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The amicable collision of movement quality and meaning : compartmentalization and integration in life and art

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The Amicable Collision of Movement Quality and Meaning:
Compartmentalization and Integration in Life and Art

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Submitted to the Department of Dance of Smith College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Rodger Blum, Faculty Advisor

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Opening Section of Amicable Collisions—Full Cast



Solo—Mei Maeda

Photos by Dan Rist

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*“We polish one another, and rub off our Corners and rough Sides by a sort of amicable Collision.”*¹

—Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury

*“All that is important is this one moment in movement. Make the moment important, vital, and worth living. Do not let it slip away unnoticed and unused.”*²

—Martha Graham

Chapter One:

Introduction—Drawing Connections

When witnessing live dance performance, the quality of the dancers’ movement frequently emerges as the most interesting component of the choreography. Movement quality may be defined as the way in which a dancer moves that cannot otherwise be described by an objective observation of the action. Description of movement quality might include expressive adjectives, attention to a dancer’s energy or muscular tension, or the relationship between a dancer’s movement and the elements of weight and time. Considered exploration of the nuanced possibilities for ways in which energy might be used in the body rivets me to the work I see; conversely, a lack of attention to their importance distances me. Movement quality binds together choreographic structure, connecting dancers to each other and to the meaning of the piece. The value of specificity and a dancer’s interest in the details of movement cannot be underestimated. In my own work, I value and encourage strong, fluid movement performed with

¹ Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels* (New York: Random House, 2012), 54.

² Agnes de Mille, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*, (New York: Random House, 1991), 102-103.

a weighted connection to the earth. I seek dancers who understand how to integrate various qualities in their bodies, and who can tend to the pathways between movements. These connections that can be experienced while dancing reflect those existing in the broader context of life. The study of movement quality in dance intertwined with my interest in the connections people experience in their lives formed the basis for the creation of my MFA thesis choreography, *Amicable Collisions*.

For the past year, I have studied movement quality from various angles, observing fellow dancers constantly as I integrate new information and perspectives. I chose to study movement quality from an academic perspective prior to starting the thesis project rehearsal process as a way to root the experience in fertile ground and clarify the approach I wanted to take in making the work. I created a dance theatre piece exploring the ways in which people compartmentalize their lives, and the degree to which they choose to overlap, merge, or integrate various roles, identities, or ways of being. People often separate the different roles they play or worlds they inhabit, such as artist/parent or work/home, as a way of organizing their experiences of life. While this approach has benefits, it can also leave people feeling fragmented or unable to bring together these various identities. The title of my thesis piece, *Amicable Collisions*, is based on a quote from 1711 by Anthony Ashley-Cooper, a member of the Kit Kat club in London who discussed changes in English society affecting the performing arts. The title refers to the coming together of the parts of one's life, and to my desire to integrate the components of my own life as seamlessly as possible. Within the choreography, movement quality served as a metaphor for the connections between people, and on an individual level, between the compartments of people's lives. I view movement quality as a representation of the metaphysical connection between

humans and the universe we inhabit. *Amicable Collisions* explored this connection, and the individual dancers' levels of comfort with the concept, through movement, music, and design.

The importance of movement quality to me as an artist lies in the essence of my aesthetic and world view. Cultivating the qualitative aspects of a dance allows me to honor the various movement patterns of each dancer while also creating a unified way of moving unique to the particular group of dancers with whom I am working. In this context, "movement patterns" reference the inherent yet examined qualitative movement tropes of each dancer which differ based on their individual physical histories. The attention to the relationship between the dancers' movement and the qualitative aspects of the choreography echoes my commitment to individuality within a community mindset. The breadth of my aesthetic allows for movements and movement qualities that may look very different from each other to embody the attributes in which I am interested. When creating work, I invite full-bodied, virtuosic movement informed by training in classical technique and cross-disciplinary somatic practices. Most importantly, the connections between different body parts must be clear, and movement must be well-integrated and fully "settled" in the dancer's body. It remains vital to my creative process to engage with dancers who take an intellectual approach to movement discoveries because this conceptual, examined way of working informs the connections I make between moments and movements. This reflects my larger interest in exploring the connections we experience in all aspects of our lives, and the ways in which people navigate those circumstances.

Amicable Collisions was performed at Smith College on February 14-16, 2013 as part of (*DÉNOUEMENT*), the shared thesis concert of the Department of Dance MFA class of 2013. Set to original music that I created with longtime collaborator Cory Ellen Gatrall, the piece had seven dancers—four women and three men—costumed in charcoal leggings and tunics in shades

of orange. Three steel-framed boxes delineated spatial limitations and were moved by the dancers during the piece as the lights shifted from stark and cold to warm and bright. The piece lasted seventeen minutes and was presented first in the concert.

In this paper, I trace the evolution of *Amicable Collisions* from inception to culmination. After a detailed description of the piece as seen through the lens of movement quality and meaning, I review the research that informed the process, and the subsequent revelations that emerged as theory became practice. My research includes an investigation into the sports science perspective on analyzing human movement, Rudolf Laban's movement analysis framework, and the approach of individual choreographers within the rehearsal process. Next, I analyze two dancers who inhabited polarized roles within my work, and with whom my most essential practical research was conducted. I then discuss diversity, an element that strongly informed my casting decisions, and the challenges and gifts that aspect of the cast brought to the process as well as the relationship between my casting choices and my aesthetic in terms of movement quality. Finally, I offer reflection on my growth as an artist, and the effect of this project on the continued evolution of my aesthetic and identity as a dance artist.

Chapter Two:

The Concert—An Amicable Collision of Process and Product

The Choreography

Amicable Collisions began in darkness with a short quote recorded in overlapping voices: “*The preservation of harmony is the aim of the laws of society. Like the laws of the universe, they prevent a return to chaos.*”³ Used in this context, the “laws of society” represented the limitations that keep society functional, as well as those which encourage people to keep various aspects of their lives separated. Immediately following this quote, seven boxes of light appeared, with a dancer posed inside each one. The three dancers located downstage left, center, and upstage right held their shapes inside five foot-, six foot-, and seven foot-tall steel box frames, respectively. All dancers shifted in the light, rising or sinking slowly before another blackout. A second quote could be heard listing some “laws of society.” The lights rose again, highlighting three dancers who explored the boundaries of their boxes while voices sang out a harmony of unrecognizable syllables. The light cross-faded to another set of three dancers, and finally to a solo dancer, who swayed and reached longingly as she gazed beyond the limits of her box of light. These movement phrases contained traces of unexamined or default movement patterns identified for each dancer in the beginning of the rehearsal period. As the last dancer’s solo came to an end, she swept backwards out of her box, which initiated a lighting change that allowed the stage to be seen as a whole.

Six dancers stretched, turned, and reached through the space, navigating new territory to line up behind the woman in the middle box, almost—but not quite—touching. They peeled off

³ Ellin Craven Learned, *Everybody’s Complete Etiquette*, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1923), 3.

in canon with a full-bodied movement phrase designed to show the different ways in which they performed the same choreography. Two dancers grasped the steel frame of the center box and lifted their feet to hang and twist, while others explored the interior and exterior edges of the boxes. Suddenly, two dancers tilted the center box with one woman still hanging from it, and she released her grip, clearly surprised to encounter this possibility. Soon another dancer carried the shortest box upstage right so that all three boxes stood next to each other in height order. During this section, several solos, duets, and trios emerged and intertwined, as dancers began to explore the space free from the concrete limitations they had previously encountered. As dancers interacted, they imitated each other's movements, finding unexpected moments of connection with others that flared briefly before they resumed their respective pathways. The differences in movement quality between them represented the separation between their individual experiences or identities.

Dancers transitioned into the next section as the recorded vocals ended, and began humming continuously. They reached into the space around them, spiraling and rolling as they slowly migrated towards downstage right. The first dancer to arrive planted her feet firmly and sang out on an open vowel sound, calling the others to join her, "Ahhhhhhh...!" The dancers gathered as one group for the first time, all vocalizing with open vowels on different notes; they stood in a small circle, shoulders touching but with their backs to each other and eyes closed. This reflected people's unwillingness to realize the extent to which the compartmentalization of various aspects of their lives remains self-imposed, chosen, and therefore an illusory construct. Simultaneously, their vocalization became an aural exploration of the world they inhabited, and the vibratory sound reflected the energetic resonance of their unrealized connections to each other. As dancers began to fall away from this core image, they continued to vocalize, keep their

eyes closed, and employ similar movements in a way that linked them to the group. Two dancers tilted and fell to a crouch before sitting to face the circle, two other dancers rolled away together, and three dancers melted from the waist, recovering and melting again. Ultimately, one male dancer remained in the circle, vocalizing alone with an echo of the initial call. He melted down and rolled up repeatedly, while the other dancers sat quietly and watched him. This moment zoomed in on the navigation of unknown potential; the dancer was trying to figure out the relationship between connection and separation, and those watching him could only witness without fully understanding his experience. Finally one dancer rose quickly to catch and hold him, and another joined her to gently guide him forward, both literally and figuratively. At this point, six of the seven dancers sat on the front edge of the lit portion of the stage with their backs to the audience, questioning imposed separation or compartmentalization by becoming, for a short time, audience themselves.

