). In addition, much of the funding came with caveats: for example, the funding that Aeriosa successfully landed to create *In Situ* required that the company commission an international artist—in this case, Bandaloop’s Amelia Rudolph—to choreograph the work. Even those who benefited from Olympiad funding were struck by the post-Olympic contraction of funds. Keren Zaiontz outlines the situation: “From 2009 to 2013, provincial funding for the arts under the Liberal government declined by an astonishing 43 per cent, from \$47.675 million to \$20.9 million” (“Performing” 110). Indeed, in their essay “Vancouver After 2010,” Zaiontz, Dickinson, and Kirsty Johnston point out that the Olympic-related austerity in the

Vancouver performance scene “actually began *before* the Games themselves” (5). Aeriosa can be qualified as a company that (to borrow Armour’s formulation) “survived the [Olympic] spotlight ... [and] found a new level of maturity” as a result of the Games and its associated funding (Dickinson et al. 5).¹¹⁶ A company limited by its ability to train dancers in the highly specialized skill set required of vertical dance, Aeriosa was able to grow its ranks to twelve dancers while it rode the wave of Olympic funding. After the Games, though, the funding dried up and Aeriosa had to shrink by half (to six dancers) to adapt to the new funding reality (Taffe, Personal interview 15 January 2015).

In the run-up to the Vancouver Games, critics noted VANOC’s struggle as a national representative: “Vanoc has been under pressure to get the Cultural Olympiad right after it was roundly criticized last year for producing what was branded as a stereotyped Canadian performance during the closing ceremonies of the Turin 2006 Winter Games. The images of ice-fishing, sled-driving Canadians played badly at home” (Lee and Griffin). Efforts to perform Vancouver as a global city are part of what enabled the production of *In Situ*. Indeed, Shelagh Flaherty, the director of Library Experience at Vancouver’s Central Branch, identifies the 2010 Winter Olympic Games as the moment of exception that created the environment that allowed for this large-scale and loud performance (with its live orchestral accompaniment) to be sited outside a public building like the library (Telephone interview). Taffe speculates that her applications for funding at all three levels of government and beyond (*In Situ* was also funded by Arts Partners in Creative Development, a temporary fund made up of six partners: 2010 Legacies Now, Canada Council for the Arts, Province of British Columbia, City of Vancouver, Vancouver Foundation, and VANOC) were successful in part because of the mass appeal and virtuosity inherent to vertical dance. Unticketed and publicly placed, the super-hero quality—dancers dangling from buildings—appeals to a wide variety of potential publics and contributes to a municipal narrative of Vancouver as a livable city.

¹¹⁶ For more on the artistic legacy of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games, see Dickinson, Johnston, and Zaiantz’s co-edited special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* (2015), which includes both analyses and artists’ reflections on the Cultural Olympiad.

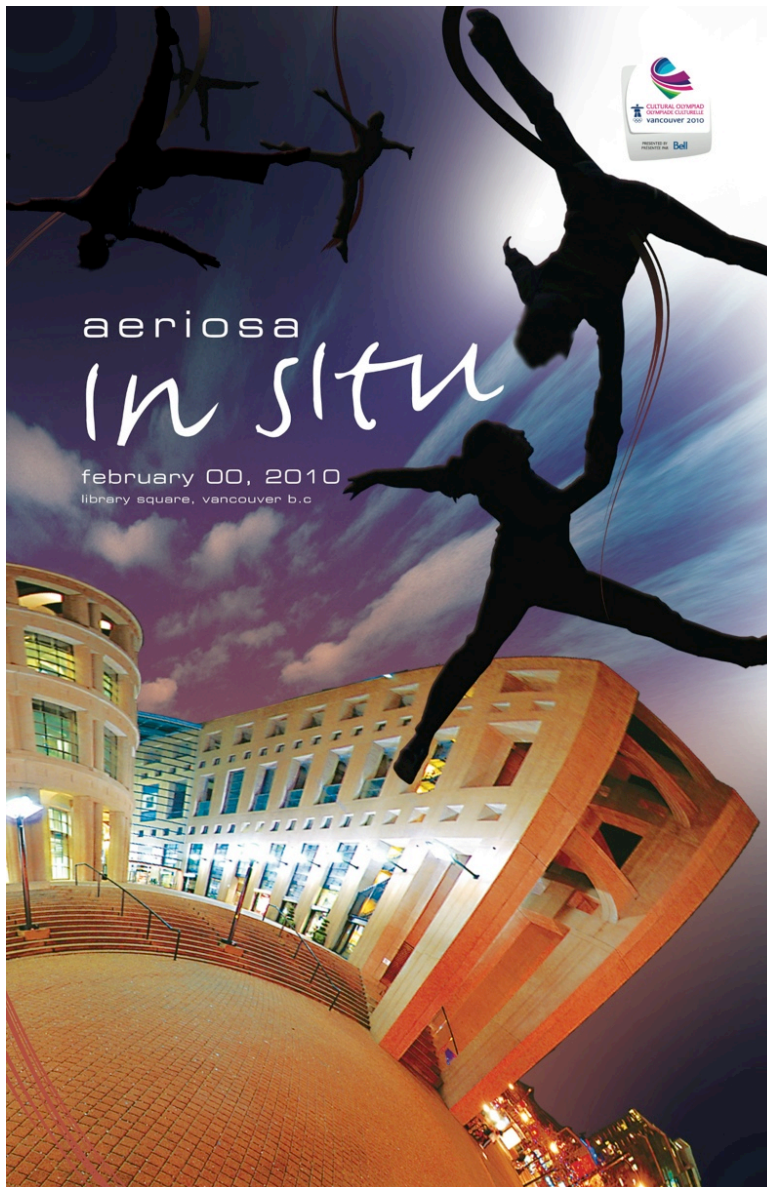


Figure 4.2. *In Situ* promotional poster, image by Aeriosa Dance Society (2010).

Note. Like all Vanoc-funded artists, Taffe had to sign a lengthy and involved contract agreeing to precise stipulations and terms of use of the Vancouver 2010 logo (pictured here on the top right corner of the promotional poster). The meticulously managed visual economy of Olympic logo speaks to the careful construction of the Olympic brand, as well as the production of a saleable “Vancouver.” Note the Bell logo as well, a corporate sponsor that became inextricable from the Vancouver 2010 brand.

The ways in which the city—any given city, though each differently—performs to potential international audiences (read: tourists) has become an important conversation in performance studies. Following Jane Desmond’s *Staging Tourism* (1999) and others, Susan Bennett approaches tourism through a performative lens, treating the city as “a

tourist stage” (“Universal”). She examines how “urban landscapes are revised and reinvigorated when they become marked as tourist attractions. The infrastructure of an area, cultural or otherwise, becomes in effect a series of performances directed at specific audiences with the intention of bringing them pleasure and equally, it must be said, inspiring them to spend” (77). This can be problematic as such “performances” often function to mask the stark social inequities that constitute public places. But to dismiss the possibilities of even the most intensively stage-managed city or tourist-directed initiative is to replicate the same top-down logic that critics hope to critique. Bennett points out that tourists have the potential to unsettle carefully regimented spaces by playing out endless and unforeseen productive possibilities of behaviour and movement: functioning as a moment of exception, tourism “remaps urban settings as places and performatives outside the everyday codes of behavior and decorum” and “moves us, albeit temporarily, out of otherwise prescriptive spatial dynamics in the city” (86, 87). Further, she insists that local residents are sure to use spaces against their design at times, finding ways to re-script even the most profoundly scripted elements of a given city by virtue of simply living and relating within those spaces (“Everyday” 32). That artists have the capacity to both reimagine and highlight these lived, off-script practices even as they call attention to the script itself—something I have argued Fortier’s *Solo 30x30* manages, paradoxically, to achieve—is clear in the case of Aeriosa’s choreographic reworking of the Central Branch.

This tension between overdetermined and self-determined development of a city and its image resonates with Jen Harvie and Keren Zaiontz’s insistence that people take up and complicate even the most instrumental cultural programming. Reacting against the simplistic notion of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and its Cultural Olympiad as “a spectacular circus,” Harvie and Zaiontz argue that such a description “reduces performance to spectacle and spectacle to an apparatus of the state and corporate oppression that is applied to host cities. In this scenario, spectacle is not a culturally specific event; it is an opiate that reduces citizens to dupes who cannot critically examine the ‘real’ cost of the Games because they are too overwhelmed by national feeling and competitive euphoria” (478). Pushing for nuance and echoing Bennett’s critique, Harvie and Zaiontz “understand performance, even a ‘spectacular circus’, as a process constituted by embodied and material exchanges that unfold through time,

involving multiple actors [rather than] as a thing that can simply and straightforwardly be imposed by Olympic powers” (478-9). Such events are subject to the everyday reworkings, adjustments, and demands of the specific matter (places, bodies, historical moments) through which they are made manifest—even if those experiences are also put to work in a top-down pursuit of the accrual of economic value. With reference to London’s 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and Cultural Olympiad, Harvie and Zaiontz argue that the Games served, in spite of itself, to raise the profile of systemic failures to recognize the human rights of disabled people, and to force debate about the economic disparities exacerbated by urban “regeneration” efforts in East London (479). In the context of *In Situ*, although the piece served an instrumental function in the economically-driven performance of a Vancouver brand that folds together components of the stunning natural environment (ocean + mountains) into a swirl of physical achievement, leisure, and elevation in all senses of the word, the dance also challenged those same easy alignments.

The Possibilities of Spatial Slippage

With its glass ceiling and elliptical construction, the Central Branch of the VPL draws the gaze upward. An edifice of sweeping spatial and historical scope and scale (an ersatz Roman coliseum), the Central Branch insists on the human bodies it contains as small, ground-bound things against its airy, skyward grandeur. Aeria’s dance refuses this positioning. *In Situ* begins at ground level inside the Central Branch promenade. At the start, a woman dressed in white nightclothes (in the lexicon of the performance, she is the “Bookworm”) is situated only slightly above her audience on a platform. The first ascent comes when the Bookworm sends the Librarian after a desired book perched on a shallow ledge near the top of the building. The possibility of height radically expands as the Librarian (performed by internationally celebrated climber and Aeria rigger Will Stanhope) scales ever higher up the inside of the seven-story building. (This climb performs a visual pun of *upward mobility*. More on that to come.) But even as he does so, and even when the dance travels from Librarian to the five women tucked into square concrete window nooks mid-way up the interior wall of the plaza, and even when the Bookworm takes flight, soaring up higher than either the

Librarian or the five dancing “Readers” in their window nooks, the orientation of the elevation remains earthly: the dancers are up, but the ground remains down. These elevations are spectacular, to be sure, but they operate according to the same directional reality as the audience experiences. There is an awe-factor in effect—look at those bodies climb, dance, fly impossibly high overhead—but it fits into (even as it is an exception from) the spatial logic of the everyday.

It is a profound change when, approximately ten minutes into the performance, ground shifts. When a quintet of fancifully dressed “Storybook” characters emerges from a yet higher set of window nooks and begins their bounded lofting side-to-side, bodies parallel to the ground, orientation wobbles and dizzies. The wall has become floor for the dancers, and so, suddenly, there are two co-existing sets of directional realities within the logic of the choreography: down is down (ground) and down is also in front (wall). Writing about another performance on another library, vertical dancer and choreographer Kate Lawrence describes this phenomenon: “The term ‘vertical’ [in “vertical dance”] refers to the orientation of the floor rather than the orientation of the dancer’s body” (49). It is by “[t]ipping up the ground on which the performer stands by 90 degrees [that vertical dance] destabilizes [spatial] relationships, allowing for a new set of spatial coordinates to be laid over those that are familiar” (49). In this way, Lawrence maintains, “vertical dance facilitates, indeed relies upon, a co-existence of conflicting spatial frames of reference in the dancer’s consciousness” (56). The disorientation that can come of this ninety degree tilt has productive possibilities, Lawrence argues, that might allow the dancer to think anew about her physical positions in directional space. She writes auto-ethnographically from inside the dance, and recalls for us the experience of adjusting to the tipped reality of vertical dance when she was new to the form, noting that spatial confusion as well as new muscular demands and sensory requirements make for a steep learning curve: “the vertical dancer’s world is initially incomprehensible to her. Familiar directions are confounded and complicated by the 90-degree tilt. As she goes over the edge, what was above is now ahead, what was below is now behind. The new up is forward, the new down is inside the building; its occupants are perceived as being ‘underground’” (56). But, she assures her reader, as the dancer gains skill, disorientation becomes reorientation, and the sense of spatial confusion fades (57). The dancer becomes accustomed to the tilted set of coordinates.

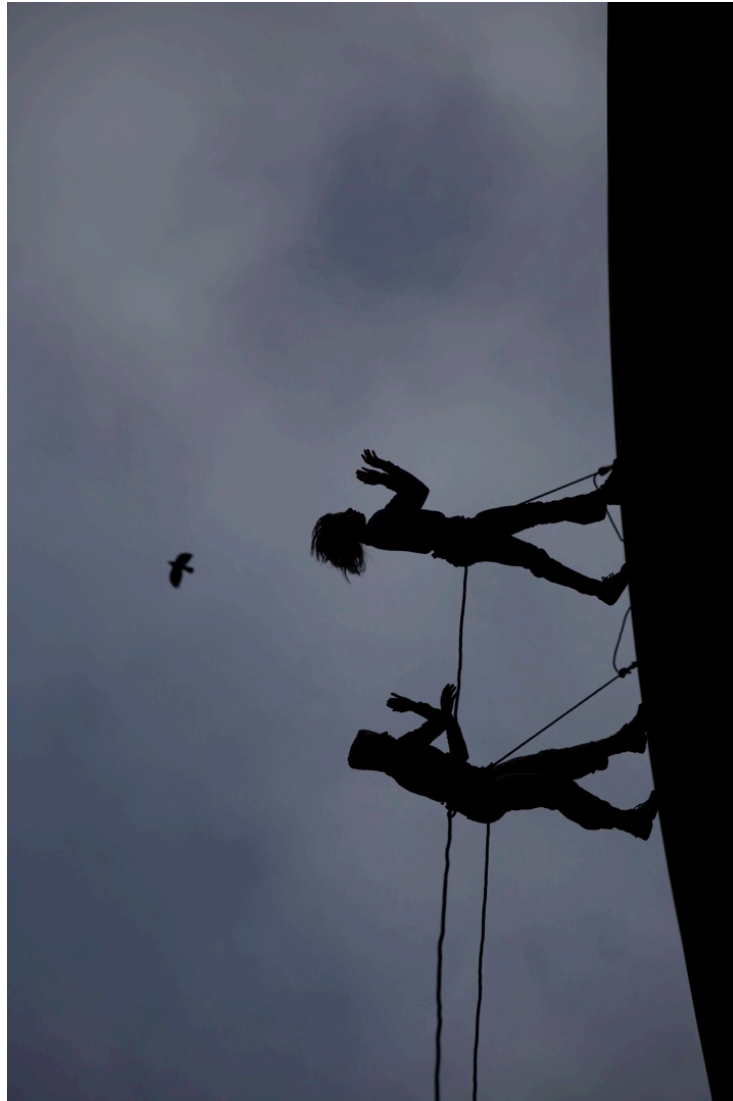


Figure 4.3. In rehearsal for *In Situ*, photograph by Tim Matheson (2010). Image courtesy of Aeriosa Dance Society.

Note. Simultaneously horizontal and upright, Aeriosa dancers disrupt easy divisions between up and down, between lateral and vertical.

But the audience, set at a remove from the vertical floor and only ever vicariously experiencing it, does not get the same chance to dwell in disorientation long enough to re-find a sense of down in the horizontal plane; instead, the vertiginous sensation of ground slipping and sliding vertically up the side of the building lingers fresh and felt. Lawrence's theory stops self-consciously short of analyzing audience response, acknowledging that: "The specific effects of vertical dance on audiences in terms of spatial perception is an area which requires further research" (57). Indeed, *In Situ's*

choreographer, Amelia Rudolph, notes that “The use of space in aerial choreography has new problems, new opportunities, and new ways of influencing the viewer’s eye” (qtd. in *Aerial Bodies* 58). While studies that explore how audiences experience dance are wanting, theories of vicariousness drawn from cognitive psychology are instructive. Barbara Tversky and Bridgette Martin Hard speculate that we live in a state of near-constant vicariousness: “Even simple social interactions, such as accepting a cup of coffee from someone or negotiating the crowd on the street, require anticipating the actions of others in order to coordinate our own” (125).¹¹⁷ Audiences of *In Situ* were cast into a tipped, vertiginous spatial experience. As one reviewer put it: “As I watched the performers dancing—and as I tried to ignore my own sense of empathetic vertigo triggered by seeing people moving so high above me—I realized that gravity and momentarily suspending gravity was an integral part of the work. At times, the wires supporting the dancers disappeared in the darkness and I had the odd sensation of watching dancers floating mid-air” (Griffin, “Aeriosa: Spectacular”). *In Situ*’s audience is asked to graft this new, askew ninety-degree orientation overtop of a lived, gravitational sense of up and down. In this perpendicular overlay, there are glimpses, perhaps, of another way of inhabiting space; there is a fleeting sense of the possibilities of sideways—one that, at the least, reorients the relationship of body to built environment and, at most, unfixes for a moment the foundations upon which we build and move through our cities.

If we read *In Situ*’s proposition of a sideways tilt back onto my suggestion that vertical dance participates, willingly or not, in efforts to brand Vancouver as a city *on the rise*, we see the subtle ways in which the form challenges the very model it is sequestered to uphold. For in challenging the binary of up and down, *In Situ* also challenges the hierarchies that attend verticality. Within the logic of the choreography, the penthouse is related laterally to the ground floor—likewise, the top tier is a sideways slide from entry-level. Even as *In Situ* reifies a vertical hierarchy by virtue of its elevated presence, the dance simultaneously resists the same with its performance of a tipped,

¹¹⁷ In an effort to explore the vicariousness of perspective, Tversky and Hard conduct a survey-based experiment that seeks to determine how respondents position themselves in relation to a variety of objects: from their own physical perspective, or on behalf of the physical perspective of another.

horizontal levelling that ghosts the vertical city. Whereas Karen Jamieson's *The River* troubles notions of the teleological progress of urban development and the linear progression of time by emphasizing the verticality inherent in horizontality—Jamieson's dance seeks depressions and cracks in supposedly smooth ground surfaces and pursues a topo-choreography of descent toward a historical creek's fluvial output—Aeriosa's *In Situ* insists on the possibilities of horizontality within a regime of verticality, the potential of *beside* at the edges of *above* and *below*.

This move, this tilting of the ground, upsets the set of fixed directional imperatives by which we live. To borrow the parlance of spatial language theory, “up” and “down”—along with north, south, east, and west—belong to categories of spatial perspective understood as “absolute” or “extrinsic” (Taylor and Tversky 374). These coordinates exist “external to the scene,” as the theory goes. This way of knowing space is set in contrast to “intrinsic” and “relative” frames of reference: whereas a “relative” understanding of space relies on the perspective of a human observer and her physical orientation and contingent sense of left, right, back, front, an “intrinsic” understanding describes space in relation to a given object in space (e.g., a car in front of a building) (372-74). So what does it mean that this dance (and this form more broadly) unfixes up and down? What does it mean that it shakes, if only temporarily and performatively, the foundations of our directional orientation system? What the upending of ground achieves, I argue, is a partial collapsing together of these categories. It troubles the “absolute” quality of up and down, exposing them as relative. It does not permit a notion of either as “external to the scene”—instead, it sequesters them firmly inside the frame of the performance. In doing so, it asks its viewers to do something both radical and basic: to imagine another way of inhabiting and moving through space. For, as this dissertation seeks to establish, site-based dance is not simply a choreographic response to non-traditional performance spaces; it is also a species of choreopolitics that performs and choreographs its audiences into alternative relationships with everyday spaces.

Indeed, *In Situ* generates a dizzying relational kinaesthetic—one that works against a fixed or fixable understanding of orientation throughout with its continual reaffirmation of each directional orientation. With a choreographic emphasis on *down* in both the vertical and the horizontal plane, ground, it seems, is constantly on the move.

After the mystical quintet danced on a vertical floor by the Storybook characters (i.e., wherein the wall serves as floor), gravity reasserts itself when three of the window-frame Readers reappear to dance again in their elevated but decidedly upright world: the ledge below them runs parallel with the city streets and sidewalks. And from this reprise of the upright window dance, audience focus is pulled downward again to the Bookworm who launches from her platform into the air with the help of a team of belayers. Again, she is in flight—hoisted above the audience, she is at height, but the world remains upright. Then it is the audience’s turn to move in a guided migration out to the north plaza, and the sensation of gravity and of ground-beneath-feet is that much more pronounced for all the preceding choreographic disorientation. Once outside, the world tips again to support more dance performed out of kilter, on a vertical floor. From there, the audience is grounded and guided again to the south plaza where the floor undergoes yet another directional tilt for the finale. *In Situ* plays the vertiginous wobble. The structure of the choreography does not allow for a simple shift from one directional reality to another; instead, it performs (and re-performs) a self-conscious slippage between the two.

