



EDITORIAL

WHY CHOREOGRAPHY NOW?

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A lot seems to be going on around choreography in the arts. It is applied to performances with non-human performers like machines, animals and plants. Some relate choreography to work reminiscent of sound art, others to pieces of writing and diverse actions proposing scripts. As a term it is increasingly utilized by curators to introduce work in exhibitions mostly relating to the visual arts. For more than a decade now there has been discussion around approaches of expanded choreography. These points were amongst what motivated the compilation of the special issue of *Dance Articulated* titled *Choreography Now*. It takes seriously the interdisciplinary developments that the art of choreography has undergone during the 21st century and aims at introducing timely discussion and examples of the opportunities these developments have engendered.

This special issue acknowledges that choreography has come of age and evolved into an interdisciplinary art form in its own right. Carrying basic insights from its history related to composing movement for the human body and dancing, it now draws inspiration from other forms of the performing and visual arts and even design. Choreography's ties with dance have thus loosened and it no longer simply relates to constructing determined sequences of chosen movements that are rehearsed and performed by dancers on a proscenium stage or other arenas for seated or standing spectators. While such choreographic activity is still ongoing, ever-expanding forms of choreography deal with forms of public human or non-human bodily acts, which constitute, instead of depict, reality in the actuality of performance. Choreography thus has been conceived of as an open frame or set of principles that generate or structure movement – propositions for possible actions to be undertaken or initiated by both human or non-human performers and the audience members, or both together (Foster, 2010a, 2010b).

Choreography has also been explored as an agent in society. Choreography thus has become an artistic capacity originating from the dance field, a capacity which is now expanding beyond dance in the same way as, for example, dramaturgy loosened its ties to theater and extended into other fields. The dissolution of the boundaries of the different art forms in the post- and late modern era has led to increased scrutiny of the influences according to which choreography operates and consequently furthered exploration of its creative potentials. This relates to a strategy of practical and creative research in dance introduced by dance researcher Elisabeth Dempster. She discusses this as *thinking through performance* as a critical unpacking of the foundational assumptions of professionalized embodied knowledge – undisciplined creative inquiry and endeavor (Brown & Longley, 2018; Dempster, 2018).

What has likewise become highlighted again is that the term choreography denotes both movement and writing. This, and several other choreographic expansions that *Choreography Now* propels, shows that choreography keeps diffracting (Barad, 2007) with its own history. As an initiating, exploration or structuring of movement that bodies and materials subject themselves to, choreography entails writing: a script, a bodily articulation or notation. In this vein, it is an apparatus for articulation that involves dynamic theorizing about what relational bodies and materials can do (Lepecki, 2010). Thus, here too, choreography and dancemaking have been conceived of as experiments or open-ended

▶ research undertakings conducted together with diverse kinds of participants, objects and materials in unconventional settings. Indeed, contemporary choreography has been discussed as a method of posing problems that produces disruption in our conventional sensibility, and in so doing, repositions our understanding of the relationship between dance, body, time, performance and choreography (Cvejic, 2015). As an artistic process, (re)search and a way of thinking, choreography now counteracts normativity in what might be perceived as dance, a dancing body or a choreographic structure.

Choreography Now is performative and produces curious dynamics and movement in a network of art forms and technologies with no clear boundaries. Creative processes in different artistic media are realized as performance, and choreography has become a term used across the arts. Choreographic practice has likewise been impacted by the weakening of the conception of a self-contained subject and a move into viewing human agency as more material and contaminated than before, a material-discursive entanglement, as, among others, posthumanism and new materialism argue for. An ensuing recent emphasis in contemporary dance has thus been the undermining of the performing human body and the highlighting of ecologically and politically informed forms of choreography that explore choreography's potential as an agent of change.

Choreography now is plural and diverse, and the collection of articles that *Choreography Now* encompasses creatively and critically discuss choreographic examples and introduce approaches to what choreography typically can mean, do, produce and contribute within different socio-material and cultural contexts.

Lynda Gaudreau is a Canadian choreographer currently working as a postdoctoral researcher in Helsinki. Her contribution "A Letter to Ludwig Wittgenstein" plays with the notion of asynchrony. As a choreographic approach, asynchrony aims at the modification in perception caused through slight changes in space-time related cultural conventions. The article in itself is a piece of choreography written in fictional letter format and addressed to the philosopher Wittgenstein. Through it the author evokes a sense of different time periods, durations, changing places and settings. In juxtaposing these elements, the unconventional letter establishes a complex flow of intensities that surprise and move the reader.

Simo Kellokumpu is a Finnish choreographer and a researcher based in Helsinki. With his article "Towards Astroembodied Choreostructions: Deviating from Choreographing to Choreoreading" he weaves choreography as reading practice with Jean Luc Nancy's notion *struction*. The author approaches the operative potential of the concept by exposing how his choreographic practice moves from composition to attention. In this, he explores the destabilization of the hierarchy between choreographer, movement, body and place, and instead suggests choreoreading as exposed place- and context-responsive bodily practice, which searches out ways to materialize artworks that he names choreostructions.

Linnea Bågander is a Swedish designer and doctoral candidate, who explores the ▶

interrelationship of textiles and the body in performance. Karoline Kent, in turn, is a Swedish interdisciplinary artist working with movement and the visual arts. Their contribution “Enabling (e)motion” introduces an artistic collaboration that generated a site-specific participatory tensile textile construction. Their choreographic process focuses on such material designing that encourages somatic bodily exploration by participants. The feedback received from participants about engaging with the materially prompted movement experimentation suggests that the construction operated as scaffolding in which they could concentrate on their felt sense and interaction with their immediate environment and disengage from their everyday activities and relieve stress.

Marie-Louise Crawley and Rosemary Kostic Cisneros are both researchers, choreographers and dancers based in Great Britain. In their article “Holding the Space: Choreography, Architecture and Cultural Heritage”, they authors discuss choreography on the basis of the workshop-performance event by Anton Mitro called *Scaffolding*. The choreography was dependent on the architectonics of the heritage space of cathedral ruins where it was performed and how the ruins chronicled the past. The article argues that the performance was a public bodily act, an artistic boundary crosser and a socio-political agent. The authors pay specific attention to temporality – how performance can engender active ongoing participation with what remains of the past, with holding and letting go of the past. Simultaneously, the article underlines the political agency of choreography as a means of addressing local history and memory.

Anna Leon is a dance historian and theorist based in Vienna. With her article “Between and within Choreographies: An Early Choreographic Object by William Forsythe”, she scrutinizes an installation in the Dutch city of Groningen. Leon’s analysis shows that the installation negates certain aspects of choreographic history while exemplifying and perpetuating others, therefore situating itself between different historical construals of choreography. The author argues that choreography is choreographies: choreography is not a stable notion, but still it often discusses with its own history. Even interdisciplinary choreographic practices can contribute to re-articulations of choreographic history.

Canadian writer, curator, and researcher Chris Dupuis contributes with the article “Curation as Choreographic Practice”. He shows how dance curators have a significant impact on the dance field through their selection processes, elevating certain works, practices, and artists, while effectively excluding others. Through this, the author argues, the practice of dance curation can be explored as a form of choreography in itself as curators have a considerable hand in shaping what kinds of dance pieces a local audience has access to. In this, curators are effectively writing dance history over time.

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