The next section was a solo set on Mei, whose work during the creative process I discuss in detail later in this paper. This solo, from the beginning of its development, explored the illusion of compartmentalization on several levels. Conceptually, Mei was exploring the ways in which she was keeping the roles or identities of her own life separate; simultaneously, she was navigating the intersection of her compartmentalization with my value of integration. On a more concrete level, Mei's task was to incorporate various elements of her fellow dancers' movement patterns with my movement quality aesthetic of athletic, virtuosic movement, attention to moments of transition, and physical connection, integrating all of that with her own consciously chosen movement patterns. No small task, the dance weaved in and out of the boxes, into and out of the floor, gathering energy that led to a fast-paced allegro section, which came to an abrupt stop when Mei grabbed her own leg. She froze momentarily before resuming a more

careful reaching movement. As the music ended, Mei walked slowly downstage center while carefully studying the dancers watching her and the audience members beyond.

Mei's deliberate progress downstage transitioned the piece into its final section, as overlapping and indistinguishable whispers began and grew in volume. Mei grasped another dancer's hand and pulled her to her feet, but was not quite ready to engage in full connection, and turned upstage to re-enter a box. As the dancers still sitting began to reach into the light again, vocal harmonies could be heard, and the dancers carried the boxes into a new formation. The two smaller boxes landed upstage left with one leaning at an angle on the other, and four dancers explored this new arrangement. Two men swung the tallest box in large, overlapping circles as they ran to place it downstage right, and then they partnered with the box and each other, supporting and lifting as they navigated new territory. This section of the piece brought all the dancers together, with previously hinted-at connections between them becoming more tangible, many moments of eye contact, and a consciously developed movement quality that wove my aesthetic with each dancer's individual patterns. As the vocals faded to whispers and then to silence, the dancers swept their bodies through space in unison but facing different directions, with all but one, Tom, out of the boxes. At the end of the unison phrase, five dancers leapt and turned offstage leaving Tom echoing their actions inside his box. The lights faded as the last dancer spiraled along a circular pathway around the stage and towards him.

The Music

In discussing the connection between process and product, I will briefly touch on the original music and sound I created for this work with Cory Ellen Gatrall. A substantial part of my artistic life in the past few years has included creating or collaborating on the musical accompaniment to my choreography. In the fall of 2011 I collaborated with Cory Ellen on text

and harmonized humming for my Fall Grad Event choreography, and for the Spring Grad Event I collaborated with a cellist on an improvised score. I knew heading into the thesis process that I would create original music, in spite of the unusual undertaking of creating two distinct projects. Because the focus of this paper is the thesis choreography, this short section exists as an overview of the musical development, an acknowledgment of the connection between the music and the movement, and a nod to the comparable depth we brought to the creation of the sound.

Just as with the choreography, Cory Ellen and I began with the same quote and the conceptual exploration of compartmentalization in life. We researched traditional etiquette books to find text that echoed the delineations of the steel boxes, and of the conceptual compartments the dancers were investigating. Because of our shared voice training as young artists, we decided early in the process to use only vocals in the final product. We developed an image of sitting in a crowded place listening to conversations that cannot quite be heard, which represented the illusion of separation in life. Based on this image, we used sung phonetic syllables and whispered text from the etiquette books and the dancers' journals to layer a soundscape. We spent many hours in the recording booth using Garage Band to produce harmonies and a nuanced weaving of vocals and text.

One of the more unusual aspects of this process for me was that instead of creating the music prior to beginning the choreographic process, or as a separate endeavor, Cory Ellen and I created in tandem with the development of the choreography. As the process evolved, the music and choreography informed each other exponentially until they became inextricably linked. Cory Ellen often attended rehearsals, and the dancers recorded their own words which we then used in the sections of layered text. Although I had originally intended to keep these elements

separate until one or both were completed, the creative processes for the development of music and choreography engaged in their own amicable collision.

Chapter Three:

Summer Research and Beyond—Everything Old is New Again

Prior to starting the rehearsal process for *Amicable Collisions*, I researched the ways in which professionals in various fields have addressed, studied, and analyzed human movement. I researched an innovative, sports science-based, movement analysis system designed to provide a more holistic view of movement analysis than had previously been used in the field. This provided a concrete model for structuring and organizing analysis and feedback related to movement quality in dancers. I investigated Rudolf Laban's movement analysis system as a foundation for discussing human movement, which served as an excellent framework in view of Laban's unique and vital place in dance history. Lastly, I interviewed working choreographers with the same set of four questions related to their approach to movement quality in the rehearsal process.⁴ From this research I intended to develop, clarify and employ my own unique approach to addressing movement quality as a vital component of the choreographic process and performance. The investigation supported the creation of *Amicable Collisions* in both expected and unexpected ways. In this chapter I discuss the research I conducted in the summer of 2012, as well as subsequent research of metaphysical philosophies that stemmed from the development of the piece, and the ways in which the research informed the creative process.

The Framework of Sports Science

In order to effectively incorporate the various perspectives on movement quality gained from my research, I needed a framework within which I could develop my approach. One possibility that arose from my summer research emerged from the field of sports science, where

⁴ See Appendix A for a list of the questions used in the interviews. Appendix B contains my own responses to those questions, answered both before and after the creation of *Amicable Collisions*.

movement analysis aims to improve performance results. The traditional approach, however, involved studying qualitative analysis from the perspective of a single subdiscipline. Knudson and Morrison, two sports scientists who believe that real-life qualitative analysis requires an integration of the various subdisciplines of kinesiology as well as other fields of study, proposed a four part model for movement analysis.⁵ Based on sports and exercise science, this model contains applications for dance and movement arts as well. The four steps of this model are preparation, observation, evaluation/diagnosis, and intervention. Preparation includes establishing one's knowledge of the activity, of the performers, and of relevant systematic observational strategies. Observation involves the implementation of such observational strategy. During the evaluation/diagnosis phase, the analyst must identify the range of correctness of critical features, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Finally, intervention requires selecting the appropriate manner in which to address perceived weaknesses, and then translating critical features into cues.⁶

Should a choreographer want a dancer to execute a movement phrase, for example, containing a *rond de jambe en l'air* while rotating the torso on a tilt, she or he could prepare by breaking down the shape and pathways of the body in space. Another part of the preparation stage would be to identify what movement qualities are desired so as to articulate them to the dancer. During the observation phase it is important to establish a consistent manner in which to observe, such as making multiple observations before giving corrections. Evaluation/diagnosis, in the example above, would mean deciding how high the leg must be, or how long the turn should last, and how close the dancer is to the ideal of what the choreographer is looking for.

⁵ Duane V. Knudson and Craig S. Morrison, *Qualitative Analysis of Human Movement*. 2nd ed, (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2002, 1997), 6-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

Finally, if necessary, the choreographer can intervene in a way that directly addresses the components that need to be changed, and develop cue words to help the dancer remember the correction. This is useful as a way of avoiding overcorrecting or “nitpicking,” particularly early in the evolution of the phrase. Regardless of how it manifests, having a framework for exchanging ideas about subjective matters offers clarity and ease of communication during the development of a dance piece.

In an article published in the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance* in 2000, Knudson examined the ways in which the integrative model of qualitative analysis can be made more accurate and consistent.⁷ The guidelines offered in this article are also applicable to teaching dance and the choreographic process. While most teachers—and perhaps choreographers—use an error-correction approach, qualitative analysis is much improved by having a comprehensive vision. Its validity increases with appropriate preparation and observational strategy, and its reliability improves with multiple observations and a simple method for addressing critical features.⁸ For a choreographer, the comprehensive vision would be the overall vision for the piece. From an artistic standpoint, the “accuracy” of the desired movement would refer to the intended goal of the creator, which, while more subjective than the distance a baseball is thrown, can certainly be clear in its parameters. Finally, it is important to observe movements over time. Knudson reveals that most studies of qualitative analysis show that analytic consistency rises with multiple observations because of the inherent inconsistencies in human movement. In sports science, some observers use a temporal breakdown when assessing movement—the stages of preparation, action and follow-through—while others use a

⁷ Duane Knudson, “What Can Professionals Qualitatively Analyze?” *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*, 71, no. 2 (2000), accessed July 21, 2012, *Academic Search Premier*, 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

less structured approach to gain an overall impression before beginning their analysis.⁹ This latter model appears more useful in an artistic context.

When I began the choreographic process I had intended to use Knudson and Morrison's research as a starting point for developing my own clearly articulated model for addressing movement quality. Partway through the rehearsal period, however, I became frustrated with what I perceived to be the dancers' inability to grasp the qualitative nuances I was requesting. I would often coach a specific movement or phrase until I could see the quality evolving, but the dancers were unable or unwilling to retain the changes in subsequent rehearsals. My cast was overwhelmingly good-natured and invested in being present, and I did not immediately realize that most of them had not yet acquired the necessary experience to know *how* to investigate in the manner I was requesting. For several weeks I abandoned discussion related to movement quality in order to focus on developing the choreography. This decision was due in part to a sense of not knowing how to handle the situation in which I had placed myself, but was also rooted in the hope that a greater comfort level with the concrete choreographic material would allow us to return to a focus on the qualitative aspects.