Or perhaps “slippage,” with its implicit travel from one discrete directional reality to another, is the wrong word, for although the choreography moves between a floor on the vertical and the horizontal plane, it insists throughout that we feel some sense of both orientations simultaneously. As with Jamieson’s tracing of the historic Brewery Creek, ground is choreographically unfixed. But whereas *The River* insisted on the ways in which history continues to erupt into the present and, in doing so, effects a constant shift in the contours of the ground below our feet, *In Situ* refuses to let the ground *stay down* at all; below us one minute and in front of us another, ground is relentlessly mobile. Not only is a double sense of space established by the repeated tipping and righting of floor, but it is also structured into the form. Although the movement vocabulary enabled by the apparatus of climbing gear has an anti-gravity quality (remember those lofting jumps that open this chapter), the ever-present possibility of a fall ensures that the pull of gravity—the upright down—remains felt even as the floor tips. Doubly unsettling in both its overlaying of conflicting sets of directional coordinates and in its unfulfilled promise of a fall, *In Situ* asks us to linger in spatial disorientation. Even as we watch up (and I will return to examine the choreography of watching), we think down.

In his theorization of a postmodern kinestheme characterized by lateral physicality, Randy Martin suggests that there is an “orientation, sensibility, or predisposition that informs approaches to movement” which is bound to the downturn in the American economy circa the 1970s and 1980s (“A Precarious” 68). This “sensibility”—a kinetic response to the economic unfeasibility of ‘moving up in the world’—emphasizes the lateral. Exemplary of the postmodern kinestheme, Martin suggests, is a piece that keeps erupting into this dissertation: Trisha Brown’s *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970, 1971). Martin situates *Man* as such: “The placement of dance in settings where the body is no longer a temple is not so many steps away from what will become (in Trisha Brown and others who develop contact improvisation from various release techniques) an embrace of risk where walking sideways quickly becomes flying low” (72).

Martin’s transformation of walking sideways into flying low fits well within his argument about laterality, to be sure. But I wonder about the possibilities that might emerge when we linger with a tilted axis, when we pursue walking sideways for what it is, when we take the sideways traverse seriously and on its own ground. For, after all, the vertical descent of Brown’s *Man*, like Aeriosa’s vertical dance, is not simply a lateral traverse: as I have argued, it is one that overlays the vertical with the horizontal, the horizontal with the vertical. Its *ground* is not ground at all, but building, structure, architecture. Indeed, its ground is the vertical surface of a specific edifice constructed to serve a specific purpose—and a closer look at that vertical ground exposes another important component of *In Situ*’s physical claim.

Unlike Brown’s *Man*, *In Situ* does not travel down a building abandoned and left for ruin by what Martin identifies as a flight of capital (before it is inevitably reclaimed by cultural creatives seeking low-cost living in an unintended step toward the eventual gentrification of the neighbourhood) (72). Instead, *In Situ* takes as its ground a structure designed by a superstar architect with an explicit aim to draw international attention to Vancouver and to eke out a place for the coastal city on a global stage. Like other forms described by Martin, *In Situ* “lay[s] claim to the city, [inverts] its conventional coordinates, and render[s] spaces of lost utility subject to another principle of speculation” (72). But rather than reclaiming a building left to let by capital, Aeriosa’s dancers reclaim a

building that is implicated in (if not emblematic of) a design and stage-management of the city very much connected to the flow of global capital. What can we make of a movement practice that refigures as ground the material effects of the branding of a city as world-class?

To think this through, consider the role of ground in contemporary dance as Martin characterizes it. If the postmodern kinestheme is, in large part, defined by its intimate relationship to floor (as opposed to ballet as upright and modern dance as on the “up and up”) (69), then what can we make of vertical dance’s upsetting of the vertical, tilting of ground, unfixing of floor?¹¹⁸ Martin aligns the postmodern kinestheme with a social emphasis on broadening human rights and the levelling of class, race, and gendered hierarchies. While I take his point, I also hope to temper it: for, as I established in Chapter 2, to be lateral and at ground level may well be to *expose*, not *level*, uneven topographies of class, race, gender, and so on. Put together, Jamieson’s choreopolitics of ground and tracing of a spatial history of Vancouver that has been built over and Aeriosa’s more recent work map an alternative politics (and economics) of development in the city. Perhaps surprisingly at first glance (up), vertical dance can contest the financialization of that development (even as it participates in it) through its foregrounding of embodied labour.

I have argued that the practice works against an easy orientation of up and down: it upsets the boundary between them; it literally turns them on their side. Not only does ground slip sideways, but this new ground (the walls of the Central Branch, in the case of *In Situ*) is ill equipped to support those who engage with it. Indeed, it is not the ground in any sense that supports the dancers—not the floor surface of the VPL plaza or concourse, nor even the walls of the Central Branch. Here, support comes from above in the form of ropes and riggers and anchor points secured at the tops of the building. The architecture of the world-class city—the walls of the Central Branch—is refitted and

¹¹⁸ Martin first identifies a “classical” kinestheme (rooted in the seventeenth century and epitomized by ballet and the quest after the “imitation of a sovereign”) and a “modern” kinestheme (rooted in the early twentieth century and epitomized by the Graham Technique and its modeling on the movement vocabulary of a “modernist genius”) before moving on to the postmodern kinestheme with its challenge to the hierarchy of verticality that typifies the previous two (69).

repurposed with a combination of rigging infrastructure and hours of physical and aesthetic labour with a result that inverts the coordinates of support: the building is used against its design to support from above.

Heightened Labour

The climbing equipment that suspends the dancers along the top edges of the Central Branch affords *In Situ* an apparent quality of ease: as Taffe puts it: “We’ve got the added dimension of suspension from our ropes, which allows us to create almost a weightless, lofty vocabulary of movement that isn’t achievable on the floor” (qtd. in Rossi). Take, for example, the movement content of the choreographic description that opens this chapter: were the dancers on the ground, we would call this sequence a series of “jumps,” but dangling as the dancers are along the wall, gravity has no purchase and so these lofts seem utterly effortless—not jumps, really, but drifts. And yet the seeming effortlessness of these lofty drifts—of all of the *In Situ* choreography, in fact—undoes itself in its very instantiation: for each lazy drift away from the building, we see the riggers positioned above the dancers, monitoring their movements; we see the ropes taut above the dancers, their tails swinging below in a whipping echo of the trajectory; and we see the muscles of the dancers straining in their anti-gravity world. The dance becomes an exposure of the effort inherent in effortlessness, the labour of seeming ease. In the logic of *In Situ*, ground does not support: equipment supports; bodies support.

To be sure, the physical placement of the dance outdoors renders the labour built into every choreographic work available for witness. The company’s rehearsals, lengthy and strenuous efforts to refine the choreographic work, have impromptu audiences: rather than perfecting their piece (in a studio) and allowing the finished product to appear for performance—generated as if by magic with the labour of rehearsal only ever implicit—Aeriosa’s dancers rehearse outdoors and in the public realm for much of their process. And these rehearsals are overtly laborious not only in the hard, physical work of the dancers, but also in the complicated logistics of the circumstance: the accidental audiences that gathered around or walked past *In Situ* rehearsals would have encountered a roped-off area at the base of the building with Amelia Rudolph craning

upwards to holler directions to suspended dancers through a megaphone. The complexities of the form and placement leave no space for a myth of ease to circulate. Part of the social and spatial politics of *In Situ* is its avowal, to borrow Shannon Jackson's formulation again, of the same structures of support that are so often disavowed in the parlance of public art criticism. The dance's active exposure of the literal, material supports required to reach height and harness the dancers upholds Jackson's contention that "Whether cast in aesthetic or social terms, freedom and expression are not opposed to obligation and care, but in fact depend upon each other" (14). *In Situ* is not only "a reminder that no one can ever fully go it alone" (9), but also a rich and visual instance of "inter-dependent social imagining" (14).

That *In Situ* lays bare the efforts of those behind the scenes, those whose work it is to support the dancers, and thus exposes the form as inherently and emphatically collaborative is only part of the effect: the dance's insistence on "showing us the ropes" (as it were) also functions to stress its various registers of labour.¹¹⁹ Throughout the piece, we see the heads of the (male) riggers bobbing up over the top of the various buildings as they check on the positioning of the dancers they belay. The company's gendered divide between dancers (female) and riggers (male) is a matter of logistics, not an intentional statement about who moves and who supports. Taffe casts in her company dancers with the requisite artistry, strength and skill to complete her training, those who are available to rehearse and work, and those "who don't break." As Taffe puts it, "it is the last woman standing who does the dance" (Personal interview 15 January 2015). And yet the visible presence of the male riggers positioned above—and bearing the weight of—the female dancers throughout *In Situ* is hard to ignore. Indeed, at first glance, it echoes the gendered logic of classical ballet, wherein the man supports the woman who is presented as (sexualized) spectacle. However, *In Situ* complicates this gendered dynamic both implicitly and explicitly. The female bodies that perform on the library walls are definitively and powerfully muscled—as they must be to do the hard work required of their climbing-based aesthetic. In this way, the Aeriosa dancers manifest Peta Tait's argument that when female bodies are visibly muscled, particularly

¹¹⁹ For more on the backstage labour that supports performance, see Christin Essin's "Unseen Labor and Backstage Choreographies" (2015).

with upper-body strength, aerial dance “cuts across” gendered notions of the body to perform a kind of gender trickery (7). But *In Situ*’s most self-conscious performance of labour is that which powers the Bookworm’s opening flight: here, a group of fellow performers joins the Bookworm on a raised platform before launching into a performance of support as they winch her up into the air with the belay system. Whereas throughout the remainder of the piece the male riggers (dressed, consistent with the visual lexicon of backstage labour, in black) come into and out of sight as necessity dictates, these female belayers are costumed and positioned firmly within the frame of the choreography. It is their labour—an explicitly *performed* and, crucially, *gendered* labour of teamwork—that enables the Bookworm’s easy float up into the sky, thus modelling the alternative possibilities yielded by collective, female support in an environment that would dictate otherwise.



Figure 4.4. Dancers in performance of *In Situ*, videography by Milan Radovanovic, scene-still (20 March 2010, MVI Digital File). Image courtesy of Aeriosa Dance Society.

Note. Four dancers are costumed and lit by the stage lights as they perform the act of belaying.

The conspicuousness of the mechanisms of support in *In Situ* is a product of the form of vertical dance, to be sure, but it also manifests Taffe’s expressed interest in positioning her dance as labour—and as female labour. Indeed, gender and labour fold

together again in one of the most virtuosic sections of the dance, referred to in rehearsal notes as “The Business Woman’s Trio” (Personal site visit interview). This trio, like the flight of the Bookworm, is characterized not simply by female labour, but by a sequence of co-articulated moves that imagines female labour as cooperative. Although her dancers perform spectacular feats, Taffe rejects the notion that her art is a moment or product of exception from the everyday; instead, she approaches her practice as: “just being in the world and doing your work as just another worker” (Personal interview 15 January 2015). Still, while the labours of rehearsal, production, and support are rendered available for contemplation, and while dancers are, indeed, positioned as workers, the infrastructure of the piece asks us to analyze whether or not the vertical dancer is, in fact, “just another worker.”

Set at height, the dancers’ movement trajectories echo and sometimes even rely on infrastructure designed for window washers, construction workers, and other high-angle labourers. Taffe explains that Aeriosa’s riggers use a combination of systems: both structural techniques (rigging to the structural components of the building) and, following a process of assessment and seeking necessary permissions, existing industrial anchor-points (15 January 2015). Work at height is carefully regulated in the province of British Columbia and, in most instances, every effort is made to avoid falls. Whenever there is a “risk of falling” in industrial high-angle work, the labourer must wear a controversial full-body harness (WorkSafeBC 4)—a device designed to distribute weight in arresting a fall, but one that comes with its own risks of injury (even fatality). While Workers’ Compensation Board of BC exempts performers from wearing these harnesses during live performances, the organization maintains an emphasis on avoiding falls as a general rule in arts work and stresses the particular importance for support/backstage workers (“Performing Arts” 8). Although Taffe is explicit that her aesthetic hinges on the safe suspension of dancers in the vertical field rather than on falling, the visual economy of the form presents the fall as an ever-present possibility—but one with consequences mitigated by the attentive riggers who shadow the performance. In this way, vertical dance’s embrace of the possibility of a safe, harnessed fall runs contrary to the industry’s effort to avoid falling. Particularly in a context of the “creative city” and its “creative class,” these overlapping infrastructures and opposing imperatives of blue and white-collar high-angle work are crucial: where one seeks to

prevent the fall, the other calls up its myriad social and spatial possibilities. The contrasting valuation of the fall, here, is both born of and testament to a classed aesthetic privilege to dwell in and rework movement pathways—a privilege that does not necessarily apply to those whose work at height is geared toward structural maintenance rather than artistic exploration.¹²⁰

At times, the dance engages explicitly with the possibility of falling. This is most clear with the first elevation of the piece, when the Librarian scales the building's interior in quest of the Bookworm's desired book. In an admittedly unconvincing performance of instability, the Librarian teeters and trembles as he arrives at each new height and as he shimmies his way along the final ledge toward the book. His exaggerated quavering only functions to amplify what is already obvious; the simple fact of height, combined with the visible (even prominent) presence of rock climbing safety gear (ropes, harnesses, riggers, belayers), keeps the possibility of the fall at the fore throughout *In Situ*. We know that the performers are very likely safe—indeed, the performance of their protection is visible in the micro-choreography of the swinging of the rope tails that dangle down from the climbing harness systems—but set at such height, the dance cannot shake the possibility of a fall; the deferred promise of a fall and the inevitability of descent shapes the dance.

The fall, as T. Nikki Cesare Schotzko compellingly argues, holds captive our collective imaginary.¹²¹ With reference to the controversial image depicting a man falling headfirst from one of the World Trade Centre towers during the 9/11 attacks, Cesare Schotzko argues that “Falling is a gesture that we are not unfamiliar with, but after [Richard] Drew's image, all falls may (have to) be read in relation to the Falling Man's”

¹²⁰ Although I will not argue that to elect (or strive) to be a professional contemporary dancer is anything other than a choice afforded by privilege, I insist that the luxury to dance in Vancouver is not straightforwardly luxurious. Recall, as I have noted, that dancers are paid the lowest wages of all (low paid) performing arts professionals and that dancers typically earn well under an annual minimum wage. Nearly every dancer I know must round out her salary with other work—often in the (food) service industry.

¹²¹ With particular attention to the post-9/11 fixation on images of falling bodies, Cesare Schotzko's *Learning How to Fall: Art and Culture After September 11* (2015) offers a nuanced analysis of how art and performance have become entwined with the service economy and popular culture on one hand, and with trauma, disaster, and “mis-memory” on the other (46).

(39). As such, *In Situ*'s evocation of the fall can also reveal to us our anxiousness about unruly bodies in public spaces. One of Aeriosa's first commissions was the opening of the Scotiabank Dance Centre—the timing of which, in September of 2001, bound the dance to the notorious events of 9/11. Because of these resonances (as Cesare Schotzko points out, images of falling bodies crowded mass media for weeks following 9/11), Aeriosa's performance was very nearly cancelled (Griffin, "9/11"). Public and/or police concern about Aeriosa dancers' presence in unusual (read: elevated) public spaces and the nature of their work at height has led the company to numerous brushes with local police over the years, including more than one animated rooftop SWAT team encounter (Taffe, Personal interview 23 February 2015). The optics of falling have also resulted in cancelled shows, including a last-minute cancellation of a performance on Vancouver's downtown BC Hydro building. Aeriosa's scheduled performance date happened to land shortly after a company accident, and Taffe speculates that BC Hydro pulled out because they "didn't want to give the impression that BC Hydro was cavalier about safety" (Personal interview 23 February 2015). But unlike the devastating falls that rightly concern City authorities, vertical dance offers a physical lexicon for falling well. It performs a comfort with falling and an aesthetic of falling while still recognizing, in Taffe's words, the potential "consequences of a bad performance on stone versus the consequences of a bad performance on stage" (Personal interview 15 January 2015).

So what can we make of a form in which "falling is actually a job requirement" (Taffe, Personal site visit interview)? Particularly when the tension between optional, safe, aesthetic falls in one instance and mandatory, dangerous, everyday falls in the other is embedded in the very formal apparatus of *In Situ* (that is, in the rigging infrastructure that mimics and/or borrows from that of maintenance labourers)? While these falls can teach us about safety gear and landing gear and the relations of support that keep us upright (to borrow Jackson's formulation), or that allow us to navigate sideways when the world shifts on its axis, the visual rhetoric of falling internal to *In Situ* is also an *aestheticized* understanding of the fall, a caught fall, an un-fall. The dance gestures toward a ghosted and expressly classed trail of invisibilized maintenance labour (with the potential for catastrophic falls) even as it absorbs those same trajectories into its spectacular celebration of height. For, as geographer David Ley articulates, and as my research supports, "the aesthetic disposition, affirming and

transforming the everyday, is a class-privileged temperament” (2531). I will return to this point.

“The work of dance,” as Mark Franko terms it in his monograph by the same title (2002), has long held fascination for dance scholars. Through his study of “the coincidence of dance and work” in the context of 1930s American theatrical dance practices and labour rights movements (1), Franko arrives at this conclusion: “History shows that workers were not to be dancers, and that dancers were not workers” (167). From this point, he mounts the following challenge: “What, then, is and was the work of dance?” (167). Transcribing Franko’s question from its Fordist, unionist setting into the thick of a contemporary neoliberal economy, Martin’s analysis of dance and finance positions the dancer not simply as a worker, but as a precarious worker *par excellence*. In the epigraph that opens my chapter, Martin draws out the ways in which the dancer is an ideal labourer in a contemporary creative economy because she produces something (of value) from nothing: she requires little in terms of material support (an empty room and bare feet are preferred by many dancers), garners the lowest wages of all performing arts workers, and so on. “Dance is caught,” Martin contends, “between the disavowal of the corporeality of laboring bodies and as a model of work without strife, complaint or much by way of recompense” (“Of Dance” 74).¹²² The dancer dramatizes corporeal labour even as she seems largely exempt from the requirements of the labouring, value-producing body.

The performance of labour throughout *In Situ*—harnesses, muscled bodies, tail rope swing, riggers, and belayers, as well as the use of industrial anchor-points and movement trajectories traveled by manual labourers who work at height—makes explicit *dance as work*. That is to say, although the remarkably difficult manoeuvres performed by Aeriosa dancers look weightless, effortless, and easy, they index hundreds of rehearsal hours (as does all choreographed movement); but they also render observable, even obvious, the mechanisms and trappings of support from which they hang. If we take Martin’s lead, then *In Situ*’s exposure of the labour inherent in dancing,

¹²² Martin’s essay “Of Dance, Derivatives, Decolonization, and Kinesthemes” (2013) is a reworked version of his earlier publication, “A Precarious Dance, a Derivative Sociality” (2012).

and of the labour required to *support* the dancers, might through its very avowal of “the corporeality of laboring bodies” disrupt the equation wherein dancers are powered by the “love of art”—like good (upper-)middle class cultural creatives—and insist, instead, on the ways in which creative work is implicated in and supported by various other less pleasant, less visible, and less comfortable forms of labour.

By exposing dance as work and by insisting on the correspondences of dance work with forms of everyday (white and blue collar) labour, *In Situ* sharpens a principle that undergirds all site-based art: that is, a refusal of the autonomy of the art object from its economic context. In her analysis of the entanglement of performance within the service economy, Cesare Schotzko offers insight into the artwork as work: “Art and performance that structurally and explicitly reflects an engagement with the service economy in which it participates—that is, work that intentionally draws attention to the *work* of creating, to the *work of the work of art* rather than the end result—might act as a critique of the very economy upon which it depends” (71, emphasis in original). In her analysis, Cesare Schotzko draws from Nicholas Ridout who contests the notion of performance as “an attempt to exit the market” (recall my rehearsal in Chapter 2 of the economic argument in Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked*), and argues instead that “performance reveals itself as exemplary commodity (it commodifies action, not just things)” (“Performance” 130, 131).¹²³ Crucially, for both Ridout and Cesare Schotzko, when a performance calls attention to itself as a commodity comprised of labour—indeed, comprised of bodies that labour in the presence of and in proximity to consumers, as performers most often do before their audiences—that performance has the capacity to draw out an affect that characterizes contemporary relationships within a service economy: “a certain self-disgust in relation to labour” (Ridout, “Performance” 127). Exemplary of this self-disgust, Ridout suggests, is what he terms “the total situation of the haircut” wherein “Whatever pleasure there might be in the experience of

¹²³ Ridout’s essay, “Performance in the Service Economy: Outsourcing and Delegation,” appears in Claire Bishop and Mark Sladen’s co-edited *Double Agent* (2008). This edited collection supported an identically named exhibition co-curated by Bishop and Sladen that featured works by “artists who use other people as a medium” (qtd. in Cesare Schotzko 68). The art world’s recent interest in forms that use bodies as artistic materials can learn from dance’s dependence on delegated labour: that is to say, the ways in which the dancer serves as a medium *off*/for the choreographer. I will engage more closely with these issues in my final chapters.

a brief scalp massage ... is massively outweighed by the ghastliness of the situation in which acts I have commissioned are performed in my presence” (127). I will return to more carefully unpack the complexities of this self-disgust as it relates to class and site-based dance in my next chapter, but for now, allow me to linger on how *In Situ*'s self-conscious laboriousness functions to (subtly) critique the economy it serves. I wonder: what can we make of a performance that is not only about “the *work* of creating” (in Cesare Schotzko's terms), but that is also labouring in service of another commodifying end—in this case, branding the city as world-class?