Although it felt uncertain at the time, in hindsight I see clearly the influence of the sports science model on the arc of my approach to movement quality. I used the four stages—preparation, observation, evaluation/diagnosis, and intervention—to develop and address movements with the dancers. For example, in one section I wanted to use a short phrase I originally developed for a piece commissioned by a ballet company. In its first iteration, the phrase was fairly segmented; one shape or movement followed another. I knew I wanted the dancers in *Amicable Collisions* to create a less-segmented version, and spent time in the studio in advance searching for ways to connect the phrase more fluidly. When I taught the dancers the

⁹ Ibid., 19.

phrase, I directed them to focus on the idea of connections or transitions. Next, I observed them, and soon realized that the phrase still appeared sectioned. As I evaluated their performance of the phrase, I concluded they were still focusing on the shapes more than the pathways in between. For an intervention, I directed the dancers to attempt the phrase but to remove every shape and only dance the transitions. This proved extremely difficult, but as we added in the shapes again, Mei and two other dancers started to blend the movement more successfully. This phrase became the basis of Mei's solo.

The other place where sports science unconsciously informed my process was my experience of working with Tom. As I discuss later in this paper, in the middle of my creative process I surrendered my desire to evoke any particular movement quality from him, which inherently allowed me to make multiple observations over a period of time, as Knudson suggests in his article. Parallel to this, my comprehensive vision of the piece crystallized, and this less structured approach left room for me to discover a way to successfully address Tom's movement quality. Although the sports science model did not inform my process in quite the linear, structured way I had intended, my knowledge of the stages of analysis and my awareness of the need to engage in a holistic view of human movement influenced the way in which I approached the challenges of working with the cast of *Amicable Collisions*.

The Influence of Rudolf Laban

In the early twentieth century, Rudolf Laban's research into human movement garnered attention due to its highly nuanced system for analyzing movement quality in industry and the arts. Although extremely complex in its entirety, an overview of the material offers a paradigm and vocabulary for addressing movement quality in the rehearsal process. As Laban developed his understanding of human movement, his descriptions included "ephemeral events, qualifiers,

and modifiers of action,” and it was this analysis of dynamic that he named “Effort”.¹⁰ At its simplest, Effort can be seen as changes in exertion in flow of movement, quality of weight, time, and spatial focus. Each of these four elements—flow, weight, time, and space—has a range of possibilities between two opposites; flow can be free or bound, weight can be strong or light, time can be quick or sustained, and one’s relationship to space can be direct or indirect.¹¹ These opposites are polar ends of the continua of each element, and Laban sought to explore the range of these continua as well as ways to integrate oppositional concepts. He believed that the range of options provided ways for humans to enrich self-understanding, particularly of our nature as thinking, moving beings.¹² These polarities, and the continua between them, provide a landscape in which the quality of movement can change.¹³

Although the possibilities within the elements of flow, weight, time, and space are often felt intuitively, the specificity with which Laban analyzed Effort offers nuance and clarity, as well as an established language to use when discussing movement quality. Flow refers to changes in the quality of flow of tension in the body. Bound flow is similar to what is sometimes perceived as rigid or taut, and free flow is related to a sense of ease, but “it is the relationships among the muscles tensed, rather than the presence of tension in the body, which determines the quality of the flow.”¹⁴ Bound flow movements are performed with a readiness to stop at any moment, whereas free flow movements have a sense of abandon, and the need to stop is

¹⁰ Karen K. Bradley, *Rudolf Laban* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 42.

¹¹ Cecily Dell, *A Primer for Movement Description Using Effort-Shape and Supplementary Concepts* (New York: Dance Notation Bureau Press, 1977), 12.

¹² Bradley, 41-42.

¹³ Dell, 31.

¹⁴ Dell, 13-14.

considered unessential.¹⁵ Weight refers to changes in the quality of body weight, which can range from forceful to light. When exploring the weight of the body or a body part, a dancer can approach movement with a forceful or strong quality by increasing the pressure of that weight, or one can withhold or withdraw the feeling of weight, producing a feeling of lightness.¹⁶ Time refers to changes in the quality of time in movement between sustained and quick. It is important to note the difference between “sustained” and “slow” here. The aspects of sustainment and quickness are different from quantitative measurements of speed, because they address a quality of movement that is often unrelated to the amount of clock time that has passed.¹⁷ In fact, when studying the movement of industrial workers, Laban noticed that sustained movement was necessary for most tasks, and that quickness too easily translated into haste, which had a detrimental effect on efficiency.¹⁸ Finally, space refers to changes in the quality of spatial focus or awareness. When there are multiple points of focus or areas of attention in the body in a given moment, one is approaching the space indirectly. When there is a channeling, focusing, or pinpointing of spatial awareness, the space factor is considered to be direct.¹⁹ Another way to view the polarities of weight, space, and time is to look at the way a movement resists or yields to a particular element.²⁰

While my investigation of Laban’s movement analysis system certainly provided a valuable foundation from which to begin addressing the subject in rehearsals (and became a vital

¹⁵ Rudolf Laban and F.C. Lawrence, *Effort*, (London: MacDonald and Evans, 1947), 8.

¹⁶ Dell, 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

¹⁸ Laban and Lawrence, 12.

¹⁹ Dell, 28-29.

²⁰ Jean Newlove and John Dalby, *Laban for All*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 130

part of my work with one particular dancer, Tom, which I discuss later in this paper), Laban's philosophical leanings also resonated with me quite strongly, and in fact informed the content of *Amicable Collisions* more than I had intended. Laban's philosophy, developed over his almost eighty year lifespan, was rooted in the belief that as humans, our minds and bodies are fundamentally connected, and that all education should stress "the importance of the link between the culture of the mind and that of the body."²¹ In addition, his work emerged parallel to a widespread, countercultural shift towards mysticism, one that assumed "the existence of an immaterial plane lying alongside our own material world."²² In his 2006 article, "The Kinesics of Infinity: Laban, Geometry and the Metaphysics of Dancing Space," Colin Counsell notes that while Laban's movement explorations, known as Choreutics, were not presented in codified form, the movements "proved resonant for performers and audiences alike, and so clearly spoke to some form of shared perception., a way of conceptualising the body's actions that was accessible to a diversity of social subjects."²³ His paper contextualizes the metaphysical basis for Laban's work, presenting the myriad non-empirical influences on it, including spirituality, social consciousness, phenomenology, and mysticism. This metaphysical basis for physical research inspires my own work; I had not previously considered that some of my personal philosophic beliefs echoed those of Laban and his contemporaries.

In the context of *Amicable Collisions*, as well as in my overarching aesthetic, movement quality serves as a representation of the metaphysical connection between humans and the universe we inhabit. The concept of a metaphysical "ether" or non-material plane presents tricky

²¹ Ibid., 16.

²² Colin Counsell, "The Kinesics of Infinity: Laban, Geometry and the Metaphysics of Dancing Space," *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 24, no. 2 (2006), 110, accessed March 21, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004107>.

²³ Counsell, 105.

terrain when navigating an academic exploration, as no concrete proof exists of any such energetic connection. Because of the way I approached the creation of my master's thesis, my personal world view greatly influenced the work, and so I find myself in the position of having to research—to question in order to define and explain—long held philosophical beliefs. For many years I have been aware of various ways in which energy exists, reacts, and connects me to other living beings and the universe. The word “energy” here refers to the connective, vibration-based vitality flowing throughout the cosmos, an invisible force realized through our interactions with our perceived world. Complex energetic interactions in the universe resist explanation, as evidenced by commercially successful but conceptually simplistic (and poorly written) attempts to do so,²⁴ and so I have previously avoided fully articulating my understanding of a metaphysical realm. Here I offer one scientist's understanding of the metaphysical connections of life on earth, and attempt to explain the personal beliefs that informed my thesis work.

Rupert Sheldrake, a British biochemist, botanist, philosopher, academic and author, developed a theory of “morphic resonance, which leads to a vision of a living, developing universe with its own inherent memory.”²⁵ Morphic resonance refers to Sheldrake's theory about the patterns and organization of living matter than cannot be explained by genetics, and proposes that morphic fields influence collective mental activity and perceptions, connecting the members of various organisms' social groups. He believes this theory offers an explanation for events that cannot be explained solely by current science or the belief in a metaphysical realm

²⁴ Some examples are the theory of synchronicity as promoted in “The Celestine Prophecy” by James Redfield, or The Law of Attraction as explained in “The Secret” by Rhonda Byrne.

²⁵ Rupert Sheldrake, “Homepage,” *Rupert Sheldrake Online*, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.sheldrake.org/homepage.html>.

beyond time and space.²⁶ His work also challenges what he calls the dogma of science, and in turn Sheldrake has been met with open hostility by some members of the science community.²⁷ He has conducted many experiments related to what scientists call “paranormal” behavior or occurrences, such as telepathy, with results that strongly suggest its existence, and notes:

Skeptics lump telepathy and precognition in with vampires and UFOs, but that’s ridiculous once you look at the facts. More than 80 percent of people have had the experience of thinking about someone who then calls. That’s not *paranormal* at all; it’s normal, in the sense that it happens everyday. Skeptics say, ‘Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof,’ but if I show them the experimental results, they want more....They keep moving the goal posts. I say the skeptics are making the extraordinary claim that 80 percent of the [people] are mistaken about their own experience.²⁸

My knowledge of the metaphysical universe is rooted in the first-hand experience of an energetic connection between all living things and the world we inhabit. Like the fasciae in the human body, this intangible, invisible connective web holds the universe together while also allowing it to move and evolve. During the death of a close family member, I realized that the spiritual or religious frameworks humans use to describe their non-physical experiences are contrived and ultimately unimportant, simply a way to describe or try to grasp unfathomable ideas. Laban conceived a higher order of spatial harmony; in addition to the physical movements and impulses that guide movement quality, Laban also believed that movement quality and feeling were interrelated. He saw a strong connection between the element of weight and a person’s emotions. He also viewed the flow factor as bearing an important role in movement

²⁶ Rupert Sheldrake, interviewed by Mark Leviton, “Wrong Turn: Biologist Rupert Sheldrake on How Science Lost Its Way,” *The Sun*, February 2013, 7.