For in the context of an aggressively branded and marketed global mega-event like the Olympic Games, these multiple and overt forms of choreographic labour call attention to the ways in which dance works in but also *on* the city. The labour that artists, including dancers, perform so nimbly and so invisibly is one of value-added: by simply doing their work, artists create value in a city. Echoing other articulations of the inextricable link between art and gentrification, Martin argues that “Artists are now the poster children for a kind of bait-and-switch of urban development, where you get people in for cheap because they don't really need any health care because they're so flexible, and then you pull the rug out from under them and gentrify the dwellings that they so gorgeously established” (“Toward” 79). Artists are the unrecognized (and often unwilling or unwitting) labourers in the appreciation of real estate value characteristic of gentrification. And although their labour creates value, artists are most often unable or at least poorly positioned to make a claim on that value.¹²⁴ *In Situ*'s disruption of dance's self-occluding labour also points toward the dance's sequestration into the production of value in the context of the creative city—that is, intentionally or not, the dance implicates itself in the labour that drives appreciating market values, that brands cities, and generates value for Vancouver in a global marketplace. While Taffe is not particularly interested in the dance's relationship to city branding, the commentary still emerges. *In Situ*'s performance of heightened labour gestures, sometimes more and sometimes less obliquely, towards instrumentalist efforts to brand Vancouver as desirable and, as Laura Levin and Kim Solga put it, “lure an increasingly powerful class of creative types

¹²⁴ For more in this vein, see Martin's lecture “Artistic Citizenship and The Politics of Cultural Production” (2013).

(engineers, artists, musicians, designers, and knowledge professionals)” to contribute to yet more economic growth, in the way of the creative city ideology (“Building” 39).

And this labour, crucially, is situated in the midst of a witnessing public. Whereas, to return to Martin’s quintessential example of the postmodern kinestheme, Trisha Brown’s *Man* functions as “a bit of a sight-gag in which the city, visually emptied of nondancer human life, is renaturalized” (“A Precarious” 72), the cityscape of *In Situ* is emphatically populated. Within the spatial logic of the choreography, the floor of the city (the VPL concourse and then the outdoor plaza) is densely populated, and only partly peopled by those to whom the creative city is designed to beckon. The ground itself is made up of a mass of bodies, of people looking up, which—given the elevated public placement of the (bulk of the) performance—is necessarily comprised of a mixed demographic including intentional and accidental audiences, patrons at neighbouring restaurants and hotels, workers on shift, tourists lead by an Olympic itinerary, commuters, homeless persons, and so on. This mixed group gathered below is unified in an assemblage of the upward gaze—its own laborious task. Whereas it is relatively common practice in watching vertical dance to sit or lie down on the ground in order to look up with ease (a choreography of audience that, itself, begs for analysis—particularly with regard to municipal “sit-lie” ordinances), the audience of *In Situ* was forced to stand. Couched in the well-attended Cultural Olympiad for the 2010 Paralympic Games, the demands on the space were simply too intense. The show was free, but crowded, with potential audience members turned away from the indoor portion each night. And outside, there was not enough room at the base of the building for audience members to stretch out. Instead, *In Situ*’s temporary public was choreographed into a collective high lift: cervical spines swaying upward and hinging at atlas joints, heads back and eyes skyward.

When Taffe describes the experience of watching *In Situ*, she echoes the physical position of her audience, allowing her weight to shift into her heels as she tips her head back and exposes her throat. She talks about the sense of openness in this position. She is right: there is a feeling of vulnerability and receptivity that courses through my body when I mimic her. But she also talks about the strenuous work involved—work I remember feeling in my shoulders and my neck even as I luxuriated in

the optional, leisurely experience of watching *In Situ*. Whereas many site-based dances fail to fully recognize their choreography of their publics, Taffe is well aware. And she knows that *In Situ*'s physical demands taxed its audiences: "There's only so long people can look up for" (Personal interview 15 January 2015). In order to watch, *In Situ*'s audience is, itself, choreographed into a micro-dance of the craning neck that kinetically indexes itself as such.



Figure 4.5. Audiences craning necks to watch *In Situ*, videography by Tim Matheson, scene still (19 March 2010, MVI Digital File). Image courtesy of Aeriosa Dance Society.

Note. While most audience members heed the choreographic call to look up, a few use recording devices as surrogate eyes, a phenomenon common to site-based dance.

Even as this micro-dance cultivates a feeling of temporary exception, a remove, from the busy whirring of the city, from the commuter pathways that may take us to and from our own labours, and from the ground and its material reminders of performed and required maintenance labours, the posture also makes demands on its performers. It disrupts the cultivated disinterest that Goffman theorizes. Contrasting the peripheral pan and the directed, downcast inertia that enables nimble navigations of city sidewalks, the upward gaze is an invested gesture, a commitment of attention that interrupts linear forward progression through the city. Neck exposed, balance tipped backward, and guard lowered, this choreography of the upward gaze mobilizes its audience in another

form of labour: the participatory, physical labour that undergirds audience experience of all site-based performance. As I have tried to illustrate throughout this dissertation, precisely how this mobilization of audience labour functions depends on how it is organized and how it is performed. For in my understanding of relational kinaesthetics, I do not mean to suggest that site-based dance manages to call together into a network of reciprocity *all* of the disparate bodies and sites that comprise a wider public sphere. Although the form does, I think, have a broader reach than theatre-based performances, site-based dance is still structured by exclusion. Consider, for example, those whose differently abled bodies would have difficulty falling in line with a site-dance's choreographic imperatives, or those for whom the street is a sleep space, or the many whose urban commutes are rushed departures from or arrivals at sites of compulsory work. For these people and many other besides, the city may not be a welcome site for the optional, leisure-based audience labour of the sort demanded and orchestrated by instances of site-based dance. And yet, despite these exclusions, the form can still do important social work through its arrangement of those bodies that it does manage to gather together to share space, time, and attention: that is, site-based dance can ask its temporary publics—however partial and limited—to witness the broad social choreographies that constitute and are constituted by public spaces. Achieving what Jackson identifies as a blurring between the content of the performance with the form of the site and, inversely, the content of the site with the form of the performance (*Social* 234-35), *In Situ*—like all site-based dance—prompts a “continual spectatorial readjustment” between site and set (234), between aesthetic and everyday. By continually moving its audience's gaze between the art object and its lived, everyday background, these practices can productively trouble the apparent neutrality of urban pathways, mobilities, and structures, exposing them as actively produced and definitively uneven.

Even as I watched *Aeriosa*—even as I felt the ground tip beneath me and even as I marvelled at the alternative movement pathways the dancers modelled—I also felt acutely aware of my privilege in being called to watch, in recognizing the call as such, and in having the leisure time (not to mention the relative trust in the safety of the city) to stop, stand, and look up. My audience pleasure was edged by a slight version of an uneasiness often inflects my experience of watching public performances. Even as I felt

a sense of connection with those around me, even as I felt the uplifting atmosphere of euphoria that permeated Cultural Olympiad events and that elevated AERIOSA's celebration of the impressive possibilities of human movement, I also felt uncomfortably bourgeois. In this way, as I will go on to explore in David McIntosh's *Lives Were Around Me* (2009), the *calling together* that I have argued site-based dance achieves is also, simultaneously, a *calling out*.

Chapter 5.

Passing

[W]e would like to point in just one possible new direction and call for performances that take up the noncelebratory: that focus on what is frustrating, fraught, even at times genuinely dangerous about being in the city; that refuse to glorify the urban playground and take note, instead, of those for whom the city is not simply about play, but is also about work, about safety issues, and about struggle. ~ Laura Levin and Kim Solga, "Building Utopia" 52

To an outside eye, this does not look like a dance. A small group, four people, stretch out into a trailing line before closing in again into a tight, travelling knot as they pass through the streets and sidewalks of the city's most famously impoverished and contested quarter, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) with its notorious intersection at "Hastings & Main." It takes the man at the front of the group a fraction of a moment to notice that the guide, who had been situated a body-width behind him on the right, has stopped walking. The man's momentum carries him slightly past the group, stretching the spatial boundaries of relation before he redirects, shifting his weight back and turning toward the bodies that have clustered around the guide. They lean in, stiff with taut attention, presumably labouring to make out the guide's words. Their guide finishes talking but lingers in the moment, occupying the authoritative space he has carved out in the midst of these bodies, these city blocks, but hesitantly—deferring the charge to lead. When the guide begins to move again, he does so searchingly: as though he, too, is following a directive. A physical sense of confusion (even dull panic) moves through the group as a subtle choreography of over-steps, catch-steps, stutter-steps, delayed and jolted starts as audience members attempt to follow an uncertain, disappearing, and reluctant guide. The physical lexicon is tightly scored around ambivalence, confusion, and unease. Recruited into a reimagining of an everyday urban choreography of passing (passing *through*, passing *as*, passing *by*), it is the audience that does the dancing.

In both the first run of David McIntosh's *Lives Were Around Me* in January and February of 2009, and the remount in November and December of the same year, the shows left from the then relatively quiet (now popular and perpetually bustling) Alibi Room every hour on the hour five times per night (6pm to 10pm) on Tuesday nights. Led first by McIntosh—co-founder and Artistic Producer of local dance and performance company, battery opera Performance—and then, in turn, by two other performers (Paul Ternes and Adrienne Wong), the show navigates southward from the pub toward Hastings Street before winding around the two hundred block of East Cordova.¹²⁵ It enters The Empress Hotel Bar on Hastings, just east of Main Street, and settles there for a few moments before winding through the streets again and into the Vancouver Police Museum (which displays an eerie homage to some of Vancouver's most grisly unsolved murder cases). Taking the back exit, the performance drifts back through the alley and street before it deposits audience members a few blocks shy of the Alibi Room again, directing them to make their way back, unguided, to retrieve the belongings they left with greeters at the pub. Performed for a maximum of three audience members per show (with an occasional exception made for a fourth), the first run of over forty shows was sold out.¹²⁶

By examining *Lives* as a dance-specific mode of movement inquiry and through a dance studies lens, I hope to sharpen the question that drives my broader analysis of site-based dance and urban choreography: how is the audience choreographed, socially and spatially, in specific and diverse instances of site-based dance? What do choreographic knowledges offer to understandings of moving through the city? I have argued that Karen Jamieson's *The River* choreographs its audience topographically as and along the buried creek, that Paul-André Fortier's *Solo 30x30* choreographs its

¹²⁵ A Vancouver-based dance company (so identified for funding purposes) that produces interdisciplinary work, battery opera Performance (boP) was founded in 1995. Much of the company's early work was co-created by dancer/choreographer Lee Su-Feh and musician/sommelier/writer David McIntosh, with each artist working across disciplinary boundaries. More recently, Lee and McIntosh have shifted their model of operation such that each artist creates independent work under the shared boP umbrella.

¹²⁶ These and other experiments with performance have earned McIntosh numerous recognitions, including a nomination for a 2010 Vancouver Critics Innovation Award for *Lives*. While certainly not a signature of McIntosh's aesthetic—not to mention the truly robust aesthetic of battery opera—this small, immersive, and hourly performance structure is one that McIntosh has made use of in other recent works.

audience as frame, and that Aeriosa's *In Situ* choreographs its audience into a vertiginous spatial slippage. In McIntosh's *Lives*, the choreography of audience functions differently again. In contrast to the elevated and virtuosic orientation of *In Situ* and its positioning of Vancouver on a global stage, McIntosh's *Lives* insists on an intimate, in-the-midst encounter with some of Vancouver's most economically depressed urban scenes. Although his work is placed in an overcoded area of the city—a site that *performs* as a loud and insistent background to *Lives*—McIntosh also displaces *site*, situating the gathering of audiencing bodies as choreographic terrain. Beyond an expansion of site to include audiencing bodies, this chapter also takes my critique of site dance and urban choreography in a new direction by asking: what is at stake in analyzing movement as choreography? What does this expansion of the choreographic frame do to existing, disciplinary forms of choreographic knowledge? What is the relationship of formal, dancerly choreography to everyday urban choreographies? What, further, can choreography bring to ongoing discussions of delegated performance? And what can this, in turn, bring to a consideration of site-based performance's casting of city spaces as theatrical backgrounds?

Leading his audience on a self-reflexive and aesthetic tour through the DTES, McIntosh crafts an aesthetic experience of implicated immersion that I will explore in this chapter. And, if I am to be upfront about my own “implicated immersion,” I should acknowledge that my approach to and analysis of the work is complicated and informed by my history as a performer with battery opera in numerous other projects over the past decade.¹²⁷ And yet, this entanglement with the company did not alleviate the sense of squirming unease that characterized my experience of this performance. McIntosh's *Lives* generates an aesthetic of disorientation that I will trace through its dramaturgy of the walking tour, its comportment through specific urban pathways, and its conscription of audiencing bodies as sites of an intimate, micro, and touring dance of sensation. Everything about the structure of *Lives* seems designed to trouble expectations, from its

¹²⁷ I danced in Lee Su-Feh's site-based structured dance improvisation *What the Hell?* (2007)—a performance with which Peter Dickinson launches his *World Stages, Local Audiences* (2010)—and her structured improvisation *Welcome to All the Pleasures* (2007). Since my turn as an audience member for *Lives*, I have worked as a dancer in McIntosh's intimate, hotel-room based *M/Hotel* (2012, 2015) and in various stages of research for the development of his wine pouring and story pairings, *Terroir* (2013-15).

proximity to and intimacy with its small audience, to its over-coded locations, to its interdisciplinarity, to its alienated and alienating relationship to its own theatrical content. A feeling of missing something, of being consciously led astray or led *alongside* rather than *toward*, characterises the work and the way the piece works on its audience. *Lives* fails—pointedly and intentionally—to offer its audience the comfort or security of a clear and tangible structure, of intelligible theatrical content, or even of a sure-footed route. Throughout the show, we are constantly “on our toes,” “on the move,” and “out of sorts.” In this chapter, I investigate how this restless urban choreography of audience movement operates to unsettle its audience. This choreographic unsettling, I argue, functions to expose mandated and classed movement built into the structure of the city even as it calls self-conscious and physically felt attention to the troubling dynamics of art consumption sited in the midst of and as continuous with poverty.

Audiening Bodies

Equal parts walking tour, roving play, and immersive micro-dance, *Lives* is difficult to categorize generically. In McIntosh’s description of the show during a radio interview with Mordecai Briemberg, his pause is telling: “Your guide finds you and takes you on a—[pause] ah—takes you on a geographical trip around the two-hundred block, East Hastings and Cordova.” It is a “geographical trip,” to be sure, but, as McIntosh’s “ah” suggests, it is also more than that: *Lives* is a class-based social experiment and a somewhat cynical “toast to this city” even as it is also a rigorous exploration of “notions of history and evidence in the context of the historic centre of Vancouver” (battery opera, “lives”). The show reworks and upsets the formal properties of a traditional sightseeing walking tour. Instead, *Lives* offers a kinetic corollary: an ambivalent choreography led by seemingly unsure guides who both indicate and instigate a remove from the physical site even as they implicate their audiences in that site’s construction.

(2001), a chapter for which the performance is named: “lives were around me.”¹²⁸ Even if this text were recited with the intention of intelligibility (which, judging from the performers’ quiet and quick delivery, is not the case), it would be very difficult to follow. Kelman’s text is, itself, an experiment in form: it is a series of anonymous first-person “accounts” about tourism, interrogation, and state intervention written as though translated into English by a non-native speaker and subsequently edited (or censored?) by a non-descript official in an unnamed (though apparently overbearing) government regime. The text is abstruse. And McIntosh is pointedly disinterested in comprehensibility. He asks his performers to deliver the text at a distance, without investment in the narrative—as though they are simply tasked to speak and the text happens to be what comes to tongue. Previewing the show, Colin Thomas asks McIntosh about the incomprehensibility of the *Lives* storyline: “[McIntosh] personally enjoys material that’s so dense that it challenges—and even defeats—literal understanding. And when they’re taking in this theatrical experience, he hopes that audience members will give up on trying to nail down every detail of the narrative and allow other levels of meaning to emerge” (n. pag.). McIntosh acknowledges the difficulty of his theatrical content: “I think the piece almost ... overloads your senses. People come to performance with a lot of anxiety—especially if they’re trying to *get* it, to figure out what it’s about—because it’s often prescriptive” (Personal site walk interview). McIntosh seeks to “let [the audience] off the hook from understanding the text, which is impossible to follow” (Personal site walk interview). With the phrase McIntosh repeats in the opening moments of the performance hanging in the air—“You can’t understand everything you hear”—it eventually becomes clear that the text is deliberately unintelligible. Still, the audience’s failed efforts to keep up with an impossible narration (and *narrative*) overwhelms the initial experiences of the performance. As with most reviewers of *Lives*, Rachel Scott writes about her frustration at her inability to follow the text: “But then,” Scott continues, “I realized that the feel of what was happening was

¹²⁸ Based in Scotland, Kelman’s career has been much lauded and derided, at once. He has been twice nominated for the Booker Prize, winning the prize for his stream of consciousness novel, *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994). He has also been awarded numerous national literary accolades, though, despite his collection of awards, his challenging work has met with resistance from awards committees and publishers alike, and has prompted public controversy on the issue of awards distribution.

the real story—not the linear events that I might piece together out of the script” (n. pag.).

While *Lives*—with its heavy reliance on text and its performance by theatre-trained practitioners—is perhaps most easily analyzed as a theatre piece, my investment in analyzing it choreographically is not only motivated by what audience members (including myself) have identified as its cultivation of the “_feel_” of the piece, although this informs my approach. Nor am I strictly driven to expand the choreographic frame in an effort to bring more closely together my larger argument about the social choreography a/effected by site-based dance—although this is, as I have indicated, also part of my motivation. *Lives* offers itself up to choreographic analysis by way of its context of production. Whether or not McIntosh makes dances has always been a problematic question for funding purposes, and so the company has done a lot of work to legitimize itself within existing funding structures, an effort aided by battery opera co-founder Lee Su-Feh’s extensive dance and choreography career. McIntosh identifies as a musician and a writer, not a choreographer. When I ask him about his relationship to choreography and dance-making, he responds: “I have an interest in physicality and energy” in whatever form that takes—in “physically embodied expression” (Personal interview). And yet, McIntosh frequently hires dancers to perform in his works, and even when he works with performers trained in theatre rather (or at least more extensively) than dance (as in *Lives*), his creation process emphasizes a practice of physical training guided by specific and choreographic modes of inquiry. McIntosh’s emphasis on “physically embodied expression” lends *Lives* a unique relationship to the choreographic. Not only does the performance rely on the careful choreography of the multi-part outdoor walking route and the “worked” physicality of the interior sections of the performance (I will return to examine each in more detail), but more productively for my purposes, *Lives* also cultivates a sense of perpetually shifting and catching weight in the bodies of its audience members.

That the choreographic content of the performance is at least partly displaced from performer to audiencing body is in keeping with the company’s self-conception, which as battery opera’s press kit announces, “investigates this body, this place, within a contemporary-colonial matrix, cognizant of the interplay between art, power, politics and

history” (qtd. in Colenbrander). “[I]nterrogat[ing] the contemporary body as a site of intersecting and displaced histories and habits,” battery opera explores a body that is both disciplined and interdisciplinary: it is “a human body that breathes, speaks, sings, thinks, moves, dances” (battery opera, “about”). The combined notions of “body as a site” and body as a breathing, speaking, singing, thinking, moving, and (finally) dancing entity is telling of the company’s approach to the movement form: although battery opera is recognized as a dance company by provincial and federal funding agencies, dance is but one of the verbs that defines the company’s approach to creation—both last to be listed and granted the status of final word. McIntosh’s understanding of the body as site—dancing *and* otherwise—is foundational to my reading of *Lives* through a site-based dance lens.

It is this subtle dance, a reworking and exposure of everyday urban choreographies, that I see as paramount to *Lives*. I approach this quiet urban choreography by way of Steve Paxton’s notion of the “small dance.”¹²⁹ With attention to the motion inherent in any seeming act of stillness, Paxton argues that to simply stand, and to stand still, is to perform a postural negotiation of a series of small falls and supports that, taken together, are constitutive of any balancing act. In his paper, “In the midst of standing still something else is occurring and the name for that is the small dance” (1975), Paxton describes what he means by the term: “in the small dance you become very aware that every moment is to prevent you from falling. You become very aware that very small falls are constantly being forestalled by slight pulls or stretches in the body. The proportion of the movements then become falls and balances, very fast and very small within the small dance” (qtd. in Kennedy 64). The dance Paxton describes, the dance he teaches his students to feel, is one of skeletal stacking and shifting; in its purest sense, it is achieved not by an outward choreographic impulse, but by an internal kinetic register of the forces of gravity on the material of the body. The one who performs the small dance is also the one who witnesses the small dance.

¹²⁹ A central figure in contemporary dance, Paxton is credited as the originator of contact improvisation, a form in which the small dance is central.

Through its choreography of its audience's route and kinaesthetic deportment through the DTES, *Lives* calls attention to various forms and registers of the small dance in its audiencing bodies. Audiencing bodies are positioned as both (part of the) content of and audience for performance works—a trait integral to my larger notion of relational kinaesthetics. As my analysis of site-based dance has, I hope, established, by being hailed to watch a performance and by being organized around that performance, audiencing bodies are, themselves, choreographed. Thus, audiencing bodies index the collapsing together—indeed, the embodiment—of production and consumption that is characteristic of immersive and participatory performance practices.¹³⁰ Audiencing bodies model the type of “sensuous spectatorship” Keren Zaiontz theorizes (“Stagehands” 73; “Narcissistic” 418). And, crucially for my purposes, audiencing bodies are made aware of themselves as such when they are encouraged to notice their own kinetic experience of a performance. They are “(syn)aesthetic[ally]” attuned—to borrow Josephine Machon's formulation—to their “fused sensory perceptual experience This fusing of sense (semantic ‘meaning making’) with *sense* (feeling, both sensation and emotion) establishes a double-edged rendering of making-sense/*sense*-making and foregrounds its fused somatic/semantic nature” ((*Syn*)*aesthetics* 14, emphasis in original). Audiencing bodies are not simply mobilized through physical space; they are, crucially, invited to attend to their own kinetic experiences of these spatial engagements. With its cultivation of an awareness of the small dances that constitute everyday movements as well as stillnesses, *Lives* invites its audiencing bodies to “_feel_” the social and urban choreographies that structure movement through Vancouver's DTES.