²⁷ In addition to Sheldrake’s perceptions of the challenges he has faced described in the February 2013 interview in *The Sun Magazine*, a search of academic articles related to “Rupert Sheldrake” reveals many critical reviews of his books. As well, a recent TEDx talk from January 2013 spawned ongoing controversy over both Sheldrake’s theories, and the level of the TED organization’s responsibility to vet TEDx speakers.

²⁸ Sheldrake, “Wrong Turn...,” 11.

expression by establishing energetic communication pathways.²⁹ Sheldrake discovered morphic fields, fundamentalist Christians might call this “God.” In my world view, beliefs that are framed as metaphysics, religion, or even atheistic science are not incompatible, and people allow their framework for those assumptions to isolate themselves from others they perceive to hold different beliefs from their own. Indeed, many of these beliefs are simply lenses through which to view the same reality, and this reality connects us to the universe, despite the vastly different phenomenological experiences we encounter. In *Amicable Collisions*, I drew on this connection in order to support the development of a collective, piece-specific way of moving that incorporated my movement aesthetic and the individual movement qualities of the dancers. This connection also fuels my ongoing desire to live a life that is integrated on many levels, which in turn influenced the meaning of the piece, and informed our investigation of compartmentalization in life.

Interviews with Contemporary Choreographers

As a choreographer develops a personal aesthetic and approach to creating work, conversations with other choreographers and observations of others’ creative processes can serve to enrich her or his artistic evolution, and echo the metaphysical connections discussed above. As I have articulated my aesthetic over the years, I have often drawn on information and insight from my interactions with other choreographers, and from studying others’ creative work. This drew me to interview a group of choreographers as part of my summer research. Most interviews are tailored to the interviewee, however; I decided to ask the same four questions of each choreographer with whom I spoke. This structure allowed me to focus the responses on a particular subject, in this case movement quality, and provided the opportunity for a more

²⁹ Newlove and Dalby, 125-27.

concentrated comparison of the choreographers' philosophies and creative processes. It was important to me to interview a range of choreographers, because often those who are studied or interviewed are ones who have achieved a measurable level of success in terms of financial support or critical attention. I interviewed the following choreographers for this project: Monica Bill Barnes, Rose Pascarello Beauchamp, Alexandra Beller, Ty Cooper, David Dorfman, Deborah Goffe, Keira Hart-Mendoza, Keith Lee, and Kellie Ann Lynch.³⁰ This group represented a range of measurable success as well as diversity in terms of location, aesthetic, training, age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. This diversity, as well as the diversity of the responses, informed and enriched my own evolution of thought on the subject of movement quality.

Prior to conducting these interviews, my focus when working on movement quality with a dancer leaned towards evoking traces of my way of moving from her or his body. I assumed that most choreographers had a relatively well-formed aesthetic that they sought to create on the dancers with whom they collaborated. When I interviewed Alexandra Beller, however, she immediately expressed her disinterest in movement quality.

People need to look good and be interesting doing my movement, but I like when people have different movement qualities within my work because that's more like the world. I have a set of things that are really important to me about dancers but movement quality is not the most important. I would tend to not hire someone who moves like someone else in the company. I get a little sleepy when I watch people who all move the same way. I'm more interested in the human community and the differences between people and the friction that is manifest between those differences and how that can inspire change or community or beauty.³¹

Beller's comments caused me to wonder if by asking dancers to move "my" way, I was dismissing their agency as movers. The idea of representing "the world" or "human community"

³⁰ Choreographer biographies can be found in Appendix C.

³¹ Alexandra Beller, personal interview, July 23, 2012.

resonated strongly with me, and I realized that instead of wanting my dancers to look like each other or like me, I wanted to use my movement quality aesthetic as a unifying element to be interwoven with their individual movement patterns. Beller's interview led me to articulate what had previously gone unrecognized in my artistic process.

Heading into the rehearsal period of *Amicable Collisions*, I wanted to identify the dancers' inherent movement qualities so as to develop a journey within the piece from their default patterns to a way of moving that fully integrated their own and each other's qualities with my aesthetic. In addition to classical training and a willingness to engage in intellectual and conceptual exploration, I value dancers who have a clear relationship with the ground and their own weight, the ability to flow and release readily, a strong awareness of the head-tail connection, full use of breath in supporting movement, and an integration of different body parts. While I create choreography rooted in this aesthetic, my greatest interest and attention lies in the transitions between movements, and the pathways from one shape or movement to another. This, along with my attention to the connection between a dancer's core and her or his distal kinesphere, leads to a fluid sense of weight and time within the movement, and resilience between oppositional body parts. I find it important to work with dancers who are versatile in their movement qualities, those who have a sense of the ways in which they prefer to move, or their defaults, and yet are also able to take on other people's movement qualities.

The development of the relationship between my qualitative aesthetic and the dancers' movement patterns paralleled the conceptual themes of the thesis choreography, as the dancers and I explored the continuum of compartmentalization and integration of the roles and identities they hold in their lives. I provided journals for the dancers and asked them to write responses to various prompts related to these subjects. Their writing allowed me to create personal analogies

or images when addressing movement quality and meaning, as well as articulate and offer character seeds for each dancer. The journals also offered them a place to share thoughts with me directly and privately, or to let me know when they needed to spend extra time on a movement phrase or concept. Asking the dancers to respond to specific but common prompts as a way of participating in the creative process continued the line of research I began this summer by interviewing choreographers, as their answers influenced the direction in which the piece evolved.

Contemporary choreographers frequently request a high level of participation or collaboration from dancers in their casts; I wanted dancers who were fully invested in the piece, and so I offered agency and asked for a deep level of investigation into the material. The dancers responded positively, but expressed varying degrees of interest and ability within the investigation itself. At times, I felt unable to address this in an effective manner, one that would encourage them to continue searching while maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for exploration. While reviewing the interviews conducted this summer, a salient moment of analysis from David Dorfman revealed itself.

I think any choreographer has to read the energy in the room or read the individual to get them out of a slump or a habit. The job of choreographer is to be the facilitator, even if you have a bunch of technique in your back pocket, every day with a group is different, you can't rest on your laurels from two minutes ago, it's a constant job which used to daunt me and now I find endlessly fascinating. And the only way to make it endlessly interesting is if you as a facilitator are "on" the entire time.³²

I realized partway through the process that I could only push dancers so far, and they had to be willing to meet me partway. Part of being "'on' the entire time," as Dorfman phrases it, requires knowing when to keep nudging and when to release. Particularly at times during the process when people were overwhelmed with outside obligations, I recognized that dwelling on

³² David Dorfman, personal interview, July 17, 2012.

movement quality no longer served the process effectively. Instead, I released any expectations of a particular movement quality and honored the challenge I had created for myself in casting dancers with whom I wanted to work for other reasons than the express way in which they moved. In the end, this release created space for the dancers to become more comfortable with the choreography, the meaning of the piece, and each other. Because the choreography was relatively set more than a month before the performance, it also allowed us to return our attention to movement quality in more detail over the last few weeks before the concert opened.

Dorfman's identification of the choreographer-as-facilitator resonates strongly in light of the arc of our creative process for *Amicable Collisions*.

The focus of my summer research into various perspectives on analyzing and developing movement quality provided a strong base from which to launch an exploration and continued study of the subject. The rehearsal period offered time for movement research and investigation, and the dancers with whom I worked each rose to the challenges I proposed in their own ways. I shared my knowledge and thoughts with them, and together we delved into creating a practical and concrete exploration of the ideas I presented. From an informational perspective, this time period followed the summer research in an extremely fruitful manner. The degree to which this movement research was successful from a product standpoint, however, varied from dancer to dancer; I discuss this in detail in the next section of this paper.

Chapter Four:

Continued Research—A Tale of Two Dancers

The challenges and successes of my exploration of movement quality and the relationship between a dancer's inherent qualitative aspects and those of the choreographer can be summarized by discussing the binary experiences of my working relationship with two of the dancers in the cast, Mei and Tom. Once again I stress the good-natured approach of every dancer in this piece. Each dancer came to the process open-minded and willing to accept challenges; the degree to which they were willing or able to take on the specific tasks of the exploration I initiated, however, varied greatly. Mei, a dancer with whom I had previously worked, came with a great deal of experience and a desire to investigate deeply. Tom, a young man who expressed interest in working with me primarily, I now believe, because he thought I was fun, came with limited concert dance experience and a great love of popular contemporary dance styles. I pre-cast Mei six months before rehearsals began, knowing I wanted to work with her again; I cast Tom because I wanted another male dancer and thought he was interested in my work itself. Tom (in addition to the cast as a whole) was also "someone I'd like to spend a day in a minivan with," as Monica Bill Barnes says.³³ In this chapter I compare and contrast the experiences of working creatively with Mei and Tom, and the ways in which each contributed to my ongoing research into movement quality.