In his efforts to explore “this body, this place,” McIntosh focuses on performance as a call to gather. Rather than promising a show, McIntosh proffers “a different kind of invitation to a different kind of experience”: as he puts it, “meet me at this place and something might happen” (Personal interview). Invitation, in this work, operates differently from the other invitation I have examined in this project: namely, the choreographic hail in/of Fortier's solo. Whereas Fortier's audiences are (mostly) unaware of the performance until they encounter it as a visual force in the urban

¹³⁰ This notion takes as a point of departure what Gareth White terms the “aesthetics of the invitation” in immersive theatre practices, in which “the actions and experiences [of audience participants] are aesthetic material” (9).

landscape, McIntosh's audiences purchase tickets in advance of the show. And whereas Fortier's audiences are kept at a physical distance, warded off by his variously indicated spatial boundaries, McIntosh's piece hinges on proximity. McIntosh details how the structure of his invitation, determined in part by his choice to situate his works outside of a conventional theatre stage, generates a physically activated audience member: "If you have your own volition to enter a space and determine where you are in the performance, then you've activated your body way more than if you know you're going to sit in the dark in the theatre and wait for something to happen" (Personal interview).¹³¹ Although to suggest that mobility is automatically linked with increased activation in a broad sense would be reductive, I think McIntosh's claim stands, particularly in the spatial contexts in which his work plays out: I agree with McIntosh that audience members who walk through Vancouver's DTES at night are bound to be more tuned into their physical states and environments than counterparts seated inside theatres. This is a large part of McIntosh's draw to the tour format: "to get your body out and walking through space You're up and you're moving, you're active; you're making decisions about how you walk; you're sensually feeling the different streets, different atmospheres" (Personal interview).

By the time we leave the comfort of the Alibi Room—assured by our host that we will find our guide outside—dark has settled over the DTES. The city feels cold and hard around the edges. It is wet. Street and car lights are refracted and shifty: simultaneously more glaring and less illuminating. Perhaps we wait for a moment outside the pub before McIntosh approaches. Or perhaps he is waiting when we emerge. Regardless, a palpable sense of anxiety had been established minutes prior when we signed a waiver excusing the performance company of liability for the physical harm that might come to us during the course of their show. I remember feeling jumpy from the start. My sense of unease is not alleviated by the arrival of our guide—even though I recognize him. (If not

¹³¹ The claim unfolds toward Jaques Rancière's notion of an "emancipated spectator." Collapsing the distinction between activity and passivity in spectatorship, Rancière insists: "This is what emancipation means: the blurring of the opposition between those who look and those who act, between those who are individuals and those who are member of a collective body" ("The Emancipated" 279). Or, differently put, "we [must] realize that looking is also an action that confirms or modifies that distribution, an that 'interpreting the world' is already a means of transforming it, of reconfiguring it" (277).

for my familiarity with McIntosh, I am not sure that I would have known that he was, in fact, the guide we had been sent out to encounter.) Without addressing us, McIntosh leads us away from the pub and away from the small, rapidly gentrifying strip of businesses at the edge of Gastown. We head east, where the streetlights become sparse and the storefronts dark.

McIntosh is both a gracious host and an unreliable one. He guides us in stops and starts. It almost seems as if he has forgotten the route he had intended to follow; he appears to be continually (if only mildly or, perhaps, guardedly) surprised by where he finds himself. He pauses at each intersection and looks around with a lightly masked searching quality. After a barely perceptible lag, he proffers a softly spoken directive: “This way.” We wind east and then south for a few blocks with very little by way of small talk or narration of the sort one might expect from this breed of walking tour; instead, there is a mostly awkward and somewhat jittery silence. Still, after a few blocks, McIntosh does ask us if we have been “here” before, and, repeatedly (though not comfortingly), he mutters: “You can’t always understand what you hear.” One block from Hastings Street, McIntosh pulls out his cell phone and appears to take a call. Putting his phone away, he addresses us: “Actually, I have to go find the other group; I left them rather abruptly.” As he leaves, he utters a cryptic promise: “If you wait here, I’m sure your guide will be along shortly. I can’t describe what they look like because they’re always changing. But I’m sure they’ll make themselves known to you if you wait here.” And then we are left, again, standing in the dark, waiting for our guide. “What this did,” according to Kevin Griffin, “is turn every passerby into a potential performer” (“4-Person”).¹³² We wait for quite a while—this I remember clearly. More than a few people wander by, appear to approach us, but pass without a look—or at least without a look of recognition. We wait for a few beats too long before a young woman seems to materialize out of nowhere, suddenly standing behind us, and much too close.

¹³² To be fair, this stretch of the DTES is already aligned with the theatrical to some degree by virtue of the placement of the Firehall Arts Centre, in front of which McIntosh deposits his roaming audience. Not only does this important performance venue cast a theatrical shadow on the street in front of its edifice, but its transformative function is exacerbated by the Firehall’s various site-specific performance series, which encourage artists to utilize the entire building and its surroundings as potential performance spaces.



Figure 5.2. A rehearsal of *Lives*, with actors and company affiliates serving as an audience, videography by John McIntosh, scene stills (23 February 2009, Mini DV Digital File). Images courtesy of battery opera Performance.

Note. Note McIntosh's embodiments of hesitation (top right and left). Also note Wong's disconcertingly close approach from behind (bottom right).

From here, McIntosh's *Lives Were Around Me* moves its small audience through other spaces in this three-block radius, and as it does so, it also moves us through various forms and degrees of unease that I will go on to describe; and yet this opening sequence—with its stops, starts, open-ended waiting periods, dark surroundings, and its location in the midst of the DTES—establishes the sense of nervous, internally-preoccupied, and intensely physical awareness that defines the show and determines its affective and aesthetic heft. It is not only the mobility and the possibility of proximity that works productively in *Lives*: the ambivalence built into its structure directs its audiencing bodies to attend to their own physical responses to their changing environments.

I remember, in particular, the corner of Alexander and Main Streets—Wendy Poole Park, I recall McIntosh mentioning, named in memory of just one of the many missing and murdered First Nations women in the area. My attention had been drawn away from the group trajectory by what had become my nearly constant peripheral scanning of the horizon—a habit of self-preservation when navigating in dark city streets, and one which was particularly active given our situatedness in a notoriously dangerous part of town. I was following my guide and my group, to be sure, but I was also in another moment: ready to stop or run as the situation demanded. (I admit that I was, perhaps, overly concerned; I will chalk that up to my gender, my class, my race, and various other vectors of privilege that allow me to imagine myself as separate from and threatened by the poverty of the DTES—a point to which I will return). Something must have caught my eye, though I cannot recall what it was. Engaged in a revolving set of hypothetical choreographies, I was slow to notice the group stop at the park. My stride was stilted—an unconscious kinetic effort to remain tuned and sensitive to the next possible shift in trajectory. And when my awareness caught up with my step, I remember the jarring sensation: weight in my heels and a stutter-stop to avoid impact with my fellow audiencing bodies. In following a guide who did not telegraph his spatial decisions (by, say, pacing up to a brisk walk or focusing on a clear point in the near distance), but rather, seemed changeable and distractible (deciding to stop, it seemed, in the very instant his motion ceased), I remember a sense (in Machon’s “sense”) of possibility: attuned to my physicality with a prickling awareness, I felt myself in three-hundred and sixty degrees, alight and awaiting whatever and whoever came next.

Lives’ cultivation of the sensations of spatial ambivalence in its audiencing bodies aligns with Sara Ahmed’s suggestion that space is felt. Whereas Ahmed’s discussion of orientation augmented my examination of Fortier’s site-based dance, it is her proposal of a “politics of *disorientation*” (24, emphasis added) that applies more closely to McIntosh’s aesthetic. Drawing out the link between space, direction, disorientation, and physical sensation, Ahmed insists that “space itself is sensational” (14), and that the “how” of how we’re taken somewhere shapes our experience of that sensation: “Directions are instructions about ‘where,’ but they are also about ‘how’ and ‘what’” (16). The ‘how’ can be thought of in many ways, among them the feeling of commitment to a course of action. She describes committing, whole body, to a tennis swing, for example

(17). This commitment is both promissory and a tacit acknowledgement of a course already undertaken. While she stops short of analyzing the various levels of commitment, it is this line of thinking that has the potential to draw out the politics of McIntosh's aesthetic, for it is this kind of physical commitment that *Lives* works against. Put differently, a micro-dance of ambivalence constitutes McIntosh's politics of disorientation. Asked to follow a series of uncertain and (sometimes) unfollow-able guides through an environment so demanding and unpredictable that it undoes the need to acknowledge (tacitly or otherwise) that the performers are not in control of the run of the show, McIntosh's *Lives* trades in the feeling of spatial and social disorientation, of half-committed and half-demanded actions. The physical sensations of my furtive peripheral pan, my stilted following stride, and my stutter stop at Wendy Poole Park were only a few of many moments in my experience of *Lives* that made clear Ahmed's assertion that "spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body" (Ahmed 9). In *Lives*, audiencing bodies are, themselves, transformed into the terrain in/on which a dance of uncertain, partial physical commitment takes place. Indeed, in McIntosh's words: "The site of the performance is the body of the audience" (Personal interview).

Implicated Immersion

The audiencing body, as I have argued, is cast into the choreography of *Lives*; but it is not alone. By virtue of placement, the performance casts as its background the lives and environs of the DTES—the *lives that are around us*, as it were. Recall my description of McIntosh's abandonment of my group on Gore Street: during those long moments between his departure and the arrival of our new "guide," every passerby was conditionally conscripted into the show as a possible (and thus temporary and unwitting) performer. In her application of Una Chaudhuri's foundational critique of environmental theatre's imperialist "resourcism" to (Canadian) site-specific theatre practices, Laura Levin scrutinizes the tendency of site-based theatre to absorb its site and surroundings into the show. She comments on the difficulty audience members often have in distinguishing the performance proper from unplanned urban events: "spectators are never certain what is *in* and *outside* of the performance" ("Can the City" 251, emphasis

in original). With careful attention to the social dynamics of site-based performance, Levin points to the under-examined “politics of (back)ground” in site-based performance, insisting that “traditionally, women and other historically marginalized persons (non-white, lower class, queer, etc.) have been relegated to the background or have been made to stand in for the formal properties of space itself” (*Performing* 17). While *Lives*’ transformation of its audiencing bodies into site or terrain is a voluntary, optional luxury—indeed, one that audience members pay to experience—the show’s parallel transformation of the DTES into theatrical background operates without the sanction (indeed, sometimes without the knowledge) of those who people the neighbourhood.

In his review of the show, Peter Dickinson points out the disjunction between the performance content and the performance environment in *Lives*. Dickinson’s critique is sited in the second phase of the performance, when our guide—Dickinson and I went to the show together—led us into a modest neighbourhood bar. It was during this “scene” that the troubling and troubled “politics of (back)ground” became most stark. During our tour, Adrienne Wong (who alternated with Paul Ternes) turned abruptly off Hastings Street at an entrance I have walked past dozens of times without noticing. The bar was filled with locals, “a larger-than-life cast of characters” as Dickinson puts it, one of which, Bobby, took particular interest in us and made several overtures at contact, ranging from conversation to a repeated offer of a hug. Although the performance was resolutely site-specific, the formal content of *Lives* did not make space for such intrusions of the site into the content of the piece. This is a version, perhaps, of what I have analyzed in Fortier’s solo as an overlaying of the theatrical onto the everyday. But whereas Fortier’s performance protects itself from intrusion of context, McIntosh’s calls attention to this impulse to protect, implicating its audience in the ethically suspect imposition of a theatrical frame. *Lives* sets against each other the two contesting claims that characterize all site-based performances. It insists that ‘we are here’ even as its structure makes the opposite claim: ‘we are elsewhere.’ *Lives* inhabits and—crucially—asks its audiencing bodies to feel the sensations that come of the uncomfortable friction between site-specificity and theatrical suspension of reality. In an effort to elaborate, I quote Dickinson at length:

our guide, while polite with Bobby and tolerant of his interruptions to a point, kept telling him that she had to keep to her schedule, and

consequently kept drawing us back to the tale *she* was telling. In other words, despite the piece being all about looking at/for/through evidence (we later had a tour of the Vancouver Police Museum, next to the Firehall, which was more than a little creepy), the material lives occupying the site in which the performance was taking place seemed ancillary to the abstract *representation* of various extreme scenarios of livability. To be sure, the juxtaposition of textual site and cited text necessarily prompted me to import other spaces as dramatic referents, some of which made me feel more, some less, vulnerable; none of which gave me any clearer sense of my bearings. But, overall, the performance seemed more interested in exploring the internal psychic excavation of various spatial archives (broadly and very sketchily defined) than it was in precipitating an external bodily encounter with the full repertoire of this particular place's experiences. (\$1 Billion, n. pag., emphasis in original)

Indeed, *Lives was* more interested in the internal trajectories of encounter than in an explicit and outward incorporation of site into content. Or rather, even as it sited us in the midst of *lives around*, it also insisted on the trouble with participating in an "encounter"—crucially, an aestheticized encounter—with those lives. It continually choreographs an impulse to look away, even as its context and surrounds invite attention. The gap between the content of the performance and the content of the site was so glaring—uncomfortably evident in Wong's forceful and repetitive redirection of herself and us away from the environment and back to the thick text she had been tasked to deliver—that it made the larger function and narrative of our role in the bar (the "behind" in Ahmed's sense, that which allowed us to find our way into this bar at this moment in this context) that much more obvious and that much more *felt*. The gap between the theatrical content, together with the snippets of text that did register, combined to push me to consider, as McIntosh suggests, "the idea of making assumptions about other people's lives so as to justify your life, or to make sense of your life—where you are, how you got here, what you're doing here" (Personal site walk interview). As audience members situated in The Empress, we are forced to reckon with ourselves as bourgeois art consumers and gentrifying agents in the midst of those most excluded by bourgeois art and most affected by the rapid processes of gentrification in the DTES. We are invited, by the very structure and situatedness of the piece, to conscript the lives around us into the theatrical frame; and yet, in those same moments when the peopled environment makes its greatest theatrical contributions, we are also choreographed to look away. The encounter with Bobby—this tangled relation that strained at the boundaries between generosity and animosity—is one of the most lasting

experiences of the piece for me. In this way, *Lives* asks us to examine the class (and other) dynamics of the kinetic tension between civil attention and civil inattention that I sketched in Chapter 3.

I recall this moment in the bar clearly, and what I recall of it is not primarily the lines delivered by Wong, nor her physicality in delivering them: what lingers for me, sharp and poignant, is a visceral *sense* of unease. I remember how my physicality was inextricably bound with my mounting and classed (and gendered and raced and able-bodied) anxiety. I remember my tense, unsettled positioning on the edge of the built-in bar bench—and I recall a gnawing distress with the situation and a dull sense of alarm at the possibility of an escalated encounter. I was conscious of how I must appear to others—a white, able-bodied, middle-class woman, visibly (I thought) out of my element in this locals' establishment. But I was even more acutely aware of my physical sensations: the feeling of panic pricking at the back of my neck, my body taut and perched and ready to exit quickly if the need arose. Again, even as I sat and appeared to be still, I rehearsed a set of hypothetical and choreographic contingency plans.

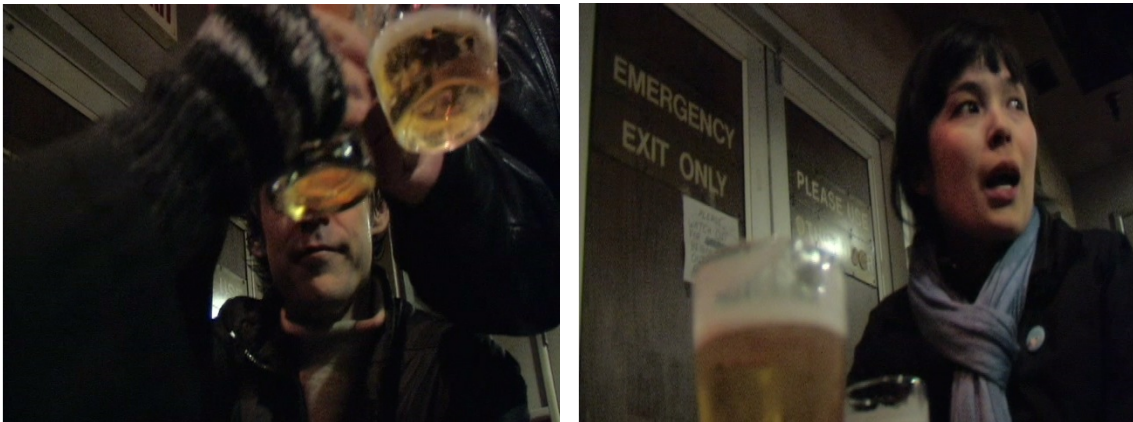


Figure 5.3. A rehearsal of *Lives*, videography by John McIntosh, scene stills (25 February 2009, Mini DV Digital File). Images courtesy of battery opera Performance.

Note. The only footage of this indoor section of *Lives*, captured during a rehearsal, exposes another layer of the “politics of (back)ground.” Out of courtesy to the patrons in the bar, the camera stays trained on the guide throughout, never recording images of anyone other than the performer. The footage, however, does pick up audio recordings of patrons referring to the camera and their desire to avoid video-documentation. Conversely, the footage also picks up audio of a patron approaching the camera, wanting to be heard as he responds to assumptions of the neighbourhood’s volatility with an account of his experiences of the DTES as the site of a supportive community.

Not at all inured to the social dynamics of his work, McIntosh understands the troubling ethics of casting a theatrical frame on public sites in general, and on the DTES in particular.¹³³ The entire theatrical machinery of McIntosh's performance is tuned to exploit—and to embed its audiences within—its own exploitation. As McIntosh puts it: “I was really self-conscious about exploiting. And [*Lives*] was exploitative. Art is exploitative” (Personal interview). This issue came to the fore during the production process. After the first three shows, the bartender at The Empress confronted McIntosh:

‘What the fuck is wrong with these people? They won’t even fucking look at us. What the fuck is wrong with them?’ I said: ‘Well, yeah, because they’re scared. They are scared to death of you. They’re scared shitless when they walk in here. They’re terrified.’ ‘So what are we supposed to do about it?’ And I said, ‘well, nothing. You can scare them if you want.’ ‘We can scare them?’ ‘Yeah, just have fun, you know. Enjoy yourselves.’ And then they had the permission to scare them, and they were super sweet. (Personal interview)¹³⁴

The subtext to this exchange was an invitation (proffered by McIntosh and accepted by the bartender) to actively *perform* as background, instead of being unwittingly conscripted. But, of course, McIntosh's audience was not privy to this arrangement—and, regardless, the casting of The Empress (and the DTES more broadly) as background remains fraught. “The day before the show,” McIntosh continues, “I actually thought I would just cancel the whole project because I thought: this is a bit audacious, you know? This is a bit ... out of control in many ways. It felt right on the edge of being acceptable to do” (Personal interview).

Exploitation is precisely what the show investigates, even as it is also what it achieves. *Lives* asks audience members to critically consider their roles as distanced and displaced cultural and aesthetic tourists in the DTES: “That was the experience of being in that bar You’re totally aware ... of being a tourist in this place and feeling compassion, but behind the compassion is a certain contempt for all the drunks in the

¹³³ As I mentioned Chapter 1, Vancouver (“Hollywood North”) is a major international filming destination, and the DTES is one of the most frequently featured (read: backgrounded) quarters of the city, conscripted regularly to perform as any number of different sites. The reality of regular filmic exploitation of the area adds urgency to any analysis of art sited in the DTES.

¹³⁴ This is McIntosh's paraphrased recollection of the encounter.

bar” (Personal interview). This sensibility is continually reinforced by the text performed by Wong (or Ternes), which is likewise concerned with belonging and alienation, judgment and presumption.¹³⁵ With jagged, stilted language, Kelman’s narrator presumes to read the inner thoughts of a waiter who will not serve him: “The hate from him. Yes, hate was there, hate firstly then inquisition, his stare now unconcealed, what I was, what? my clothes, tourist not tourist, stranger to our country, if that I was so, and what was my bag, what was in it” (56). McIntosh’s production of *Lives* calls attention to the fact that his audiences are complicit in casting the DTES and its residents as a gritty backdrop to their (bourgeois) theatrical experience, and it expects its audiences to do so with a degree of disdain—a disdain likely cloaked by a (bourgeois) “compassion.” In doing so, *Lives* brings to the fore a set of thorny questions that apply beyond a theatrical exploration of the DTES: Under what conditions do you watch the lives around you? Whose lives do you feel licenced to watch? Whose lives do you ignore? What does it “_feel_” like to look, or to look away?