One similarity that presented itself immediately was that Tom and Mei both expressed a desire to keep certain parts of their lives compartmentalized. They each grew up in the United

³³ Monica Bill Barnes, quote from rehearsal of "Finish Line," February 2012. In February of 2012, Monica Bill Barnes came to Smith College as a guest artist and I performed in a piece she set for the Five College Faculty Dance Concert. During a rehearsal, she mentioned that although she looks for certain performative or technical qualities in dancers she casts, she really considers whether she is willing to spend significant time in close quarters with them first.

States as children of immigrant parents, and have struggled with balancing their cultural heritages with their lives as US citizens. In their responses to my initial questions about roles and identities, they shared an awareness of culture as informative to their identity in a way that the white, American dancers did not. Mei and Tom also each kept parts of themselves private, and resisted moments of vulnerability, although in different ways. Beyond these elements, however, their experiences and interactions during the rehearsal process differed greatly.

Mei entered the process not only with more concert dance experience, but also with more experience in working specifically with me, and Tom joined the cast having little acquaintance with either situation. Mei's movement integrated comfortably on and in her body—she seemed to have actively developed her sense of herself as a dancer. Tom's interests lay in building his skills as a contemporary jazz dancer, and he seemed to struggle with what he felt his body could not do. My research as a choreographer involved working with each of them on the edge of their comfort zone, despite the differences in where they drew that line for themselves. Because I wanted to develop an articulated framework for addressing movement quality, and because I intended from the beginning to cultivate a strong sense of community among the cast members, I initially approached working with Tom and Mei in very similar ways. It immediately became apparent, however, that their dissimilarities required vastly different courses of action.

Of all the dancers, the conception of disparate identities or roles resonated most with Mei, and she seemed to have a greater awareness than other cast members of the ways in which they played into her interactions in life. One of our frequent discussions involved the analogy between the intersection/integration/collision of these roles/identities, and the way we were working with movement quality within the choreography. Specifically, I wanted Mei to retain the important essence of her own movement quality patterns, and to experiment with taking on

my patterns, and then to play with the range of intersection/integration/collision of the two ways of moving. This investigation served as the basis of our rehearsal process, particularly in the development of her solo. Her understanding of the material and the exploration evolved over the course of our work together, becoming extremely nuanced.

Of all the sections in *Amicable Collisions*, Mei's solo highlighted the most effective embodiment of both the physical goals of my thesis project as well as the conceptual questions we explored as a group. Because of Mei's accomplished and integrated dancing ability, I layered several ideas onto the choreography. This was based on a movement phrase originally created for a piece about isolation from which my current work evolved. The "isolation" piece and *Amicable Collisions* bookend a four year artistic investigation into the way people around me view their connections to others. At every moment of her solo, I asked Mei to consider her own movement or experience, and weave that into a physical examination of someone else's movement or experience, and then to push herself into new territory both physically and conceptually. Mei's solo distilled this research into a complex and continual exploration of levels of integration in movement and life.

In contrast, Tom, who brought a delightful irreverence to the rehearsal process, sometimes veered towards humorous antics, thereby avoiding a full investigation of the movement material or concepts I was exploring. Early in the process, when I tried to coach him on movement quality for a particular phrase, I sensed that he felt shy about working on it in front of the others, and that he held back because of those feelings. As we actively worked on the phrase, he would physically embody the quality I was attempting to evoke, but soon after he would return to his own patterns of moving. At one point I began to question if he was able to or interested in the ability to truly access an unfamiliar way of moving. Tom's training came from

a studio setting that valued jazz and contemporary dance, flashy tricks, and extreme physical virtuosity; he had limited experience with conceptual nuance as a fundamental element of creative process, and perhaps even with the broader idea of articulating a creative process.

After several weeks of pondering Tom's situation and testing out various ways to address movement quality with him, I released any attempt to change his movement patterns. I wondered if the answer to my question of whether I could evoke a desired movement quality from a dancer might be negative. I even wondered if I should have only cast people who moved similarly to my aesthetic, although I immediately realized that casting choice would have been far less interesting and informative. This point in the process discouraged me, and I shifted focus to developing and setting the bulk of the choreography, hoping to be re-inspired at a later stage.

In our January rehearsal intensive, an epiphany came to me about Tom's movement; he finds the incorporation of "sustainment" (in Laban terms) into his movement challenging regardless of how fast or slow he moves. His movement quality consistently presents as "quickness." I shared this analysis with Tom and asked him to actively integrate a sense of sustainment into specific moments in the piece. I also suggested that cultivating versatility in his movement quality would serve him well in other areas. I never discouraged him from keeping his old movement patterns, which he fosters because they support him as a contemporary jazz dancer, but instead encouraged him to broaden his vocabulary. We discussed the ways in which his movement patterns are part of his identity as a dancer. Because I searched for ways to connect the dancers' life experiences to the conceptual exploration of the piece, I suggested that Tom's "amicable collision" might exist between the frivolity he enjoys in contemporary/jazz dancing and the depth I think he desires from more conceptually rigorous dance forms.

This moment represented an enormous shift in Tom's approach to the movement. Explaining Laban's analysis of Effort as it applied to Tom specifically helped him address some of the qualitative nuances that had previously eluded him. It also offered us both cue words for quickly reminding him of the work we had done when he slipped into old habits. In addition, his greater comfort level with me, his fellow cast members, and the movement material, all of which developed over the time spent together in rehearsals, created a safe environment for him to explore the edge of his comfort zone in dance. Initially I wondered if I could have arrived at that place with Tom sooner if I had actively analyzed him earlier in the process, but upon further reflection, I think he needed the extra time in order to feel comfortable and familiar with the way in which I was working. This allowed him to exist in a place of vulnerability, and to take new artistic risks.

Although Mei and Tom entered the creative process in radically different places, each of them contributed to my research significantly. Mei's ability to use my questions as a starting point for her own movement exploration made her a partner in my research. Her integration of the various elements and layers I offered allowed me to investigate from the outside, granting me a more objective view than using my own body to conduct the research. In contrast, Tom's initial resistance to changing his movement quality forced me to thoroughly probe both the ways I intuitively approach qualitative aspects of choreography, and also the level of importance that my aesthetic choice has in comparison to the relationship between me and a collaborator. Specifically, I realized that my working relationship with Tom and the act of honoring his artistic evolution were equally important to my own research and artistic goals for *Amicable Collisions*. This in turn supported Tom's ability to stretch himself in our shared pursuit of developing the

range of his movement quality. Despite their artistic differences, Tom and Mei's collaborations within the creative process proved invaluable to my overarching research.

Chapter Five:

The Importance of Diversity—Community Does Not Equal Conformity

The diversity of the cast of *Amicable Collisions* unexpectedly emerged as one of its prominent features, contributing significantly to both process and product. As the child of progressive liberals who purposely chose to raise their children in a culturally diverse area, I am constantly aware of social, economic, and cultural variables in modern life. As stated above, my interest in diversity informed my choices related to the interviews conducted during my summer research, and it also influenced my casting decisions. Although I consciously cast dancers for my piece with the intent of creating a heterogeneous group, I did not realize how conspicuous or radical this choice might appear. Many people questioned my casting decisions, less with criticism than with curiosity. My piece was the only one in the thesis concert with men in the cast, and the only one with a majority of people of color. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the diversity of the cast of *Amicable Collisions* influenced the creative process, my research, and the piece itself.

Of the seven dancers in the cast, three were men, and four were people of color. These four were all children of immigrants, and their parents represented five different non-Western cultures. Two of the white American dancers grew up in New England, and the third was raised in the South. The dancers came from both rural and urban areas, from various family structures, and fell in different places on the continua of gender and sexuality. Within the parameters of a traditional college experience, they also varied in age. One dancer was a graduate student, and one a year older than her colleagues due to taking time off to travel; the cast also included a senior, two juniors, a first year student, and a student in high school. The dancers varied in

shape, size, and weight, and came with different amounts of performing arts experience.

Bringing together a diverse group of people seemed important to my research and felt familiar because of my upbringing; beyond that I chose to cast dancers based on my perception of their interest in working with me creatively, on my connection to them as people, and on their technical and artistic ability.

Heading into the rehearsal process, I believed that with enough time and dedication from the dancers, I would be able to work with them on embodying my aesthetic using the framework I would be developing in conjunction with the rehearsal process. Despite being fully aware of the diversity of the cast, I never imagined how it would impact the movement research that would inform my project. The varying degrees of experience meant that each dancer required a different approach. As a dance educator, I have often worked in classroom situations with students of different levels, and the environment I create lends itself to each person working on their own evolution as a dancer. In the context of creative process, however, I found it challenging to be able to speak to one dancer in nuanced, complex detail without losing the attention of others unable to process at that level. Conversely, I sometimes felt I was wasting the time of the more experienced dancers when I spent time on detailed attention to movement quality with the dancers who came with less training. Although advised to schedule time separately with each dancer, I resisted breaking up regular rehearsals early in the process for fear of derailing the sense of community we were creating, and scheduling outside of the set rehearsal times proved extremely difficult. For a period of time, this choice left me in a conundrum about how to proceed specifically with addressing movement quality.

In the end, it was the sense of community that rescued this aspect of the piece. The dancers connected strongly with one another, and my directions to them to pay attention to the

ways in which they and their fellow cast members moved influenced their physical experience of the movement. We discussed movement quality consistently, and we also moved together consistently. At the beginning of the process I offered a group warm up, and would often direct the dancers to move through the exercises in unusually close proximity to each other. This forced them into hyperawareness of those surrounding them; the movement of one dancer always affected the entire group. This contributed to the qualitative connection between the dancers apparent in the performance of the piece. After the first show, a dancer from another piece in the concert approached me to tell me how clearly she could see my movement quality in the dancers' movements; this was not someone with whom I had discussed my research, but a witness of the piece for whom the unified way of moving we had created was abundantly obvious.

The cultural diversity of the cast contributed in unexpected ways as well. At the beginning of the process, after a few rehearsals where we discussed the concept of compartmentalization in life, I prompted the dancers to journal about the ways in which they compartmentalize or integrate their lives. Unsurprisingly, the only white, male, heterosexual dancer expressed his lack of any need to compartmentalize his life. While he could identify various roles or ways of being he inhabited, none felt at odds with any other, and he expressed feeling comfortable in most situations. Despite his acceptance of the others' identities, this dancer's privilege in the context of patriarchy lent itself to an assumed feeling of comfort or belonging. Because he had always experienced life in relation to the advantages he receives based on his social status, he never encountered pressure to conform to a prevailing norm. Indeed, he embodied the prevailing norm. In contrast, the dancers who in some way inhabited marginalized roles all expressed some degree of difficulty with merging various aspects of their lives. In particular, the identities that did not conform to mainstream societal expectations—e.g.

queer, non-Western, female—became compartmentalized, an aspect of their sense of themselves that required navigation in its relationship to conventional society.

Conceptually, the navigation of roles or identities served as inspiration for *Amicable Collisions* from its inception, and the diversity of the cast highlighted the myriad ways in which people choose to manage this aspect of life. I asked the dancers to consider how they maintained identities that were separate, and how they integrated others. Their personal, collective physical histories, based on culture, experience, and training clearly informed their movement patterns and qualitative essences. This in turn brought dynamic range to the unified movement quality we created for the piece, as each dancer explored not only her or his own qualitative range, but those of the others involved. I suspect a more homogenous cast would have been unable to access the concepts I was exploring, and that the conceptual exploration would have been flattened by such a choice. Additionally, in hindsight I see how my casting choices presented, as Beller put it, “more like the world.”³⁴

This representation of humanity, rather than one known segment of a culture, requires reaching outside of one’s comfort zone as a choreographer. As artists, we are expected to push ourselves creatively, and I propose we must expand our comfort zones in other ways as well. Before conducting my summer research, I intended to cast dancers who I thought would specifically be able to embody my aesthetic requests. I soon realized, however, that my interests lay in the interplay between my movement quality and a dancer’s, and that a diverse cast would support further research far more than a homogenous one. In addition, I recognized that conformity held no interest for me—I never wanted the dancers to look alike—I wanted to work with a community of individuals. By casting dancers with a range of identities and experiences,

³⁴ Beller, personal interview.

I could make movement quality the connecting element or base from which to honor their individuality as movers, performers, and people.

In a time where training varies greatly, traditionally structured companies are becoming passé, and more independent choreographers are creating work with fluctuating groups of dancers, attention to movement quality can create a cohesive performance environment.

Although the cast of *Amicable Collisions* was particularly diverse, any cast that assembles for one piece will come with a range of experiences in life and dance. Movement quality can serve as the fascia of the choreography, binding phrases together and allowing shifts and growth as the project evolves. As a choreographer, I will continue to pay close attention early in the creative process to the dancers' specific movement habits as a way to encourage their connections with each other, creating a cohesive community within the context of the piece.

Chapter Six:

Conclusion—The Amicable Collision of Art and Research

“*We polish one another, and rub off our Corners and rough Sides by a sort of amicable Collision.*” This quote served as the conceptual seed for this piece, and remained a touchstone throughout the process. One of the initial challenges I experienced as I mapped out this thesis project was how to incorporate my academic research into my creative process. I was fascinated by studying movement quality, but I remained uncertain as to how that research would inform the meaning of the piece. I chose the quote about amicable collisions that served as my conceptual inspiration almost arbitrarily. The quote resonated with me strongly when I first read it, and continued to return to my thoughts as I searched for a way to creatively manifest my research. I began to think about possible connections between the quote, my experience as a dance artist, and my research into movement quality, and the process of creating *Amicable Collisions* commenced. The image of an amicable collision applied to my approach to life as well as to dance, and in that image I found a way to my research and my concept. Envisioning gentle or friendly contact between two disparate elements became an analogy for the ways in which the cast navigated the compartmentalization of life experiences. The paradigm of an amicable collision between the various aspects of people’s lives has the potential to smooth out, or integrate, the parts often kept separate. Similarly, an amicable collision of a choreographer’s movement quality and that of the dancers in her or his piece has the potential to merge into a unified aesthetic that supports the meaning of a piece as a whole while honoring the individuality of each dancer. Rather than fusing or melding elements, this syncretism allows dancers to retain

their intuitive movement qualities while also embodying those of the choreographer's intended aesthetic. In this chapter I evaluate how the thesis project contributed to my artistic development.

In the years prior to entering graduate school, my professional choreographic experiences primarily consisted of commissioned work. I had artistic freedom, but was given strict parameters in terms of rehearsal time, and sometimes casting. Even when producing my own work, I was often limited due to the realities of accessing rehearsal space or creating with dancers who worked other jobs. Additionally, I usually found the work of artists who focused largely on process to be self-indulgent or inaccessible, which left me with little desire to spend many hours on creative process. My time in graduate school has helped me envision a space for deep creative work, one that allows for a balance in focus on process and product. I have tested out various ways to manifest this balance, and the creative process of *Amicable Collisions* reminded me that my artistic evolution is ongoing.

I have come to several realizations about my life as a dance artist over the course of this project. The people with whom I choose to work surface as the most important elements to consider. Although I valued each dancer in my cast deeply, in the future I will seek out more experienced artists as collaborators. I find working with people who embody a clear sense of who they are as artists more satisfying than working with dancers who simply move well, and an examined artistic life requires time, patience, and experience. Another important realization relates to the development of movement material. Although I admire strong improvisation skills and recognize their significance in generating movement, my interests lie in working with set material. I appreciate that the structure of set choreography allows dancers to explore the unknown in "known" material. I find that new details constantly emerge, and that live performances of set material differ every time. My observations of improvised and set

performances lead me to believe that set choreography offers a greater depth of exploration of meaning in movement, and eliminates long moments of uncertainty that are more interesting for the performers than for most of the audience members watching them. Perhaps most importantly, in articulating my aesthetic I have discovered that not only do I value linear, athletic, virtuosic movement, but also that the energetic connection I experience in my life outside of dance greatly influences my work itself and the people with whom I choose to create work. When creating dance art, I strive to highlight the connections and transitions between shapes and movement phrases as a reflection of the larger connection existing between the dancers themselves. This focus on transitions or pathways between movements and connections between body parts leads to a weighted, fluid, often supple quality. The movement quality of a piece should embody the synchronicity of life—people come with vastly different life experiences, but are ultimately connected as beings in the universe.

One of the largest and primary influences on my artistic life lies in my effort to integrate my identity as a dance artist with other roles I play in life. This attempted balancing act greatly informed the overarching course of my graduate school experience, as well as the development of the thesis project specifically. Because I have always desired integration in my life, I began the project assuming others did as well; the resulting realization that this was not the case gave me empathy for the challenges people experience as they navigate their sometimes conflicting roles and identities. At the same time, it confirmed the extent to which I continue to value integration and balance in my own life. The differences in movement quality between the dancers in *Amicable Collisions* reflected the differences between the various roles we play in our lives, but the focus on movement quality as an important element of the work connected dancers to each other and to the investigation of compartmentalization, just as we are all connected to

each other beyond the physical realm of the dance studio or stage. As I venture forward as an artist, I strive to view balancing the roles I play as an ongoing practice, and I invite the non-artistic aspects of my life and my ever-evolving identity as a dance artist to continue to amicably collide.

APPENDIX A

Photographs

All Photos by Dan Rist



Exploring the Boxes—Mat Elder and Dunan Herman-Parks



Final Section—Full Cast



Final Section—Full Cast

APPENDIX B

Four Questions for Choreographers

1. How would you describe your aesthetic in terms of movement quality? (Or, describe the movement quality you are looking for from your dancers.)
2. When considering movement quality, how do you approach working with dancers for the first time?
3. How do you approach discussions or directions related to movement quality during the rehearsal process?
4. What is the relationship between the choreography (defined as steps and structure) and movement quality when you create work?