As a member of the audience for *Lives*, I felt myself stand out from my environment. I felt distinctly out of place. The performance reinforced this feeling, asking me to bore into the sensation of discomfort of spatial and social discord. As I wandered through the DTES and then as I drank a pint of pale lager in the locals’ pub, I was pointedly aware of myself as a misfit in the location, I was physically alert to my anxieties about my physical safety, and I was also uncomfortably aware of myself as a middle class art consumer, complicit in casting the DTES and its inhabitants as (back)ground to my performance experience. In the bar, we were asked to ingest, to literally *consume*, the environment of The Empress in the form of a pint of beer. As we incorporate matter from our environment into our bodies and allow it to coil and travel deep into our centres in an internal choreography of bodily systems, we are forced to acknowledge, at some level, our aesthetic consumption of the DTES, even as we also become constituted, in part, by it. In this way, *Lives* achieves what Levin has called “an aesthetic, or ethic, of

¹³⁵ McIntosh describes the way his work dovetails with the underlying themes in Kelman’s text: “In that piece, there is this whole conversation about exploitation and compassion. Compassion and contempt. What is compassion and what is contempt, and how are they—or *are* they—the same? And the idea of tourism, of being a tourist. The monologue in the bar is about tourism, being a tourist, and looking at people and deciding what their lives are and how worthless they are. That was in the text” (Personal interview).

closeness,” which “challenge[s] the Brechtian aesthetic of distance that has been privileged in theatre and performance studies” (*Performing* 28). McIntosh’s aesthetic hinges on a folding together of distance and closeness: the awareness of oneself as an outsider that McIntosh’s work generates is carefully reworked into a physical sensation of implicated immersion that operates along classed, and necessarily gendered and raced and other lines. The “questions of belonging” McIntosh’s *Lives* poses to its audiences resonate with those that Levin studies, where it is precisely by blending in that artists are able to make the various structuring inequities of background(ed) environments “stand out” (*Performing* 158). It is by feeling disoriented, out-of-place, and out-of-step that the audiences of *Lives* are invited to feel the uncomfortable sensations of complicity—a notion that hinges on being deeply *involved*.

This winding together of opposites, of in and out, is echoed in our larger cartographic route: repeatedly, in the case of The Empress and The Police Museum both, we enter through the front door and exit out the back, spitting out into the same alley from two different trajectories. These coiling exits rely on and perform a familiarity with the establishment, a kind of insiders’ knowledge that operates in stark juxtaposition to the sense of displacement *Lives* evoked for me. A turning inward that leads outward; a route that folds in on itself before cycling back to the place it started: an undoing of internality and externality supports *Lives*’ choreography of implication. By foregrounding its status as bourgeois and inaccessible at the same time as it inserts itself intimately into the local scene, *Lives* insists that we attend to the processes of simultaneously conscripting into and excluding from the performance a group of people often ignored by site-based performance’s reworking of the city into an ad hoc performance space—“those for whom the city is not simply about play, but is also about work, about safety issues, and about struggle” (Levin and Solga 52).

Lives’ aestheticization of the bodies that pass through its theatrical frame (audiencing bodies and backgrounded bodies) relies on the sort of participatory labour with a complicated politics. The paying audience’s performance of a sensate micro-dance and the larger score of the walking tour combine in their function to delegate at least part of the piece’s dance work to its audience: as with the other pieces I have studied, this performance choreographs its audience. As I discussed in Chapter 1 and

(briefly) Chapter 4, performance scholars have recently responded to a visual art discourse on relational and participatory art with attention to issues of audience agency and delegated labour in immersive, site-based, and participatory performance practices. Zaiontz summarizes this as a discussion of the “working conditions” of audiences (“Ambulatory” 174). Indeed, like me, she proposes a language of “choreography” in her attention to audience labour, noting how audiences are put to work when they are “choreographed’ to move through purpose-built sites” in site-specific theatre practices (“Stagehands” 72). But even as she presents the category of delegated performance, Zaiontz complicates it with her attention to “sensuous spectatorship” (73). She suggests that the sensuousness of some site-based practices has the potential to disrupt the hierarchical power dynamics that often drive these practices. In these cases, “Audience labour,” Zaiontz argues, “is not simply a matter of delegating critical acts to participants but is an encounter with those acts that occurs through such kinesthetic operations as touch and movement” (12). *Lives*, as I hope I have established, offers an aesthetic model of urban choreography and of participatory audience labour as “sensuous”—a model that makes room for the private, internal sensations and motivations in ways that might complicate power relations built into its choreographed tour.

Delegated labour, Nicholas Ridout claims, is not just the domain of audiences in participatory performance practices: indeed, all performers are “only delegates at best” (“Performance” 131). “[R]epresentatives of or stand-ins for others ... [who] carry out their actions as agents of higher powers,” performers are labourers working at the behest of a director to produce a saleable commodity. And yet, a defining feature of delegation, Ridout suggests (quoting Joe Kelleher), is “signature”: the director has delegated a performance if, Kelleher proposes, “this gesture is somehow an extension of my self-expression, or if it is something that I myself am presumed to be doing, or something with my ‘signature’ upon it (however the notion of signature might be understood)” (qtd. in Ridout, “Performance” 130). In the instances of delegated performance I have discussed in this dissertation, and certainly in *Lives*, those who perform are invited, at the least, to offer their “signature” to their performance. What my reading of the sensuous spectatorship that characterizes *Lives* (and, I have argued, tends to characterize site-based dance more generally) builds toward, then, is an examination of the power dynamics inherent in both artistic and social choreographies. While I do not

mean to suggest that a felt sense of the body in motion somehow undoes the very real discrepancies of power in instances of top-down direction—even instances as seemingly benign as an artist’s direction of participatory audience labour—I am invested in considering how this aesthetic form that meditates so kinetically on bodily sensation (personal and vicarious) might refine the formulation. For, as dance scholars have argued, a negotiation between “incorporation and excorporation, between command and demand” (Lepecki, “On Choreography” 4) is central to the practice of choreography. Because the choreographer works on and with a medium that is, itself, sensate and wilful, the dance is always both internal to and outside of the choreography, subject to the interpretive labours of the one who dances. Because the only way to perform a dance well is to *make it your own*, the act of choreographing is always, even in its most traditional and directorial forms, also an act of submission, of giving over—a point to which I will return in my Afterword. And so, in a sense, *Lives* seems to celebrate the egalitarian impulse that drives so many participatory performance practices: it “activates” its audiences and it stresses the experience of private, internal choreographies even as it orchestrates them publicly and collectively. And yet, in the same moment, *Lives* also exposes this egalitarian impulse as, itself, built on a set of stark inequities. The breed of sensuousness that *Lives* cultivates is a squirming discomfort that runs along lines of privilege. *Lives*, as I have argued, functions to expose optional, bourgeois audience labour as, itself, a form of exploitation.

Another form of delegated labour—one that is not elective, nor compensated, nor glamorous emerges as a precondition for *Lives*’ participatory audience labour. Even as *Lives* puts its audiences to work, it also situates its imperative to participate within an expressly classed spatial context—a context that functions, at every turn, to point to the discrepancies between the luxury of electing to perform participatory and interpretive audience labour on one hand, and the unwitting conscription into the theatrical frame of (some of) those compelled to perform far less pleasant forms of labour, or who cannot procure even that and suffer the consequences of homelessness and street living. My proliferation of “labours” here might seem to obscure the important, lived differences between various forms of labour (audience labour, aesthetic labour, physical labour, backgrounded labour, delegated labour, and so on), but this is precisely what *Lives*, I argue, works against: *Lives* calls critical attention to glaring differences between the

optional, leisure-based performance of participatory audience labour, on one hand, and the exploitative, background(ed) labour of those who belong to a sector of Vancouver's population whose relationship to labour is (in many cases) precarious, compulsory, dangerous, and poorly compensated. Returning to Ridout, the expression of "self-disgust in relation to labour" that characterizes *Lives* extends not only to the labour of the performer who works to produce a commodity that the audience synchronously and proximately consumes ("Performance" 127); this self-disgust is embedded in an acknowledgement of the background(ed) labour that functions as the unwitting set for the performance, one that—crucially—operates by sensationalizing the poverty that is indicative of uneven distribution of labour in the city. In this way, McIntosh occupies and models both ends of the spectrum of the social possibilities of delegated performance articulated by Jen Harvie. Harvie insists that while "in many instances [delegated performance] risks reproducing some of the most egregious conditions and effects of contemporary labour relations," she also contends that, "at its best, it draws self-reflexive critical attention to that risk" (*Fair* 29). *Lives* performs a troubling slippage between these two poles: it challenges its audiences to acknowledge their participation in "problems with contemporary labour dynamics ...[precisely] by enacting them, highlighting them and embedding audiences in their antagonisms" (60). In this way, bourgeois audience labour functions as, returning to Ridout, "a site for a critique of its own commodifying process" even as it also "reveals itself as exemplary commodity" ("Performance" 131).

McIntosh's emphasis on performance as a bourgeois commodity was heightened in his remount of *Lives* late in 2009, which ran with ticket costs increased more than eight-fold. Whereas a ticket for the first iteration of the show was valued at \$26.00 (or \$18.00 for students and seniors), the remount asked for \$267.67 per head—a price that "reflect[ed] the actual costs of production." McIntosh elaborates: "Because it is a remount and brilliantly, does not require a theatre, we are able to offer tickets at a bargain price of only \$267.67 (Two hundred and sixty-seven dollars and sixty-seven cents)" (battery opera, "lives"). Clearly stipulated in the preview and promotional material for the remount, though, is the caveat: if ticket cost is a barrier to attendance, battery opera will accept donations in exchange for a ticket on a first-come-first-served basis. (Only one patron in the run of twenty-five well-attended shows paid the full \$267.67.) The first performance in my study to impose a ticket cost on its audiences (*The River, Solo*

30x30, and *In Situ* were all accessible to audiences, free of charge), *Lives* insists on performance as a saleable commodity—and an expensive one at that. In large part, the exorbitant ticket cost for the *Lives* remount was McIntosh's response to federal and provincial funding cuts to the arts, which I have described in more detail in my previous chapter. McIntosh explains his decision to hike ticket costs: "For me, the main question is, 'What is the purpose of public funding for the arts?' ... This is a way to reframe that discussion" (Nelson). McIntosh is explicit about his choice to charge large for *Lives* as a direct response to the funding cuts. And yet, forcing the question of public funding is not the only effect of McIntosh's price hike. His move also situates his performance in the midst of a service-based economy that exchanges "a predetermined experience" for money (Personal interview). On many different registers, then, *Lives* insists on the embeddedness of optional, leisure-based audience labour in an uneven social and economic system and forces its audience members to critically examine their roles as consumers.

The political gesture of McIntosh's exorbitant ticket costs resonates with Deborah Pearson's claim that the "very economic unsustainability" of intimate or one-to-one performances "becomes its own act of resistance" (67).¹³⁶ Reflecting on her Toronto-based performance, *The Queen West Project* (2012), Pearson maintains that her production "sought to be a glitch, a small stumbling block, in the relentless gentrification of the Queen West neighbourhood. It was ... not financially successful, and in a neighbourhood that is becoming hostile to many of its long-time inhabitants by virtue of its focus on financial success, that was part of the point" (67). Perhaps the same can be said of *Lives*, particularly considering temporal context, which overlapped with the multi-year Cultural Olympiad (detailed in my previous chapter) and the concomitant pressure

¹³⁶ Pearson offers an equation for this "unsustainability": the show had a grant budget of "approximately \$30,000 CAD, [and thus] cost approximately \$104 CAD per potential audience member. Tickets were \$25 CAD each, meaning the show operated at a loss of nearly \$80 CAD per person" (64). Again, Pearson celebrates this financial anachronism: "I contend that one-on-one performances can provide value precisely because the budgets [a critic] calls 'decadent' do not fit into a comfortable capitalist model of exchange" (63).

to “revitalize” the DTES in time to host the 2010 Olympics.¹³⁷ Pearson continues, discussing a theatrical practice only slightly less peopled than McIntosh’s *Lives*: “One-on-one performances are decadent, economically unsustainable, and a baffling way to cost labour. They seem to contradict the workings of late capitalism and in this sense present an alternative means of considering art and labour” (67). And yet, Pearson’s presentation of the resistant potential of “economic unsustainability” has limits she fails to acknowledge. To presume that financial unsustainability is somehow automatically aligned with ousted local residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods not only overlooks how such performances contribute (if reluctantly) to gentrification, but also how these art practices exclude and exploit those same local residents in the moment of presentation and, in part, by way of those same measures of economic unsustainability she celebrates (i.e., high ticket prices that exclude working and lower class patrons). It is this kind of easy alignment of very different types of misfits within our neoliberal economic system that McIntosh troubles. His wholehearted and upfront acceptance of himself and his work as “bourgeois” (Personal site walk interview), combined with the aesthetic of classed immersion that structures *Lives*, functions to position his audiences as consumers of a saleable artistic experience—and at a steep cost, in the case of his remount—situated self-reflexively in the midst of those who would be displaced by the gentrifying forces in the service of which his work, by virtue of its existence and placement, is (at least indirectly) conscripted.

On Passing, On Unsettling

Whereas inside The Empress, McIntosh’s audience was conspicuously out of place, during the multi-part walking tour to which the performance continually returned (from the Alibi Room to The Empress, from The Empress to The Police Museum, from the museum back to the Alibi Room), the audience of *Lives* was largely unidentifiable as

¹³⁷ McIntosh makes his perspective on the Cultural Olympiad amply clear in his blog post “Yes, I think it is about the Olympics”—also published shortly before the remount of *Lives* launched. Here, he implores Vancouver-based artists and presenters to “defer ... their Vancouver presentation activities scheduled between January 22 and March 21st, 2010. Defer to a time when the global economy picks up and the children are allowed second helpings of gruel. Or until March 22nd.”

an audience in the midst of a performance experience. That is to say, the *Lives* audiences and performers were all but invisible as such during the exterior components of their walking tour. McIntosh explains: “I did some experiments with what size of audience doesn’t ... disrupt the street, and it seemed like three was good” (Personal interview). Whereas Karen Jamieson’s *The River* was pointedly interested in casting its audience as a moving mass, a visible community entity that added spatial and representational significance to her formal choreography (of the dancers), McIntosh actively works against the construction of his audience as an undifferentiated group. The point of his work, as McIntosh puts it, is “to be in a place. With people. Other people. At some point you become a band and then everyone will look at you. And you are no longer in that space, you are like the distraction of the space” (Personal interview). In part, then, *Lives* was structured out of an ethical imperative to perform in public space without disrupting the various scenes and narratives that occupy those spaces with an imposition of the theatrical frame. Passage, in this sense, becomes a sort of *passing* for the everyday. Because the outdoor sections of his performance “passed” as everyday activity, McIntosh was able to bypass the processes of applying for various city permits and permissions that demanded so much administrative labour in Jamieson’s *The River* (and comprises a good portion of the company’s paper archive of the piece). But this *passing* also functioned in other ways.

McIntosh’s approach to the choreographed walking tour complied with what Vancouver-based geographer Nicholas Blomley identifies as the “functional logic of pedestrian circulation” (*Rights* 62). In his effort to understand how sidewalks function, Blomley departs from common (humanist) approaches to public space and mounts, instead, a theory of “pedestrianism” according to which, he argues, city engineers design sidewalks and city bylaws regulate them. Understood, Blomley maintains, in terms of flow (and blockage), pedestrianism is defined by “a view of the sidewalk as a system of movement” (15). It is, in other words, the “right to pass” that functions in service of a “traveling public” (59, 63). Anything that impedes the steady flow of movement along the sidewalk corridor is not only undesirable, but also rendered illegal by various city bylaws, including the contentious sit-lie ordinances so common in North American cities. In the logic of pedestrianism, “bodies and objects are viewed as broadly interchangeable” (89): “duly licenced,” Blomley insists, “the panhandler is on the same plane as the street

vendor or sidewalk café owner, or electrical pole or bus stop” (88). Indeed, the function (if not the intention) of pedestrianism is to depoliticize contestations over space and, crucially, to “deactivate rights claims” by presenting issues in “highly spatialized terms,” wherein “users are not persons, but *peds*” (89, 97, 106, emphasis added). Pointing to the “remarkable depoliticization” effected by pedestrianism and its attendant bylaws, logics, court arguments (81), Blomley insists that pedestrianism’s use of an “alchemical language of space” and of “use” is itself “a remarkable political move that needs to be taken seriously”—both *in* and *on* its own terms (110).

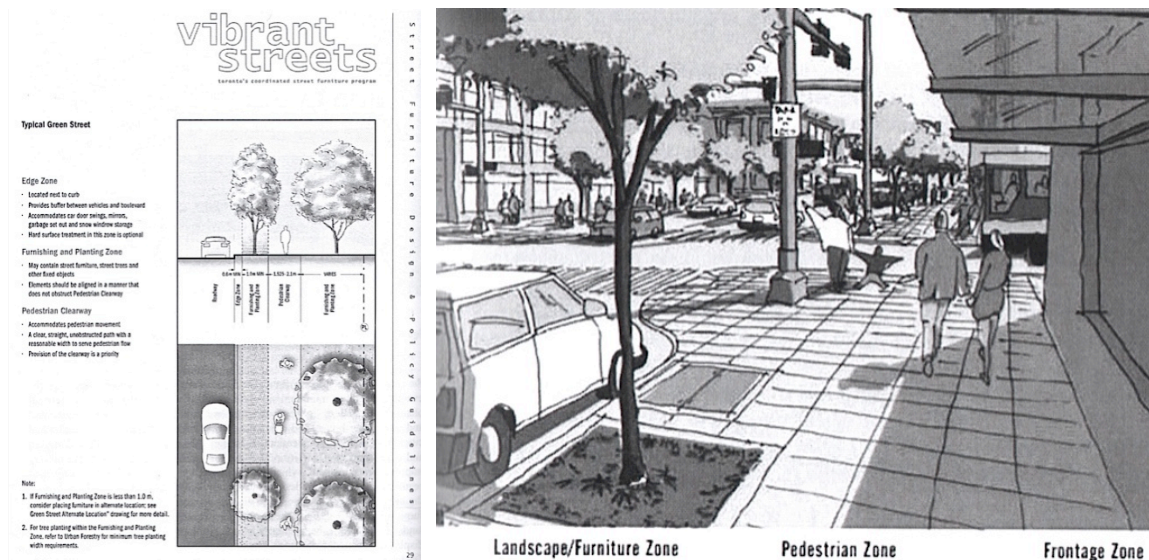


Figure 5.4. Left: Street zones, *Vibrant Streets: Toronto’s Coordinated Street Furniture Program: Design and Policy guidelines*; City of Toronto, City Planning, Urban Design, Transportation Services, Clean & Beautiful City and R. E. Millward & Associates); rpt. in Nicholas Blomley, *Rights of Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2011; print; 40). Right: Sidewalk zones, City of Seattle, Seattle Department of Transportation, *Right of Way Improvement Manual*; rpt. in Nicholas Blomley, *Rights of Passage* (New York: Routledge, 2011; print; 39).

Note. The spatial design of the city sidewalk serves pedestrianism: conceived of as a zone of flow and constant (forward) progress, the sidewalk is crafted with buffer zones and precise metrics of human movement designed to serve “the pedestrian clearway.” Note the cleanliness and middle-class character of the streets imagined here.

For, indeed, as various strains of dance scholarship have convincingly argued, the imperative to move and to keep moving is, itself, deeply political.¹³⁸ With its emphasis on movement and moving through, what does pedestrianism mean for dance? And, inversely, how can dance practices, forms that meditate on and mediate by way of movement, comment on or challenge pedestrianism as a dominant form of urban choreography? In the logic of pedestrianism and (thus) in the design of city sidewalks, “What is important about the body is whether (rather than why) it is in motion or static” (9), and, as Blomley insists, this “lack of curiosity as to how we walk, and to what ends, is a curious one” (107). For, as a chorus of formidable dance and performance theorists assert (in unison): “Bodies do not only pass meaning along, or pass it along in their uniquely responsive way. They develop choreographies of signs through which they discourse: they run (or lurch, or bound, or feint, or meander...) from premise to conclusion; they turn (or pivot, or twist...) through the process of reasoning; they confer with (or rub up against, or bump into...) one another in narrating their own physical fate” (Foster et al. xi). Choreographic knowledges understand that running, walking, wheeling, walking slowly, limping, crawling, cowering, cycling, strutting, drifting, driving, walking with the flow, walking against flow, stumbling, and any number of other variations on mobility affect the space differently. In *Lives*, the imperative to keep moving is kinetically grounded in a self-conscious sense of how, when, and where we move.

What *Lives* achieves in its exterior tour portions is to call the physical attention of its audiencing bodies to the ways in which the sidewalk orchestrates an urban choreography—that is, how the structure of the sidewalk choreographs bodily movement through the city. Because the connection between the performance’s various guides, the theatrical content, and the urban landscapes we pass through is tenuous at best, the overwhelming sense of the physicality of *keeping up* is one of mandated motion for the sake of motion. As I followed McIntosh (and then Wong and then Ternes and then McIntosh again), through the streets, I remember thinking: *I don’t know where I’m going, and I’m not convinced that my guide knows where we’re going, but I know I should*

¹³⁸ See Randy Martin’s *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (1998) and André Lepecki’s *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006) for two foundational perspectives on “the political ontology of modernity’s investment in its odd hyperkinetic being” (Lepecki 5).

continue to go, to keep moving. This walking tour is not punctuated by instances of sight-seeing in the way of most typical walking tours. Although McIntosh does pause in a few instances to point out particular features of the space (recall my description of our group's collective pause at Wendy Poole Park), this engagement with the particular features of the physical space feels abrupt, understated, and almost off-hand. In the latter portions of the walking tour, neither Wong nor Ternes—both completely occupied by the text they have been tasked to deliver—offers much by way of connection to the physical surroundings, save for one gestural indication toward a stain on the ground in the alley behind the museum that is echoed in the last lines of the text. We are not walking, then, to sightsee. Rather, we are walking simply to walk. And yet, particularly in the opening portion with McIntosh, our guide's hesitance cuts through this choreographic impulse of forward motion: his unreliability—articulated by his vague sense of disorientation, his stops and starts, his seeming spatial confusion—undermines even as it foregrounds the architectural and legislative choreography of constant flow that characterizes movement through the city.