APPENDIX C

My Answers to the Four Questions for Choreographers

Pre-thesis answers, September 2012:

1. How would you describe your aesthetic in terms of movement quality? (Describe the movement quality you are looking for from your dancers?)

I am looking for dancers with obvious classical training--strength, virtuosity, athleticism, flexibility, and a linear sense of their bodies, who are also grounded, who have a clear relationship with the ground and their own weight, and who are able to flow and release readily.

I like to see a strong awareness of the head-tail connection, full use of breath in supporting movement, and an integration of different body parts. I also value dancers' abilities to be versatile in their movement qualities, those who have a sense of the ways in which they prefer to move, or their defaults, and yet are also able to take on other people's movement qualities.

2. When considering movement quality, how do you approach working with dancers for the first time?

I talk to them about my aesthetic, involving them fully in my thoughts on movement quality as they evolve. I ask them about their training so I have an idea of what areas I might need to focus on more than others, and about their thoughts on movement quality so I can understand where they may be coming from during the rehearsal process. I try to have some warm up exercises to begin rehearsal so that I can address qualities or pathways I'd like them to pay attention to separate from the shape/structure of the choreography.

3. How do you approach discussions or directions related to movement quality during the rehearsal process?

I try to be as clear as possible about what I am looking for from the very beginning, and why, and to share my reasoning for changes that I make during the process. I focus a lot on the pathways of the body as it moves through the choreographic structure, and try to give very specific and clear notes about what I want to see or sense from the dancer. I ask the dancer to be attentive to movement quality from the beginning of the process, and to tend to tiny details within the choreography. I try to cultivate a balance, or integration, between the specific movement quality in which I am interested and the individual dancers' idiosyncrasies of movement or performance.

4. What is the relationship between the choreography (defined as steps and structure) and movement quality when you create work?

To me, the steps and structure matter far less than what a dancer does with them, which is why I am so interested in this subject. We have all seen phenomenal, virtuosic dancers and consummate performers bring light and life to mediocre choreography. And we've seen mediocre performers dance brilliant choreography. If forced to choose, I would rather watch the amazing performer. While all of us aspire to setting brilliantly creative choreography on acclaimed dancers, the reality is that we are often working within limitations of many kinds. I think that paying attention to the integration of the choreography and desired movement quality of a piece can create a more richly textured performance experience, particularly when time is one of the limitations to consider. Whether the movement quality is part of the choreographer's aesthetic, or the choreographer simply wants a unified movement quality among the dancers, I believe that clarity of intention with regard to movement quality is of utmost importance.

Post-thesis answers, February 2013:

1. How would you describe your aesthetic in terms of movement quality? (Or, describe the movement quality you are looking for from your dancers.)

The breadth of my aesthetic allows for movements and movement qualities that may look very different from each other to embody the attributes in which I am interested. I appreciate full-bodied, virtuosic movement informed by past (or present) training in classical technique and cross-disciplinary somatic practices (dance or other). The connections between different body parts must be clear; movement must be well-integrated and fully "settled" on the dancer's body. The importance of specificity and a dancer's interest in the details of the intended movement cannot be underestimated.

2. When considering movement quality, how do you approach working with dancers for the first time?

I try to work with experienced dancers who have a clear sense of who they are as performers and how they move and relate to movement as dance artists. I share my interest in the study of movement quality and try to articulate the way that interest might inform the current project. Specifically, I discuss my interest in versatility in accessing different movement qualities, and ask the dancers to play with the ways in which they can integrate their personal movement patterns with those of the other dancers in the piece.

3. How do you approach discussions or directions related to movement quality during the rehearsal process?

I use many descriptive words and images when discussing movement quality; a favorite example is watching salt water taffy being made and embodying the stretch and resistance of the taffy itself. Another recent example involves moving one's hand through a sky made of honey. I also offer conceptual explorations, such as the idea of egalitarian resiliency or harmonious discord, as a way to inform specific movements that I have given the dancers.

4. What is the relationship between the choreography (defined as steps and structure) and movement quality when you create work?

They are forever intertwined in my mind, but it is the movement quality that imparts meaning and substance. Almost any choreography (no matter how mundane) can be interesting, examined, and artistically successful by working with movement quality and the dancers' performativity. The movement quality embodies the essence of the piece, whether that essence is conceptual or narrative.

APPENDIX D

Choreographer Bios

MONICA BILL BARNES, artistic director/choreographer for Monica Bill Barnes & Company, is a New York City based choreographer and performer. Born and raised in Berkeley, California, Barnes moved to New York in 1995 after receiving her B.A. in Philosophy and Theater from the University of California at San Diego. Before she decided to become a choreographer Barnes studied on scholarship at the Alvin Ailey School, was a member of the high school debate team, played volleyball and wrote bad plays. Since pursuing choreography as a livelihood, she has created fourteen evening-length dance works, numerous site-specific events and multiple cabaret numbers for her company, Monica Bill Barnes & Company. MBB & CO. has performed in various venues in New York City ranging from DanceNow at Joe's Pub to Fall for Dance at New York City Center. Other favorite New York performance venues include The Joyce Theater, Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, Symphony Space, NYU's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts and Dixon Place. Lincoln Center Institute invited Barnes to tour two of her shows, "This ain't no Rodeo!" (2003-2005) and "Suddenly Summer Somewhere" (2009-2010), throughout the tri-state school system as part of their Repertory Season. Barnes has been an invited Guest Artist at the American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, North Carolina School of The Arts, Vassar College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Connecticut College, The College At Brockport, Florida State University, James Madison University, University of Michigan, Steps on Broadway, Peridance and Dance New Amsterdam. Barnes was thrilled to be a part of her favorite NPR radio show, This American Life, in May at a live cinema event alongside radio show host Ira Glass and other fabulous guests. Recent projects include commissions for Parsons Dance ("Love, oh Love") and The Juilliard School ("The way it feels"). Upcoming projects include residencies at The College At Brockport, Emory University and the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography at Florida State University.

ROSE PASCARELLO BEAUCHAMP, Artistic Director of inFluxdance, is a choreographer, a dancer, artist and educator. With a BFA in Performing Arts/Dance from Emerson College and an MFA in Choreography from California Institute of the Arts, Rose's interests lie in integrating dance, theater, design, and media. She is a Certified Laban Movement Analyst and Bartenieff Practitioner (CLMA) which has rooted all of her work in somatics and body awareness. Rose has danced with companies such as Miki Lizst Dance Company, R Squared Dance Company, Uprooted Dance Theater and Ipswich Moving Company, an aerial dance company, as well as various Contact Improvisation Projects. In addition to inFluxdance, some of her collaborators include Emily Randolph, Rosemary Hannon, Dinah Grey, Nicola Berlinsky and Tanja London, among others. While living in San Francisco, she was the founder and co-director of Marin Choreographers' Collective as well as co-founder of Summer Fest Dance Camp for youth. She served as producer for various performances in the Bay Area at venues such as Marin Theater Company, Alice Arts Center, and Venue 9. Her full-length work has been featured in Boston, Los Angeles, Montreal, Toronto, Boulder, San Francisco and other cities across the US, while excerpts have been seen in performances such as the Marin 21st Century Dance Collaboration, Women's Work, and the 23rd Annual Celebration of Craftswomen in SF. In Boston, she was one of the recipients of the Green Street Studios Performance Works Project

2006, supported by the LEF Foundation in 2006. In 2009 Rose was selected to create work at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival's Choreographers Lab. She received the 2009 Emerging Artist Award. Her choreography has been shown on the Fringe Festival Circuit where inFluxdance has presented *This Fairytale is Not Working Out*, *Found and Lost*, *Identity Crisis*, *DreamCatchers*, and *Justice for Some*. inFluxdance was voted Best in Festival at the San Francisco Fringe Festival in 2007 and 2008 and nominated Best in Festival at the Montreal Fringe in 2011. In 2010, the company was selected as the Sugar Space Artist in Residence in Salt Lake City, UT. From 2006-2011 Rose served as the first Head of Dance at the University of Virginia. Under her direction, the program soared. During her time in Virginia, Rose focused on collaboration across disciplines finding ways to integrate dance with architecture, art, psychology, engineering, art, and music. Rose has presented at numerous conferences and workshops with a focus on dance and social activism. She is currently residing in Brockport, NY with her family and will begin teaching as adjunct faculty at Alfred University and The College at Brockport in Fall 2012.