If, as performance theorist Fiona Wilkie suggests in *Performance, Transport and Mobility: Making Passage* (2015), “performance not only responds to but can also produce mobilities, reshaping existing models and engendering new, alternative possibilities for movement” (2), then we must consider how specific performative mobilities function as moments of bodily reimagining. Wilkie proposes this attention to mobility as a form of “*making passage*, developing not merely commentary on travel but a valuable means of shaping experiences of transit and thereby creating new momentum” (17, emphasis in original). Attending to “the disparity and power imbalance of vastly different mobilities” (8), Wilkie “asks questions about value and about the danger of overlooking specific circumstances of walking and specific identities of walkers in the service of a broad critical framework of pedestrian movement” (13). In this way, Wilkie comes to agreement with Blomley, each of them pointing to the problem with decontextualizing specific instances—the *how*, not simply the fact of movement through the city.

Whereas Wilkie suggests that performances “that seek to mark the significance of transit spaces....*work against the logic of uninterrupted flow at sites of transport,*

encouraging spectators to register their passage as a complex activity, simultaneously public and private, and culturally, socially and even morally loaded” (17, emphasis added), McIntosh’s *Lives* works inversely at the same aim. Precisely by obeying the prevailing “logic of uninterrupted flow,” *Lives* asks its audiencing bodies to “register their passage,” and to do so kinaesthetically, in all its various complexities. The wondering, hesitant breed of inertia that McIntosh’s tour performs and demands renders felt the ongoing pressure to move (purposefully) through city spaces. When his audience collects at the stoplight at the southwest corner of Alexander and Main Streets, they shift restlessly as they wait for the cue (green means go) to move forward again. They follow McIntosh across the street with a temporarily clear trajectory before their pace slows again as they approach the sidewalk on the other side: McIntosh has not yet indicated a direction; he has not telegraphed his trajectory with a clear physical commitment, a hand or head gesture, or a verbal cue. The small group pools for a moment on the east side of the street, not quite coming to a stop, before McIntosh decides—on the spot, it seems—to progress straight ahead.

But to characterize all the movement in *Lives* as hesitant would miss some important information about “how” the performance choreographed its audiences. Although the exterior portions of *Lives* were dominated by a kind of stilted meander, there was a stretch in which the walking was brusque and clearly directed. Once the group turned west onto Hastings Street, through the ad hoc markets set up along the sidewalk, the pace quickened and focus sharpened. McIntosh reflects on this choice, noting that this was an effort to complete the desired trajectory (into The Empress) without attracting unwanted attention or solicitation from those populating the sidewalk (Personal site walk interview). Our pace, then, is motivated by an interest in achieving the artistic vision, to be sure; but, or perhaps more accurately *and*, it is bound together with issues of class. Like the determined stride of the commuting worker, among a variety of other slants of direct and brisk trajectory, we scurry quickly along the Hastings corridor in the hopes of passing if not unnoticed, than at least ignored by the down-market dealers/ings along the sidewalk. This market, incidentally, has recently been targeted for clean-up by city officials (“Downtown”), in yet another instance of “revanchist

city” efforts of the sort described by Neil Smith—an approach to city regulation with, I insist, decidedly choreographic a/effects.¹³⁹

That the imperative toward perpetual mobility operates unevenly along classed, racialized, gendered, and abled lines is of perhaps most consequence when transience becomes a tool used to strip a group of its power. This is, of course, the underpinning of the sit-lie ordinances and other city bylaws only thinly masked as anything other than, as Blomley phrases it in another text, “straightforward class hatred” (*Unsettling* 31). Reading Blomley’s *Unsettling the City* alongside his study of pedestrianism, *Rights of Passage*, it becomes evident that hyper-mobility works doubly against residents of the DTES: not only does it force locals for whom the street is a home to perpetually *move along*, but it also (perhaps, I submit, *as a result*) casts these same people as itinerant, transient, and thus without claim to the land on which they dwell. In *Unsettling*, Blomley’s study of property law and settlement in the city, he feels ethically bound to emphasize Vancouver as a colonial, settler city. As Blomley asserts: “To talk of land and displacement, particularly in a place like Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, and not to consider colonialism is to commit an unforgivable, but not unprecedented oversight” (105). Despite the paucity of scholarship on “the city as a postcolonial space” (108), Blomley insists, “Colonial dispossessions and displacements cast long shadows that ... are still with us” (105-06). For example, it was only in 1991 that the province of British Columbia finally and only partially acknowledged Indigenous title and undertook treaty negotiations. Of course, there are legacies of displacement that complicate this narrative further. Blomley focuses specifically on Cordova Street—around which *Lives* circulates—and points out that not just First Nations ownership claims but also those of pre-Internment Japanese-Canadian and, a little further south, Chinese-Canadian claims have historical clout. As Blomley notes, “A city directory for 1923 lists almost the entire three hundred block of Cordova as ‘Orientals’” (189n29). Even “local” narratives of community are structured on exclusions (often of Japanese-Canadian claims) and, as such, forge a false sense of homogeneity (149). Drawing out the ways in which a rubric of mobility works to support dominant (white, middle-to-upper class, male, able-bodied,

¹³⁹ See Smith’s *The New Urban Frontier* (1996) for a nuanced analysis of the classed implications of various (bodily) urban regulations.

and so on) divisions of land and of power in conflicting and overlapping ways, Blomley notes that: “Characterizations of the residents of the inner city as mobile and unfixed bear a striking resemblance to many representations of native people. In both cases, the effect is to force a separation between a population and the space it occupies, rendering a *collective claim* to this space void, even invisible” (xx, emphasis added).

It is this alternative, physically enacted, and “collective claim” that Blomley seeks to draw out in his examination of property rights in Vancouver’s DTES, which he identifies as “an intensely disputed space” (xvii). Property, Blomley insists, “is not a static, pregiven entity, but depends on a continual, active ‘doing’” (xvi). This “doing” is articulated in physical terms: “As *settle* is a verb, so property is an enactment,” Blomley argues, and as such, “[property] must be continually ‘settled’” (xvi). With settlement comes, of course, a long (colonial) history of displacements, which, Blomley maintains, “are often evicted from urban history despite their contestation by those affected” (xvii). And yet, even in the context of a long colonial history and increasing pressures of globalization, “people in cities, as elsewhere, articulate many property-like claims that fall outside or complicate the ownership model” (xix). In light of these “claims” or “enactments”—which include protests, graffiti, and squats, as well as ongoing efforts to reclaim unceded territories and everyday dwellings in, passages through, and uses of city spaces—Blomley convincingly shows that despite the emphatic insistence of seemingly discrete and decisive private property lines, the “settler-city, ground zero in the colonial imagination, is an increasingly unsettled space” (xx).¹⁴⁰

While it is tempting to argue that McIntosh enacts just such an “unsettling” counterclaim, reshaping the dynamics of the streets through which *Lives* passes by choreographing a temporary and communal claim to the land that pushes back against dominant narratives of private property, this would miss something of the point. For the structure of *Lives* actively dispels any sort of claim to belonging, however temporary. *Lives* does unsettle, I submit, but not by way of claiming. The “doings” that comprise

¹⁴⁰ Blomley chronicles various specific land disputes in the area, including the battle over the Woodward’s building in the core of the DTES, a building which, significantly for this study, has since become an important centre for arts presentation and training in the city as the host of the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, which houses Simon Fraser University’s School for the Contemporary Arts and the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre.

Lives enact various embodiments of interloping. McIntosh, and the city spaces through which his piece moves, choreographs his audience into trajectories of displacement. Playing, as he does, with what Blomley calls “the slippery politics of ‘placing’” (149), McIntosh forces his audiences to examine their judgements about the DTES and its residents. These understandings of the DTES are unavoidably bound up with the ways in which the neighbourhood has been representationally over-coded: “Long a place for Vancouver’s working class, and racialized populations, as well as an active if somewhat down-market commercial area, the area is now seen as synonymous with criminality, marginality and profound ‘Otherness’” (148).¹⁴¹ McIntosh explains: “Everyone brings their own baggage, I guess, to the area—their assumptions of what the Downtown Eastside is and what their relationship to it is. So—and that to me is interesting as well: to examine what your assumptions are” (Radio interview). By leading his audiences through an ambivalent walking tour, into a bar for which they are, as McIntosh puts it, “the wrong clientele” (Personal site walk interview), and into an exaggeratedly intimate exchange in the Police Museum (to which I will turn in the final section of this chapter), McIntosh’s tour cultivates a sense of being out of place, in the wrong place, in the wrong. It casts its audience as tourists, as voyeurs. Rather than modeling an alternative form of temporary settlement which, in turn, unsettles presumably claimed land, *Lives* enacts both on and through its audience an aesthetic of implication and of *unsettling*. Whereas, as I have indicated in my reading of Susan Leigh Foster’s analysis of pedestrian movement in early postmodern dance (Chapter 1), the choreographic flâneur can function to expose the (bourgeois) conventions of the theatre, in the case of *Lives*, the aestheticized and kinetically sensuous practice of walking makes felt a bourgeois choreography of the city.

In forcing its audiencing bodies to confront, physically, its classed judgments and anxieties about the DTES, the performance cultivates an awareness of privilege. The show does not ask its audiences to imagine that they are able to suspend their vectors of privilege. Instead, it asks its audiences to reckon with how its various forms of privilege—including the bourgeois luxury of audiencing the show, of casting a theatrical frame on the DTES, and of (very likely) leaving the area at the end of the night’s

¹⁴¹ For more on the (mis)representations of Vancouver’s DTES, see Clint Burnham’s essay “Postmodernism is the Theory, Gentrification is the Practice: Jameson, Haraldsson, Architecture, and Vancouver” (2004).

entertainment—are complicit in the maintenance of the poverty on display. Privilege, as McIntosh articulates in another project, is “a road I cannot / not be on / Even if I were to step to one side / or the other / It would be the road that carried me” (“Soup” 14-15). It is this acknowledgement of privilege, coiled together with an acknowledgement of vulnerability, that *Lives* invites its audiences to trace through the DTES. As McIntosh articulates: “[The DTES] is the historic centre of the city; it’s not an isolated, stand alone-area; it’s actually the centre of the entire city. So no matter where you live in the lower mainland, this area has been created by you as a collective entity” (Radio interview). In this way, McIntosh’s work twists his audience into the fabric of the DTES even as *Lives* strives toward a felt sense of unbelonging. Winding, coiling together, settling and unsettling, being in and out of place, *Lives* asks its audiences to acknowledge an intimate implication in the very situations, conditions, and structures that we identify as apart, separate, distant. It models and provokes a bodily, choreographic acknowledgement that (re-)settling is also always an unsettling.

“By Virtue of Our Flesh”

By siting his work on the street, and specifically in the thick of the DTES, McIntosh aims, in part, to disrupt a set of audience/performer contracts deeply structured into the theatre. As McIntosh puts it:

The habit of going to the theatre and the contract you make with the audience started to feel limiting. ... The space itself took on a—I felt like I was asked to care for it and then that’s when I realized, oh, the space is quite weak, and so my interest was to try to, I guess, challenge the structure, or just look for holes in the structure. ... But that felt aggressive and petty after a while, to have that as your agenda. Because the structure felt really fragile; so it felt like you were [*pause*] harming [the people who came to the theatre], or dishonouring their community. (Personal interview)

Off stage and out of the theatre building, McIntosh feels more liberty to press at the edges of theatrical structure, to reframe an audience/performer contract in the interrogatory, as a question. McIntosh identifies an openness with site-based work in terms of control: “if you put a piece in public, I don’t actually control the world, so then

that's a different relationship for you to come and experience what I have to give you if I'm not controlling everything" (Personal interview).

Generating a sense of doubt, or anticipation, or unsettling in his audience is at the core of McIntosh's practice and of *Lives*, and so I will quote him and at length here. Part of his choice to move work outside the theatre structure was linked with material changes in theatre design:

I think theatre attracted me because it would be really *dark*. Before they had the exit signs ... in the early 80s, you would go into a theatre and you would be with people and even if you're all bourgeoisie and comfortable, there was that moment when the lights would go out and it was pitch-black. And you actually felt totally vulnerable. And totally connected to this audience that was breathing in the dark waiting for something to happen. So that was the magical element of theatre for me. At that moment when it was really black, you've *arrived*, and 'OK—something is going to happen.' And it might suck or whatever, but it was just that moment when you're in the dark with a bunch of people and if there was a fire you'd all die, but something was about to happen. So that moment was always very interesting to me. And now, you don't have that now because those exit signs are so bright. For health reasons they put out these big, red exit signs that are bright for the whole show. ['Right,' I say, 'so there's not enough darkness at the theatre.' He echoes me:] So there's not enough darkness. You don't have that physical sensation of actually being vulnerable and in a mass of bodies in that moment. (Personal interview)

When he invites his audiences into public spaces, McIntosh finds, that sense of unknowing returns; "there are moments where they feel totally vulnerable. ... They have that sense of 'something could—what could happen?' And that's really important" (Personal interview). *Lives* would not do the work it is designed to do, McIntosh insists, if it were mounted in the summer months. It would be too light, too safe. I press him, asking why he values this vulnerability. He responds:

Because [the audience and performer are both] *present*. They're both vulnerable—oh, I'm in a hotel room.¹⁴² I don't know what the fuck is going on. You—all of the sudden—you're present; you know where you are; you're aware of where you are. And the same thing in *Lives Were Around*

¹⁴² McIntosh refers here to the context of his *M/Hotel* (2011, 2015), another intimate performance for between one and ten audience members set in a room in Vancouver's downtown Holiday Inn.

Me: people were always asked to go somewhere and they never really knew if they were being taken care of. So Ziyian, who in this role [as the host at the Alibi Room] can't take care of anybody, would tell them to go outside. And they'd go outside, and I'd meet them. But we never talked to each other, so they weren't—how would they know that I'm the right person to talk to? And then I'd take them and say: 'just wait here, someone will be along.' And then they're in the bar. And they're not really even sure if this is the right person to follow. You know, all those moments of you know, I'm not really sure what's happening. (Personal interview)

§
LIABILITY WAIVER December 15, 2009
Release and Waiver Statement
ORGANIZATION: battery opera Performing Arts Society
#712 – 207 West Hastings Street Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 1H7

ACTIVITIES: Participation as Audience in activities including but not limited to the observation of battery opera Performing Arts Society's production entitled "Lives Were Around Me", travel to and from locations used for performances of "Lives Were Around Me" and presence of my person at all such locations.

LOCATIONS: Public roads and thoroughfares in the city of Vancouver, British Columbia and any buildings or structures on the 200 block Hastings East and the 200 Block East Cordova that may or may not be entered into including but not restricted to The Vancouver Police Museum during the course of Audience Activities.

TIME: Anytime during which I participate in Audience Activities

I, the undersigned audience member, voluntarily join the activities of battery opera Performing Arts Society on December 15, 2009. As an audience member, I understand that any activity might involve potential hazard, injury and loss or theft of personal property risks and that battery opera Performing Arts Society is not responsible for any of the risks. I assume that all risks associated with my voluntary participation as an audience for battery opera's production "Lives Were Around Me" including, but not limited to, falls, twists, traffic accidents and the effects from natural hazards in all the locations, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. Knowing these facts, I for myself, my heirs, or anyone else who might claim on my behalf, covenant not to sue and waive, release and discharge battery opera Performing Arts Society, The Alibi Room, The Vancouver Police Museum and The Empress Hotel and it's representatives or affiliations for any and all claims or liability, whether foreseen or unforeseen, for death, personal injury, or property damage arising out of, or in the course of my participation in all the audience events and activities.

Figure 5.5. Liability waiver for *Lives* with signatures trimmed, (2009). Courtesy of battery opera Performance.

Note. This is the waiver used for the remount in December of 2009. It is identical to the earlier version of the waiver used in the original production of *Lives* in January and February of the same year.

The lack of surety around the *Lives* experience begins with a set of administrative performances at the Alibi Room. In addition to checking in with Akasuzi (played by Vancouver-based dancer and choreographer, Ziyian Kwan), who oversaw the taking of polaroid photographs of whatever personal effects audience members elected to leave in her care (photographs which would re-emerge on display at the Vancouver Police Museum), audience members were also required to sign a waiver. This waiver,

McIntosh acknowledges, “was totally useless,” offering little additional protection to battery opera in the case of an incident that prompted an audience member to sue (Personal interview). And yet, the act of signing the waiver functioned in important ways to open the question of the audience/performer relationship. It forced audience members to acknowledge that, as McIntosh articulates it, “The “piece takes place out in the world. I am not in control of whether you step off the street in front of a car, or get assaulted or trip over a grate and break your ankle.” By attending the show, and, even more explicitly, by signing the waiver, McIntosh continues: “You agree to step into the world. That world is downtown Vancouver” (Radio interview).

And not just downtown Vancouver, not just the core of the DTES, but the home of what McIntosh calls “a shrine to Vancouver’s unsolved murder cases” (Personal site walk interview), the Vancouver Police Museum. The Police Museum, which is located at the site of the original City morgue, is promoted online with promises of “real evidence from some of Vancouver’s most notorious and unsolved historical crimes, including the Mikshake Murder, Babes in the Woods, and the Krosberg Murder” (Vancouver Police Museum). In fact, the Police Museum runs its own walking tour through the DTES, one it call Sins of the City. Advertised as a way to “experience the world of a cop in the 1920s, when Vancouver was a seething hub of sex, drugs, booze [sic] and organized crime” (qtd. in Aoki and Yoshimizu 278), this tour “imposes often racialized and spectacular narratives of drug trafficking, prostitution, and bootlegging onto a neighborhood that is in the present regularly depicted as pathologically diseased and morally depraved: discourses that intersect with an immense pressure to redevelop the area” (Aoki and Yoshimizu 278). It is into this context that we are invited after we leave the bar and coil back around to Cordova Street to be ushered into the Police Museum.

We enter in the semi dark. It is after hours. Our guide unlocks the front door and leads us up the partly lit stairwell. We mill through the exhibitions: a glassed display case containing confiscated weapons, a chart featuring various street drugs apprehended in the area, a photo display honouring fallen officers. Our guide makes the rounds through the room, whispering in our ears, one at a time. Reviewer Kevin Griffin describes the experience: “When the performer leaned over and whispered into my ear ‘New York’ it was the first time I’d ever experienced such intimacy during a performance. She leaned

so close to my right ear and spoke so softly, no one else in the audience could hear what she said. In turn, she whispered something into the ear of each of the other audience members” (“4-person”). Our guide cuts through the moonlight filtering in through the skylight above by flicking the switch on each display case, illuminating the gory remnants of some of Vancouver’s most famous unsolved murder cases—arrangements of photographs, lost shoes, and other fragments of evidence. Then, one by one, she turns off the lights again. Her movements are small and subtle, but they are all choreographed, worked. Then we make our way into the autopsy room, the performer still delivering text. When she turns the lights on, they seem extra bright, extra harsh, assaulting our dim-adjusted eyes. She gestures for us all to sit on one of the two shiny silver tables before she moves to the table opposite and starts to undress. She undresses matter-of-factly. The movements, like their effects, are bare. Each step is a task: pants down, underwear nested inside; shirt up and over; reach around to unhook bra. Naked, the performer sits on the edge of the autopsy table—legs dangling, facing us—and finishes delivering her text. After only a beat, she adjusts to lift her legs lengthwise onto the table and lies back. She closes her eyes. And then silence. We sit opposite, watching this naked, motionless body, the function of the table transforming her into a cadaver before our eyes. When I ask McIntosh about the motivation for the nudity, he responds simply, “The room seemed to demand it” (Personal site walk interview).

I remember the feeling of the cold steel table coming through my pants. I remember how that chill traveled up my spine when our guide lay down, a vicarious trace of the steely cool on my skin. I am both there, lying naked on the table, and here, watching from a little over a meter away on the table opposite—yet another form of tourist in this night of uncomfortable voyeurism, witnessing yet another scene that is not mine to watch; implicated in yet another form of trespass, this one as stark and glaring as the light bouncing off these bright white walls. Throughout *Lives* McIntosh has asked his audience to watch themselves watching; this takes new, gendered, exposed form here: “You have to accept a relationship with [the guides] to go on this tour and then it becomes really intimate when they take off their clothes and lie down. So it becomes this really intimate relationship—and by that point, it’s over” (Personal site walk interview). After a moment, the other performer (Ternes, in my experience) enters the room and

delivers text as he covers the naked body with a sheet, completing the cadaver image. Promptly, he ushers us out of the autopsy room and out of the museum by way of the unkempt, unlit staff exit, which spits into the same alley as *The Empress*. Ternes gestures down the alley toward McIntosh, and in the moment of heads turning, Ternes runs away in the opposite direction, full-tilt. McIntosh takes us back part way to the Alibi room, asking: “Did you find your guide?” Partway back to the Alibi Room, he leaves us again, muttering some version of, “you can find your way from here.”

In the performance I attended, Bobby (from *The Empress*) reappeared in the alley at this point and confronted McIntosh. For a thick moment, we watched as Bobby seemed to escalate, looking for a fight. The moment passed without altercation, but it marked my final moments of the piece. I remember the feeling of bald risk: here I am in a dark alley that I would normally avoid, especially at night; this is an alley that is not inimical to gendered violence (indeed, the justly notorious “Blood Alley” is only blocks away); meters away, there is a man who is offended by my presence which must feel like exploitation—because it is—and he is (justifiably) angry. I remember thinking: who is responsible for taking care of me? Am I to defer to the presumed safety of the theatrical frame? No. Not only does the volatility of this “real” situation trump and disarm the theatrical pretence, but the entire performance has been geared toward unsettling notions of care, responsibility, and theatre’s tacit promise of a sure and safe delivery that might otherwise allow me feel protected. If *Lives* is a choreography, Bobby’s re-appearance is an unexpected and uninvited improvisation. And yet, this scene lays bare the very real ways in which performance is implicated in the everyday: a claim inherent to every site-based work.

During one of our conversations, I recount to McIntosh my experience as a lone audience member for his *Portside Walk*, a roving iPod audio production McIntosh was commissioned to create as part of Newworld Theatre’s quartet of *Podplays* (2011). This play took me, wearing headphones, around the perimeter of Vancouver’s CRAB Park in the DTES (another site Blomley draws out as an example of a successful claim to

community ownership) and into the underground parkade below Canada Place.¹⁴³ I remember feeling distinctly vulnerable. I do not remember this as a moment rife with aesthetic potential. I do remember feeling angry. Inside the theatre, even when the lights are out—even, I think, if it were completely dark—I assume that I am safe. For me, perhaps as someone born into a theatrical moment already dimly lit by the red glow of exits signs, the darkness of the theatre has never been linked to a feeling of true vulnerability. I know that I am embarking on a theatrical journey and I trust that I will be guided, taken somewhere. This feeling has travelled out of the theatre in many of my experiences of site-based work, including those described in this project: I felt physically safe when I watched Fortier carving the space into distinct frontings in Library Square; I felt nestled amongst the crowd as I watched the Aeriosa dancers dangle from the Central Branch. Indeed, my sense of security echoes what Adam Alston identifies as “the audience’s disposition to trust complete strangers in an aesthetic space, on the presumption of it being a safe space” (136).¹⁴⁴ In McIntosh’s *Portside Walk* and again in *Lives*, this shifted. I did not trust that I would be taken care of. I did not even trust that those who were performing even knew *how* to take care of me. And, indeed, it became clear quite quickly that none of the performers were interested in putting me at ease. Refusing throughout to take on the role of guide in a sure-footed, confident way, the performers in *Lives* did not make any claim to take care of us, protect us, lead us safely through a volatile neighbourhood at night, in the dark, and in the midst of sometimes-explosive behavior. (Indeed, recall how Wong seemed flustered and disarmed by the repeated and physical overtures made to my audience grouping by Bobby at the bar.) Even inside the police museum, at a “safe” remove from the neighbourhood, we are pushed beyond another threshold of safety when we are asked to watch our guide strip

¹⁴³ CRAB Park is an acronym which stands for “Create a Real Available Beach”—capturing the spirit of the joint and unofficial claim to space for which Blomley argues (*Unsettling* 48).

¹⁴⁴ For a fuller discussion of the relationship of risk to responsibility in participatory theatre, particularly in relation to neoliberal models of risk, see Alston’s “Audience Participation and Neoliberal Value: Risk, Agency, and Responsibility in Immersive Theatre” (2013). For an examination of risk in immersive theatre, see Gareth Whyte’s *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of Invitation* (2013), particularly his second chapter, “Risk and Relational Action.” For an inquiry into the ethics of shifting risk onto the audience (from the performer), see Keren Zaiontz’s dissertation “The Stagehands of Subversive Spaces: Site-Specific Performance and Audience Labour” (2011), and her “Ambulatory Audiences and Animate Sites: Staging the Spectator in Site-Specific Performance” (2012).

and lie down only feet in front of us, this exaggerated nudity set in front of the mostly un(der)investigated backdrop of unsolved murders and jars of brined body parts (hearts, livers, kidneys, brains in jars on the wall behind the autopsy table).

Whereas Aeriosa's *In Situ* engages with notions of vulnerability by way of the physical precarity of the dancers, McIntosh's *Lives* expands the reach of vulnerability to encompass its audience. Another version, perhaps, of the spatial coiling that characterizes the walking route, McIntosh coils the private with the public body. His aesthetic enacts Judith Butler's insistence that—and here I coil too, returning to the opening pages of my project—"[t]he body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life" (*Precarious* 26). *Lives* explores "the way in which [the body] disposes us outside ourselves or sets us beside ourselves" (26). Just as signing the *Lives* waiver is, according to McIntosh, an "agree[ment] to step into the world" (Radio interview), so entering into various shades of vulnerability is one of the preconditions of audiencing his work—a condition perhaps downplayed or even overwritten with a false sense of security, but yet no less defining in all audience/performer (indeed, all intersubjective) relationships. *Lives* renders explicit and felt the vulnerabilities we cannot *not* carry with us by virtue of our flesh, vulnerabilities we cannot escape but can only ignore: "The body," as Butler maintains, "implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence" (24). And yet by way of its situatedness in the DTES, *Lives* also renders explicit what Butler identifies as the uneven topography of vulnerability: not only do some people face more immediate and more menacing threats than others (32), but the very structure that governs our ability to recognize the vulnerability of another is bound up with a "differentiated field of power and, specifically, the differential operation of norms of recognition" (44). *Lives* models what Levin and Solga imagine in the epigraph that opens this chapter: an "uncelebratory" performance that acknowledges its own productive inability to recognize "those for whom the city is not simply about play, but is also about work, about safety issues, and about struggle" ("Building" 38, 52). In its cultivation of a kinetic and self-conscious attention to the uneven urban choreographies of/in the DTES, *Lives* insists that we examine the vectors of privilege that create the conditions for mis-

recognition and occlusion of the *lives around* us. Its entwining of proximity and distance brings us up against the limits of our ability to see one another, to know one another, and to *feel for* one another.

Other studies of vulnerability and risk in participatory (or immersive) performance practices have focused on the ways in which intimacies and vulnerabilities function to emphasize or frame the participating audience member as solo. Zaiontz terms this phenomenon “narcissistic spectatorship,” and highlights how—particularly in the case of a preeminent immersive theatre company, Punchdrunk—such a mode of audiencing is driven by a competitive, isolated, individualist (neoliberal) version of self.¹⁴⁵ These works “foster a presumptive intimacy that not only entitles spectators to act upon the site, but also to act upon one another. ... Punchdrunk encourages intrusive modes of engagement that atomize spectators in their self-made journeys” (“Narcissistic” 419). Unlike Zaiontz’s account of Punchdrunk, McIntosh’s *Lives* does not push its audience members to accumulate theatrical pleasure (414)—quite the contrary. Instead, McIntosh’s work asks us to examine our privilege, our own motivations, and entitled removals in pursuit of theatrical pleasure in the first place, particularly in the spatial and social context of the DTES. *Lives* denies easy, safe access to this pleasure. It confounds, it fails to protect, and it renders us complicit. Its audiencing bodies are forced up against their complacencies, assumptions, avoidances, judgements, and discomforts. McIntosh proposes an impossible vicariousness in his various invitations to imagine the lives around us. Like the work Zaiontz describes, *Lives* “compel[s] a preoccupation with your own multisensory relationship to the site” (419); and yet, it does so with a simultaneous attunement to the registers and limitations of your ability to “_feel_” for another. This partial vicariousness, what I have called relational kinaesthetics, is structured, crucially, by a self-conscious misrecognition of the other, and, as such, is cut through with a specifically bourgeois acknowledgement of the uneven distribution of vulnerability. For site-based performance is still embedded in regimes of “capitalist

¹⁴⁵ A London-based performance company formed in 2000, Punchdrunk is at the global forefront of immersive theatre practices.

leisure” (Ridout, *Stage 3-4*).¹⁴⁶ Even as *Lives* animates the spaces between some bodies, it also flags those inter/intra-bodied spaces it fails to occupy. It asks its consumers to dwell in and on the discomfort that comes of feeling connected to a body that lies on an autopsy table in an aesthetic gesture but not one that lies on the ground in a compulsory gesture of poverty or mental illness or violence or addiction or pain or the inability to get up—or any number of other cross-hatching conditions. The uniquely choreographic cultivation of a self-reflexive attention to the possibilities and limitations of a relational kinaesthetic sense, of feeling with and for one another, is one of the most productive possibilities of site-based performance—one that structures *Lives*, as well as the last production I will turn to by way of conclusion, Projet In Situ’s *Do You See What I Mean?* (2013).

¹⁴⁶ For more on theatre as a compromised bourgeois activity, one upon which he builds his delegation argument in “Performance in the Service Economy” (2008), see Ridout’s *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (2006).

Afterword.

Adjusting

*Beside is an interesting preposition because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. Beside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings. Beside comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other reactions. ~ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* 8*

She is blindfolded and seated when I approach her. Her previous guide has removed her socks and her shoes and set them aside. Coat too; layers shed. They have carried their journey through the city with them. It is on her breath; it is in her body; it is in her joints as she rises from the chair. “My name is Alana,” I say so that only she can hear, “and I will guide you differently.” We begin as they had been: her hand on the inside of my elbow in a conventional sight-assist walking arrangement. She is familiar with this dynamic by now, after her extended tour through downtown Vancouver. I lead her from her seat onto the dance floor where, slowly, we find our way, together, out of a lead-and-follow partnership and into an enfolded, shared dance that emerges in the space between us. I can feel her confusion at first, her desire to be led; I want to speak with her—to tell her that we will find our way into something altogether different. I can feel her hesitance, her reluctance as she starts to realize that I am waiting for her to meet me in the dance. Our touch drifts apart as I explore what distance does to our connection. She feels the wind of me as I run past. Her head turns, trying to see, trying to know where she is situated in relation to me—her only anchor in a space she has not yet seen. When our point of contact rolls from hand and arm up to our heads, I feel her

collapse in a small, silent catch of emotion. She is crying now, and I try, through the top of my head, to support her, to feed the ground beneath my feet into instability. A beat and a waver and then she answers with renewed pressure. We are here, together, navigating the space and our shared movement impulses, the *mine* and the *hers* indecipherable now even as the *me* and the *she* remain felt and separate, the stuff of this temporary agreement to adjust together to one another, to the other bodies that people the space, to the world she carries in with her from outside, and to the place in which we now find ourselves.

I describe my experience dancing in *Do You See What I Mean? (DYSWIM)*, a site-specific performance designed by French choreographers Martin Chaput and Martial Chazallon of *Projet In Situ* (France). In partnership with Urban Crawl, Vancouver's PuSh Festival brought *DYSWIM* to the city in January and February of 2013. A two and a half hour long immersive and alternative walking tour through nearly four kilometers of Vancouver's downtown—from the Downtown Eastside (DTES) through the downtown core to the city's more affluent Yaletown—participants in *DYSWIM* begin their tours at Access Gallery, leaving one at a time every fifteen minutes. Audience members are greeted and blindfolded by Chazallon before they are introduced to their guide, one of over eighty volunteers who had been coached by Chaput and Chazallon in the weeks leading up to the performance in the sight-assistance walking technique and in the general aesthetic of the tour. Without disclosing details that might aid audience members in locating themselves geographically, guides lead audience members through a carefully pre-determined route, pausing at points to explore the textures of the city. Guides also lead audiences into stores and other private establishments, including private homes, where a particular immersive (sensory, culinary, tactile) experience awaits them—an experience that has been prearranged by Chaput, Chazallon, and the impressive production team hired to facilitate the performance. After two hours, the tour winds into the Roundhouse Performance Centre (incidentally, the same site that serves as the indoor culmination of Karen Jamieson's retracing of Brewery Creek), where four local dancers—myself included—wait. Here, after shedding their outdoor attire, audiencing bodies are invited into a silent dance that reimagines the possibilities of leading, following, and moving together.

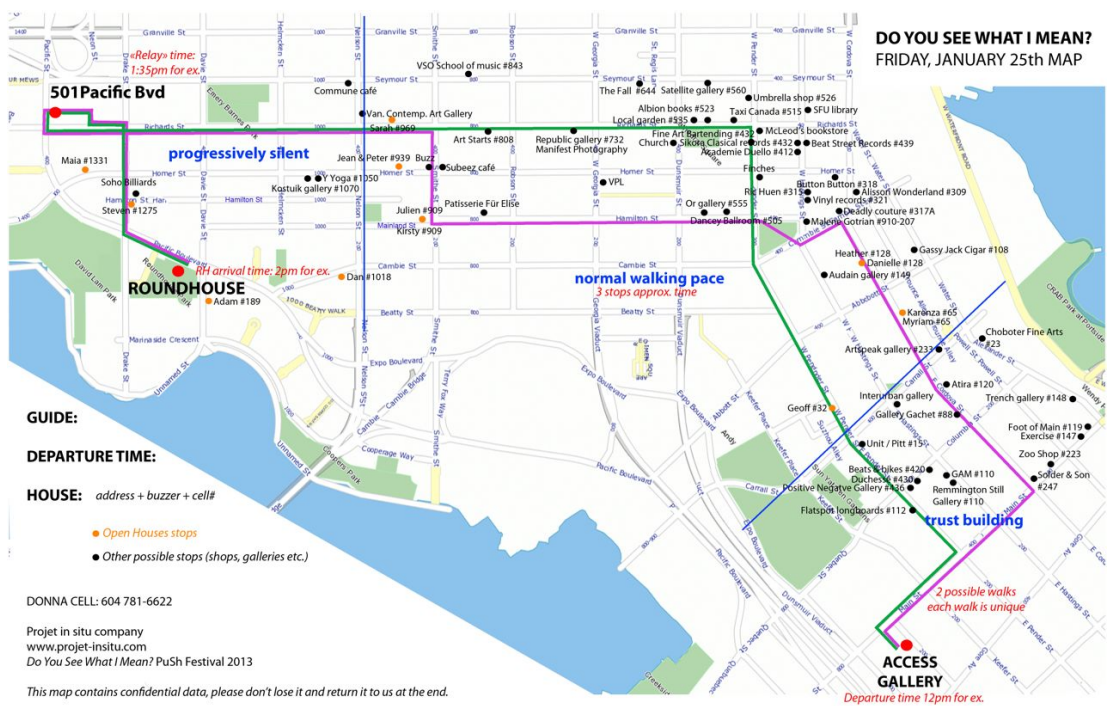


Figure 5.6. Map of walking route for 25 January 2013, from Caleb Johnston and Hayden Lorimer, “Sensing the City,” *Cultural Geographies* 21.4 (2014, Sage, web, 10 January 2015, 675).

Note. There were multiple versions of the walking tour, each with different performative stopping points (thrift stores, restaurants, cafes, local homes, etc.). But each tour began at Access Gallery and finished at the Roundhouse Performance Centre.

I arrive here, at Projet In Situ’s touch-based walking tour in an effort to look back on my project and make some key adjustments. A piece committed to an alternative physicality, to “sensuous correspondence” (Levin, *Performing* 36) or a “sensuous spectatorship” (Zaiontz, “Narcissistic” 418), to a kinetic understanding of site as a mobile experience, and to proximate intimacy amongst strangers, *DYSWIM* models and enacts some of what I have identified as the most productive elements of site-based dance. Structured by an inquiry into the subtleties of power in directed movement, *DYSWIM* also intensifies a tension that runs through my dissertation: that is, the tension between the dynamics of “command” (Lepecki) and “support” (Jackson) central to site-based dance’s choreography of its audienicing bodies.

In a project that seeks to recuperate or at least draw out the potential for agency inside of a choreographed structure, it feels appropriate to conclude from this juncture: inside my experience as a hired dancer in a site-based project, an experience in which I

functioned as both a directed and a directing force. For the question of agency—and of command—is locked into a hierarchy that structures much contemporary dance practice and its academic discourses: in a discipline that often celebrates the choreographer as artist and the dancer as (mere) interpreter, there is much work to be done in advancing an analysis of dancers’ voices and phenomenological experiences. This critique becomes more pointed with a consideration of the gender asymmetries that characterize the occupation of choreography (notoriously male-dominated) and the occupation of dancing (notoriously female-dominated).¹⁴⁷ Although I write from a dancer’s perspective throughout my dissertation and although I conclude with a self-reflexive analysis of my own grounding as a dancer in *DYSWIM*, I have, throughout this dissertation, reproduced some of the same inequities I observe: I have tended to focus on the choreographer rather than the dancers’ experiences and reflections—failing at a structural level, perhaps, to fully explore the components of reciprocity and relationality inherent to many dancer/choreographer relationships.

My project is also entangled in another complicated and site-specific power dynamic that I have not been able to treat fully. I framed myself as a settler scholar in my previous chapter, and one who is aware and at least a bit ambivalent about studying a colonial aesthetic tradition that insists on reclaiming spaces, on “taking place,” in one of the world’s most unsettled cities. I will add to this set of frictions my inability in this dissertation to treat the wealth of historical and present-day movement practices that come out of a Coastal First Nations tradition on the west coast of Canada—those ranging from ceremonial practices to contemporary dance adaptations (including the site-based work of Raven Spirit Dance, for example, and Karen Jamieson’s more explicit engagements with First Nations peoples and practices). The incredibly rich and complex history of the relationship between dance, culture, and land in Indigenous Northwest Coast dance would certainly deepen any study of site-based dance practices on this land. Very recently, Mique’l Dangeli has brought some of these practices into academic

¹⁴⁷ For a recent, insistent, and international response to the sexism built into the dance establishment, see the fallout from (male) choreographer Akram Khan’s quip that the dance world does not need more female choreographers “for the sake of it”—including an angry letter to Khan signed by over four-hundred members of the international dance community (“Akram” n. pag.).

art and dance studies discourses. As Dangeli notes, there are an estimated forty First Nations dance groups in Vancouver's Lower Mainland (35). While these are not all site-based practices in the lineage of site-specific art, they are, as Dangeli compellingly argues, intrinsically bound to the land: "In British Columbia, where the vast majority of Aboriginal land rights cases are not settled, dance groups utilize their performances as public platforms from which to express their land rights and reinforce the land rights of other nations" (28). Working through a close analysis of two of the artists I have studied here, Dangeli studies the mechanisms of Indigenous protocol in Karen Jamieson's and Julia Taffe's respective collaborations with First Nations dance-makers and draws out this significant claim: "In what other practices, artistic or otherwise, are settlers held accountable to Indigenous laws?" (98). Coastal First Nations dance, for Dangeli, is a site of an alternative politics of responsibility between peoples and lands.

Perhaps even more fundamental to this study, though, is a consideration of the colonialism built into the many approaches to relationality that I have mobilized in *Moving Publics*. Indigenous anthropologist Zoe Todd provocatively suggests that the recent turn in academia toward philosophies of the interconnectedness of land and bodies not only borrows from Indigenous ways of knowing, but does so without due recognition—enacting yet another form of colonialism at the level of knowledge (n. pag.). A careful genealogy of the theories that I draw from in my notions of choreographic topographies and relational kinaesthetics, for example, would not only lead back to First Nations knowledges (consider Paul Carter's engagement with Australian Indigenous thought, for example); it would also reveal, I am certain, a set of elisions and occlusions of First Peoples' knowledges that function to enact the kind of colonialism Todd critiques—conceptually and repeatedly *taking place*.

The colonial workings of site-based dance's place-taking take material form in works that re- and *unsettle* "one place after another" (to bring Nicholas Blomley and Miwon Kwon into conversation). In its global itinerancy, *DYSWIM*, like *Solo 30x30*, temporarily lays claim to spaces in which it is a stranger, performing in and over those spaces with a choreographic archive of past sites. In so doing, *DYSWIM*'s restless movement through various international spaces lays bare an instability of site I have explored throughout *Moving Publics*: as a piece travels from place to place (across town,

across the globe, and from one day to the next), it accumulates components of site within it. In this way, there is a dynamic of what Keren Zaiontz has called “site-unspecific[ity]” to *DYSWIM*. In her effort to “understand how a show that *feels* so local can be part of a global project and a transposable dramaturgy that is designed to be tented anywhere” (“Performing” 103, emphasis in original), Zaiontz identifies a growing trend in the performing arts to tour conceptually site-specific shows globally. Internally paradoxical to the home-grown uniqueness attributed to site-specific performance as a genre, Zaiontz points out that “[s]ite-unspecific theatre does not obscure its status as a reproducible art object and theatrical experience; rather, it gains traction (among audiences, critics, artistic producers) through its global circulation in ‘creative’ capitals” (115). Even as *DYSWIM* is perhaps suspect in its reliance on the circulation of creative capital, there is also a refreshing transparency to this dynamic, and one that challenges the preciousness of the local embedded in the economy of site-specificity. As Susan Leigh Foster compellingly claims: “choreography holds out the promise to affirm the local’s connection to the global, recognizing the specific and intensive physical commitment that any body must invest in order to ground itself in the world” (*Choreographing* 72).

As a form of social imagining that is at once abstract and specific, dance is firmly rooted in the complexities of inter-personal interaction; it is ever grounded in the body. As Andrew Hewitt insists: “In the moment of dance, the possibility of a movement beyond the limitations of the body is paradoxically embodied” (3). Dance is a mode of socio-political thought that does not—that cannot—escape the body. Site-based dance situated in public space is doubly encumbered: not only can it not escape the body, but it is also bound to the lived discomforts, frictions, and demands of its spatial context. Sometimes, the form succeeds in grappling, head-on, with the discomforts and awkward chafing points yielded up by appearing, gathering, and following together with a group of other bodies shaped by their specific histories and vectors of privilege—and in doing so in the midst of a densely coded, historically shaped, and definitively uneven public space. But the form also risks reproducing the structuring inequities of public spaces without critiquing them. For, as Judith Hamera reminds us: “Not every urban sociality forged through dance is generative or successful” (14). I agree with André Lepecki that dance and dancers have the potential to draw out the possibility for agency inside a

structure: the (political) promise of the dancer, Lepecki argues, is a kinetic affirmation of the belief that “within control, I can always mobilize agency” (Clayton et al., “Inside/Beside” 18).¹⁴⁸ But I also see a danger in that celebration of agency: to reimagine the possibilities for movement within a given structure does not guarantee (indeed, might even preclude) a critical reimagining of the structure itself. For our choices of movement pathways, with or against design, are circumscribed—classed, gendered, raced—and even the presumption to reimagine relies on a certain distance from the structure, a distance that is not evenly distributed.

The choreographic knowledge that constitutes the ground of *DYSWIM* takes as a given our fundamental relationships of interconnection—bodies to ground, ground to bodies, bodies to bodies—while also insisting on the frictions felt at points of contact. Blindfolded and geographically disoriented, audiencing bodies are forced to follow guides they do not know. While the piece insists on the latent possibility of intimacy embedded in the bodily experience of strangers moving together, that possibility is constituted by the fissures between bodies. The fear, anxiety and even anger that comes of being guided by a stranger through a dynamic and potentially dangerous cityscape—the small incidents that bump up against curbs, doorframes, and steps just undershot—tempers the enabling qualities of relationality. *DYSWIM* performs Shannon Jackson’s insistence that that which supports also constrains; and, productively for my reading of the city as a choreographic structure, the performance also temporarily forces its audiences up against the ways in which constraint is not only a form of support, but also an invitation to explore. The blindfold, the pre-determined route, and the guiding touch all work together to open possibilities for movement precisely by way of closure: the structure, here, provides a degree of freedom.¹⁴⁹

But *DYSWIM*’s structuring limitation, the blindfold, does not only function to foster an exploration of its downtown trajectory as a choreographic topography; it also brings to

¹⁴⁸ Lepecki makes these comments (which echo his work on choreopolitics which has informed this project) in a public roundtable at the 2013 Mellon Dance Studies Summer Seminar—an event in which I was privileged to participate.

¹⁴⁹ For more on the relationship between freedom and structure in danced and other forms of improvisation, see Danielle Goldman’s *I Want To Be Ready* (2010).

the fore a set of mobility issues that I have not been able to treat fully in this dissertation. Site-based dance's reimaginings of urban choreography are often—though certainly not always—complicit with the presumption of able-bodied physicality. The alternative bodily trajectories they both perform and choreograph reshape the possibilities of their urban environments, but they often do so without reimagining the physical *impossibilities* structured by those same environments. In many cases described in this dissertation, as I have argued, and as Jackson articulates in her study of socially turned art, “alteration in public mobility ... brings the enabling conditions of mobility into view” (*Social* 5). By asking us to attend to the historical creek bed, the dynamics of witnessing in Library Square, the often occluded vertical trajectories of manual labour, the sidewalk's structuring of urban choreographies of passage, or the felt rather than seen dimensions of moving through, site-based dance has the potential to engage its audiencing bodies in a consideration of the vectors of privilege that constitute the grounds of mobility in and through the city. And yet, it is worth remembering in the context of site-based dance's insistence on the choreographic possibilities of urban surfaces that, as Vivian Sobchack voiced earlier in this dissertation, “For the ‘differently abled ... the world is not your dance floor’” (62).¹⁵⁰ The necessarily slow pace of *DYSWIM* dictated by the blindfold departs from the host of site-based dance practices that imagine hyper-able bodies (consider the “super-body” aesthetic of vertical dance). This emphasis on differently-abled bodies was highlighted by the involvement of numerous members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, who participated in the site visits embedded within the walking tour, offering audiencing bodies yet another expression of guidance in the form of insights into moving through the world by feel. In this way, *DYSWIM* calls on its audiencing bodies to physically navigate the closures and exclusions built into public spaces: that is, the ways in which structures that support the movement of some bodies through the city also function to impede the movement of others.

¹⁵⁰ For more on disability in/and dance, see Petra Kuppers' *The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art* (2007) and *Disability Culture and Community Performance: Find a Strange and Twisted Shape* (2011).



Figure 5.7. Exterior walking tour portion of *DYSWIM* in Vancouver, photograph by Liesbeth Bernaerts, from Caleb Johnston and Hayden Lorimer, “Sensing the City,” *Cultural Geographies* 21.4 (2014, Sage, web, 10 January 2015, 676).

Note. A volunteer guide leads a blindfolded audience member on a two-hour long walk through the city before she arrives at the Roundhouse Performance Centre where one of four professional dancers takes her place.

To navigate the uneven terrain *DYSWIM* identifies, the piece proposes a choreography of assistance. Its ethos of mobility relies on direct contact with another body—crucially, the body of a stranger. The piece asks its audience to trust the touch of another for guidance through the city—through traffic and rough neighbourhoods, down stairs and slopes. In so doing, it models the possibilities of the relational kinaesthetic I have been trying, throughout this project, to move toward. Moving outward from *DYSWIM*, but also using the piece to reflect back on my previous chapters, I want to argue that site-based dance’s potential to *move* its audiences is bound together with its ability to model and elicit a choreography of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s “irreducibly spatial positionality of *beside*” (8). Calling attention to skin contact, direct or vicarious, with surrounding surfaces—the exterior of buildings, the concrete skin of a sidewalk or the asphalt of a street, and/or the touch of another body—site-based dance encourages its

publics to attend to the texture of motion through city spaces. Touch, Sedgwick argues, collapses the distinction between passivity and activity: “to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold” (14). As with Fortier’s presentation of the inside of his hand (the interface for delicate, private forms of touch and for bus-pole-gripping urban navigation, both), site based dance practices have the potential to enfold the public and the private together—to insist that we take seriously the ways in which we carry our private worlds into public space. By calling attention to surfaces, *besideness*, and other physical border zones, site dance invites its publics to pause and attend to the embodied experience of being both interconnected with and separate from the surfaces (animate and inanimate) that constitute public spaces.

Site-based dance contemplates what it is to be committed to a movement trajectory and it frames that commitment within the context of everyday, overlooked commitments to predetermined routes. Drawing power from its cultivation of vicariousness, the form casts its audiencing bodies together in a variety of proximate arrangements—“desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations” (Sedgwick 8)—and, in doing so, it insists on the productive frictions intrinsic to experiences of public intimacy. It offers a kinetic and aesthetic register for our mutual dependence on other bodies, insisting, as Judith Butler contends, that if “the exposure of our bodies in public space constitutes us fundamentally, and establishes our thinking as social and embodied, vulnerable and passionate, then our thinking gets nowhere without the presupposition of that very corporeal interdependency and entwinement” (“Bodies in Alliance” 12). The form’s insistence on the feelings and failings of a relational kinaesthetic—an aesthetic and affective register that situates the kinetic as deeply relational—orients us to the possibilities and limitations, the pleasures and discomforts of reimagining movement within predetermined strictures, even as it also indexes “the aesthetic disposition, affirming and transforming the everyday” as an unevenly distributed privilege (Ley 2531).

I have long understood that performance, my performance and that of others, is an offering: I arrive on stage, in the studio, in the street with something to share—often something shared with me by another. But the experience of dancing in *DYSWIM*

clarified for me how performance also operates as an *asking*—an invitation, perhaps, as Gareth White has termed it. But it is also more than that. *DYSWIM* exposed for me the *demand* that performance makes of its audiences, a demand to attend, to follow, to trust, and to come along *with*. This is a demand that site-based dance as a form, I propose, has the potential to lay bare. Because it interrupts the daily flow of life, because it asks us to attend to its bid for curbside attention, because it insists on kinetic attention to texture, and because it does so in a mode that is emphatically *together* (but not as one), it invites its practitioners and audiences both to consider carefully what it is to *be moved*. It offers a self-conscious, aesthetic, and bodily consideration of both the pleasures and the discomforts that come of submitting oneself to, or finding oneself inside, a choreographic structure. In her effort to analyze the pleasure of being directed in immersive theatre, Zaiontz’s notion of “narcissistic spectatorship” that I sketched in my last chapter critiques what she identifies as the aesthetic re-creation of neoliberal models of individualist competition and acquisition (“Narcissistic”). While I think Zaiontz is precisely right in her observation of the practices she analyzes, I have worked throughout this project to point to a different register of experience embedded in site-based dance as a form: the pleasure and the discomfort of witnessing and being led through alternative movement pathways in everyday urban spaces comes, in part, from the form’s tacit but foundational acknowledgement of the city as a choreographic force that organizes bodies in space even as it is, itself, organized by those same bodies.

Chaput and Chazallon both know that I found the creative and performance processes challenging. Working as a dancer in the piece, I was acutely aware of and uncomfortable with what seemed to me to be the uneven power dynamics in the series of duets that constituted the performance. The ethics that underpinned the performer/audience relationship troubled me: positioned as the in-the-know and sighted guide, I was directed to offer intentionally open-ended movement directives to my blindfolded, confused, and often anxious—not to mention very likely exhausted—partner. Although the description that opens this afterword reads as a positive experience of the possibilities of mutuality—and although I enjoyed many of my dances inside *DYSWIM* and received overwhelmingly positive post-performance feedback from my partners—I found elements of the process deeply uncomfortable. “It will not be comfortable, necessarily,” Chazallon told me in a discussion of my experience. “But it is also not

uncomfortable for the sake of being uncomfortable; we are really working at something” (25 January 2013). That “something” toward which we worked was conceived of as a “grey zone” in which “you are not responsible for the performance as you are in other performances, full stop” (25 January 2013). In this show, the dancer is not meant to direct or create or even *perform* a dance. Instead, the dancer’s task is to create a space in which a dance, a dance developed with the stranger she guides, might take place.

DYSWIM exaggerates a trait of engagement that is present in every instance of choreography, and one that I have drawn out with particular attention to Karen Jamieson’s manifold followings in Chapter 2: the act of leading is entangled with following, following with leading. Here, I will dance a little with Lepecki’s engagement with Erin Manning’s notion of “*leadingfollowing*.” As Lepecki, after Manning, contends: “‘to initiate’ is always to confuse and to blur ‘leading’ and ‘following’ into a single (political) formation: *leadingfollowing*. With this concept, which is both descriptive and choreographic, we can see how dance enacts a crucial (choreo) political critique of leadership, one that detaches leading from commanding, and following from submission” (“From Partaking” 39). To lead is to suggest, to open an aperture between bodies and, crucially, to *follow* the response of the one who follows. To follow, then, is also to lead—to initiate a following. *Leadingfollowing* is embedded in the hand-to-elbow choreography of the sight-assist walking technique that defined *DYSWIM*’s gestural vocabulary: the guide stands, arms relaxed, and the blindfolded participant reaches out to find her guide’s inner elbow. It is the follower who initiates contact and it is the follower who determines when to let go. Walking through the city, the pair works toward “feeling each other move,” to borrow SanSan Kwan’s phrase (itself borrowed from the parlance of the dance studio) (5-9). This trained and honed kinetic attunement constitutes an unspoken agreement that allows dancers to find unison or to find a shared movement impulse—to find agreement about, precisely, when to move. In its choreography of dancers attempting to find unison, improvisers “listening” for one another inside a structured improvisatory score, *DYSWIM* generates a framework for “feeling each other move” that insists on the nesting together of leading and following, and that generates a shared set of movement impulses between strangers.

This quality of kinetic attunement extends beyond its exploration of body-to-body relationality. Throughout, *DYSWIM* directs the attention of its audiencing bodies to the micro-topographies of sensation, scent, and sound in the city. Indeed, it is precisely by way of an obscured visual field that the piece cultivates a heightened kinetic register. The blindfold, as Chaput and Chazallon articulated it during a rehearsal, “puts you back in your feet” (14 January 2013). Audience members I spoke with commented on the texture of feeling in the sensation of the ground under their feet: its slip, stick, roughness, give. They commented on the landscape of smells they traced through the piece—one that tracked processes of gentrification through the city: the scent of urine in the DTES gave way to gourmet coffee in Yaletown. *DYSWIM* achieves what Josephine Machon proposes: “Practitioners who experiment with taking sight away completely ... illustrate the shifting perception that occurs when sight is removed and space is reconfigured, forcing an audience member to attend by using the full sensorium in experiencing the work. This serves to accentuate embodied perception by heightening holistic sensory awareness” (*Immersive* 81). In *DYSWIM*, this manifested in what Peter Dickinson called “a heightened haptic sense” (“PuSh” n. pag.) In his review of the show, Dickinson describes “the texture of the sidewalk or road underneath my feet; the warmth of the sun on my face; always the nubby fabric of [my guide] Mariana's sweater at my fingertips” (n. pag.). Because it eliminates the visual interface, *DYSWIM* emphasises the kinetic quality of space; it invites the city to perform its function as a choreographic topography.

Crucially, though, as my reflections on the global itinerancy of the site-specific suggest, *DYSWIM* also insists that the particular choreographic topography of a given site is never just that: it also contains within it other sites, other choreographies. Sara Ahmed makes a similar point with her examination of how we transport other sites into moments of spatial disorientation in order to find our way. Ahmed draws on a lineage of philosophical examples of blindfolded persons (men, more accurately) to claim that when we are blindfolded in the midst of an unfamiliar environment, “one whose contours are not part of our memory map,” we must rely on a combination of touch and a knowledge of “social form, [of] how the social is arranged” (7). Even when I was blindfolded during the walking tours that were part of the *DYSWIM* rehearsal process, I knew, without visual confirmation, that the ground beneath my feet was, for example, part of a sidewalk. I recognized the smooth roughness of the ground surface; I felt the

ridges that separate one concrete square from the next. As part of a sidewalk, I knew (without knowing) that this version of ground must extend in an approximation of a straight line in either direction, as sidewalks do; I knew that it would meet with intersections, stoplights, street traffic, and so on. I was oriented without knowing where I was; it was an oriented disorientation. In this way, my experience—like that of other *DYSWIM* audiencing bodies—was characterized by a “familiarity [that was] shaped by the ‘feel’ of space or by how spaces ‘impress[ed]’ upon” my body (7). Even as my exploration of a particular choreographic topography is grounded in this site, in this stretch of sidewalk, it is also elsewhere, importing both abstract and specific urban structures into (to call on battery opera’s formulation from Chapter 5) “this body, this place” (qtd. in Colenbrander).

DYSWIM insists on this folding together of sited experiences, crystalizing a dynamic at work in all site-based dance: because it relies for its development and performance on multiple rehearsals, revisits, and repetitions, site-based dance foregrounds site and event both as unstable concepts. Just as my dancing partner carried with her into our dance the air and the feel and the freshness and the muscle memories from her two-hour long walk through Vancouver, so every site-based dance carries with(in) it a kinetic accrual of places, times, and relations from one rehearsal to the next, from one performance to the next, and on. As an emphatically embodied form, then, site-based dance has the potential to insist on the interconnectedness of multiple and widespread places and moments.

When Hamera discusses her theory of dance technique as a “hauntopia” peopled by a long lineage of bodies in a chain of embodied transmissions (8-9), she also reflects on other types of hauntings in dance. In particular, she suggests that studio spaces are haunted by the kinetic traces of those who have come before. This troubling of presence and absence extends further: Hamera also recalls how her childhood ballet studio was haunted by the absence of bodies whose presence elsewhere (spatially or temporally understood) loomed large: specifically, her teacher’s unrequited longing for Anna Pavlova’s presence marked the studio (8). In this productive equation, spaces are *constituted*—for that is something of what a discourse of haunting seeks to articulate—by pasts that erupt into the present (to invoke Rebecca Schneider’s sense of time’s

“remains”). Building on Hamera, I propose that what site-based dance models—and what becomes clear in *DYSWIM*—is a version of a hauntopia tilted on its axis: here, the dancing body is, itself, a receptacle of places and people that work on and shape the body even as they are shaped by its movement. When my dance partner comes into the space, I can feel in her body the rhythm of her walk: I can feel the looseness in her joints generated by the two-hour, tandem tour. I can feel the hard strike of heel against concrete in her gait. I can feel the stops and starts and traffic lights in her responsiveness to my pauses. I can feel the bristling proximity of passing too close to another pedestrian, of trimming too close to a doorframe, in the way she burrows into the edges of my trajectory. I can feel an echo of the particular quality of support embodied by my partner’s previous guide (soft and inquiring, or firm and directive, or loose and unclear) in the way she listens to my movement, and in the way she offers her own. These chiasmic traces of places-as-gestures-as-places function not only as a kinetic index of the ways in which we constitute and are constituted by one another; they also animate the dance floor—this particular levelled, cleared, marley-covered dance floor (to call on Carter’s formulation)—with a site specificity that both is and is not specific to this place.

It is this pull between what I identified in my last chapter as the “here” and the “elsewhere” that site-based dance always enacts and that *DYSWIM* so carefully sustains. And it is with this tension that the concept of “beside” can help: for, as Sedgwick insists in the epigraph that opens this Afterword: “Beside is an interesting preposition because there’s nothing very dualistic about it” (8). The notion of “beside” (and its various permutations) has recently become an important strain of performance and dance scholarship: a few expressions of particular relevance to site-based dance include Zaiontz’s notion of “site-specific spectatorship as an experience of ‘beside’” (“Stagehands” 13), Laura Levin’s exploration of site-situated performance with reference to Heidegger’s notion of “alongside-things” (*Performing* 182), Lepecki’s material exploration of “alongsideness” in contemporary dance (“Moving” 81), and the collective exploration of “beside” at the 2013 Mellon Dance Studies Summer Seminar public roundtable “Inside/Beside” (Clayton et al.). In her contribution to this discussion Schneider turns to Lepecki’s writing on *leadingfollowing*, drawing out a connection between his compounding of opposites and her own theorizing of, as she puts it,

“ephemeral/remaining” and “then/now” (9). The “irreducible positionality of *beside*” (to bring Sedgwick back into the conversation) that joins these words becomes, for Schneider (as for Sedgwick), an instance of “both/and” (10)—an effort to think around the binary that would divide the words nested together.

I sat in the room during this roundtable discussion, positioned beside some of the scholars whose work has come to constitute my own in an academic relationality that asks to be called citationality, and I recall the importance of the forward slash, “/,” in the discussion. “/” was theorized as a partition, as a joint, as a wall leaning askew and threatening to fall, as a slope to traverse (up with resistance, or down with momentum), as a teetering and permanent state of imbalance (Clayton et al. “Inside/Beside Dance Studies Roundtable”). The slash, or the “slant” as Schneider terms it, leans forward, enclosing movement into its stillness. “/” indexes the longing for a way of thinking around the dualism that Sedgwick situates in besideness. But it also indexes the limits of *beside*—the joining that is also a partitioning. It is this limited and promising sense of *beside* that characterizes a relational kinaesthetic. What I have tried (and failed on many fronts) to conceptualize in this project is what Schneider identifies as “access to partial connection” (10), something she suggests, that dance and dance studies are particularly well positioned to explore. As an aesthetic and kinetic mode that brings people together in/with space to explore “what a body can do,” dance plays with the tonal qualities of kinetic relationality. In this way, it has the potential to, as Schneider proposes in the roundtable discussion, “unsettl[e] the body off of the site of positive embodiment, into all the partial spaces it may or may not touch. ... Not only here, now, contingently, but in the affective spaces that any body creates in relation to other objects, other bodies, other things—in and across space and in and across time” (10). Returning to Dee Reynolds’ affective understanding of *kinesthetic empathy*: “dance is a movement through and across bodies rather than being an attribute of the dancer’s body” (129). The site-situated dancing body exists in an in-between *space*: beside beside, perhaps.



Figure 5.8. A dancer/participant duet during the interior portion of *DYSWIM* in Vancouver, photograph by Caleb Johnston (2013).

Note. This photograph depicts one of my dances with an audience participant. Here, I see myself listening for the small dance of stacking bones in my partner's body, which (even in this image) blurs at the edges with my own.

Just as her dance is choreographed by the accrual of sites that brought my dancing partner in *DYSWIM* to me, and as her body is conditioned by the quality of *leadingfollowing* that has mobilized her through the city, my body, too, is a receptacle of constituent parts: the dances I encountered earlier in the afternoon and evening have accumulated in my joints; the hours of performance have softened my tissue and slowed

my pace. Stepping further back, my body is conditioned, toned, and tuned by the techniques I have encountered here and elsewhere: by my informal public conditioning in the everyday urban choreographies of containment and passing, by my formal training in a lifetime of transferences of different forms of bodily knowledge. I carry hundreds of hours dancing on the buttery hardwood floor at the EDAM studio (perched and shifting on top of Brewery Creek) in my reaching for ground. I carry the regimes of a decade as competitive gymnast in longing to lift and fly, in my slightly swayed lower back, in my perception of precision. I carry the cut and line of my desk chair, of my keyboard, of my computer in my held shoulders, in my tight hips. My amalgam body meets her amalgam body in a dance that performs the ways in which we are constituted not only by one another, but also by the spaces and textures in and on which we are grounded. I feel the pull of the *here* against the tug of the *elsewhere*. I feel it in our bones—hers, and mine—swaying and stacking in the moving stillness of the small dance that emerges between us. I feel it in the ground, shifting and settling beneath us. For a moment, I think I feel the two together.

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