ALEXANDRA BELLER (MFA: U of Wisconsin at Milwaukee 2006; BFA in Dance U of Michigan 1994) is Artistic Director of Alexandra Beller/Dances. As a member of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company (1995-2001), she performed in over 50 countries and throughout the U.S. She helped to create "The Belle Epoch," (Martha Clarke and Charles Mee). She was a 2-year Artist in Residence at HERE Art Space, and has also been an AIR at Dance New Amsterdam. Alexandra is on faculty at Dance New Amsterdam and has taught at the Atlantic Theater School, The New School, 92nd St Y, and at universities throughout the United States. She was a visiting artist at APA, CCDC, and DanceArt in Hong Kong, D-Dance Festival in Korea, Den Nordsk Balletthoskole in Oslo, Henny Jurriens Stichting in Amsterdam, Open Look Festival in St. Petersburg, Bytom Festival in Poland, and Cyprus Summer Festival in Nicosia. She was a guest choreographer at the U of Michigan, Rhode Island College, The U of South Florida, MIT, Texas Woman's University, Connecticut College, Texas Christian University, and Bates College, among others, and received an NCCI commission from Montclair State University in 2003/2004. Alexandra's choreography has been presented at and commissioned by Dance Theater Workshop, 92nd St. Y, Aaron Davis Hall, Danspace Project at St. Mark's, Joyce SoHo, P.S. 122, WAX, HERE, The Connelly Theater, SUNY Purchase College, Dance New Amsterdam, Symphony Space, and Jacob's Pillow and has been commissioned by companies in Arizona, Michigan, Texas, Korea, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Maine, New York City, Florida, Boston, Rhode Island, New Jersey and elsewhere. Her company has toured through Michigan, Massachusetts and New York and received The Company Residency at The Yard in 2004. Film work includes "Romance and Cigarettes" by John Turturro. She was the collaborator and subject of a series of photographs by Irving Penn, "Dancer," (Whitney Museum, Houston, Chicago, Sweden, London, St. Petersburg, Paris, Japan and other locations globally). Alexandra is also a part time dance critic and writes reviews for offoffoff.com. Recent projects include performances at the Henry Street Settlement, Bytom Festival in Poland, and Open Look Festival in Russia as well as a choreographic commission in Oslo. Upcoming projects include a NY season at Dance New Amsterdam, a tour to Czech Republic and touring throughout Michigan in 2010. Alexandra helped design the Choreographic Investigation Course at Dance New Amsterdam, a new training ground for emerging dance makers, and teaches regularly in the program as well as serving as a mentor for many of the participants.

TY COOPER began his training in ballet and modern dance at the age of 13 at Woodside High School for the Performing Arts. There his love of movement flourished and inspired him to seek out a degree in Dance and Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University. In addition to his studies, Ty trained at the School of Richmond Ballet, where he was accepted into the Richmond Ballet Trainee Program. During his time with Richmond Ballet, Ty performed in Stoner Winslett's *The Nutcracker*, Malcolm Burn's *Don Quixote*, and George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*. Ty was a founding member of Charlottesville Ballet, dancing with them for three seasons, and was a guest artist for Dance Theatre of Lynchburg where he worked with Keith Lee. Ty also served as a rehearsal coach and choreographer for Charlottesville Ballet, where he choreographed and set *The Nutcracker* and a number of classical and contemporary pieces.

DAVID DORFMAN, artistic director of David Dorfman Dance, is the recipient of a 2005 Guggenheim Foundation fellowship. He has also been honored with four fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, three New York Foundation for the Arts fellowships, an American Choreographer's Award, the first Paul Taylor Fellowship from The Yard, and a New York Dance & Performance Award ("Bessie") for David Dorfman Dance's community-based project Familiar Movements (The Family Project). Dorfman's choreography has been produced in New York City at venues ranging from the BAM Next Wave Festival to The Joyce Theater, The Kitchen, Dance Theater Workshop, The Duke on 42nd Street, Danspace Project/St. Mark's Church, P.S. 122, and Dancing in the Streets. His work has been commissioned widely in the U.S. and in Europe, most recently by AXIS Dance (Oakland, CA), Bedlam Dance Company (London), d9 Dance Collective (Seattle), Eisenhower Dance Theatre (Detroit), and the Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia for the musical Green Violin, for which he won a 2003 Barrymore Award for best choreography. An avid fan of collaboration and collective processes, Dorfman is pleased to tour an evening of solos and duets Live Sax Acts with dear friend and collaborator Dan Froot (UCLA faculty), most recently in New York City and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in Zimbabwe. Dorfman has been a guest artist at numerous institutions across the country and abroad, most recently at University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Smith College, and the University of Iowa. As a performer, he toured internationally with Kei Takei's Moving Earth and Susan Marshall & Co. Dorfman holds a BS in Business Administration from Washington University in St. Louis and an MFA in Dance from Connecticut College, where he joined the faculty in 2004 and is currently Professor of Dance and Department Chair. Dorfman would like to thank long-time mentors Martha Myers and Daniel Nagrin for taking a chance and rescuing him from counting leisure suits in St. Louis, his mom Jeanette for inspiring him to dance to heal, his dad Oscar for teaching him the magic of a good joke, and Lisa Race and Samson Race Dorfman for collaborating with him on a very wonderful version of The Family Project.

DEBORAH GOFFE, artistic director of Scapegoat Garden, is a performer, choreographer, dance educator and video artist. Since earning her BFA in modern dance from the University of the Arts and an MFA in performance and choreography from California Institute of the Arts, Scapegoat Garden has served as the vehicle and creative community through which the Hartford-native explores the intersection of dance with other media. Founded in 2002, Scapegoat Garden is a Hartford-based collaborative dance theater, driven to create daring, interdisciplinary performance that goes in through the nose, eyes, skin, ears and mouth to stir those who witness or participate. Through the company, Deborah is inspired to conjure lush worlds where dynamic movement, sound, video, costumes, sets, lights and a genuine expression of the human

experience converge. With collaboration at the center of its process, the company's vast repertory has been selected for performance in festivals and venues throughout the region including: Hartford's *Charter Oak Cultural Center*, the *Wadsworth Atheneum*, the *International Festival of Arts and Ideas* in New Haven, *Provincetown Dance Festival*, *Bates Dance Festival* in Maine, New York City's *Raw Material Performance Series* at Dance New Amsterdam, *DUMBO Dance Festival*, *Artists of Tomorrow Festival*, and *Fridays at Noon* at the *92nd Street Y*. In this, Scapegoat Garden's 10th anniversary year, Deborah remains committed to the company's vision of exemplifying the artistic integrity and innovation of Hartford's cultural community. Through its performance works, community engagement activities, and its laboratory for creative process at *The Garden for Contemporary Dance*, Scapegoat Garden strives to forge relationships between artists and communities, helping people see, create and contribute to a greater vision of ourselves, each other, and our city. In service to her work with Scapegoat Garden, Deborah has received Artists Fellowship Grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the City of Hartford Arts & Heritage Jobs Grant, and the Surdna Foundation. In 2010, Deborah was invited to participate as New England Emerging Choreographer at the Bates Dance Festival in Lewiston, Maine. In that same year, she served as a yearlong Artist-in-Residence at Billings Forge Community Works. Deborah has taught dance and related courses in a number of institutions, including Belmont High School in Los Angeles, California Institute of the Arts, CREC Center for Creative Youth, Trinity College, and CulturArte - a youth arts summer residency program in Cape Verde, Africa. She is currently a core faculty member at CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. In addition to her work with creative youth and with her Scapegoat Garden collaborators, Deborah serves as Dance Coordinator at Charter Oak Cultural Center, working closely with area dance-makers to revitalize and re-envision the Greater Hartford dance community through the newly formed *Homegrown Dance* initiative.

KEIRA HART-MENDOZA, artistic director of UpRooted Dance, is a dance artist working in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. Keira migrated to DC from Charlottesville VA where she was teaching various dance courses at the University of Virginia. Keira currently teaches at Coppin State University in Baltimore MD. She holds an MFA in Dance from Arizona State University and BAs in Dance and Media Arts & Design from James Madison University. An interdisciplinary approach and collaborating with artists in all fields are essential aspects of Keira's work. She has worked with musicians, filmmakers, engineers, actors, motion capture technology, and fashion design. Keira's choreography and Dance for the Camera work has been shown in Arizona, Washington, Virginia, and Washington DC. She also won "Best Student Work" for her video piece entitled "Seeing is..." at the American Dance Festival's Dance for the Camera Film and Video Festival 2005. She has collaborated with BosmaDance, Shane O'Hara, Kelly Bartnik, and others. Keira has had the opportunity to attend numerous dance and film festivals including the American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, Breaking Grounds Dance Festival in Toronto Canada, Independent Dance Summer Study in London England, The M.E.L.T. Festival, and Dance for the Camera Film and Video Festival. Keira's choreography has been shown nationally and internationally in Arizona, Washington, North Carolina, Virginia, the DC-Metro area, and in Mexico. She has also worked as a guest artist at James Madison University, the University of Virginia, Dance & Co., and she worked closely with Arizona State University's Dance Arizona Repertory Theater Company for two years.

KEITH LEE, founder and artistic director of Dance Theatre of Lynchburg, started his dance training at the age of three in his native Bronx, NY. With encouragement from Ben Vereen, he later pursued his studies at the High School of Performing Arts, where he received Capezio awards for excellence in both Ballet and Modern techniques. Immediately following graduation in 1968, he joined American Ballet Theatre. Promoted to the rank of soloist the following year, Keith Lee's repertory included choreography of such masters as: Jose Limon, Jerome Robbins, Alvin Ailey, Lar Lubovitch, Antony Tudor and George Balanchine. A versatile artist, as fluent in modern dance technique as Ballet, Keith Lee has served as Ballet Master of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, as well as Ballet Master for the Dallas Black Dance Theatre, The Capitol Ballet, and Nanette Bearden's Contemporary Chamber Dance Company. Lee began choreographing in 1968; since, creating ballets for American Ballet Theatre, the Washington Ballet, the Geneva Ballet, the Oakland Ballet, the Garden State Ballet, the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, the Capitol Ballet of Washington DC, the Memphis Concert Ballet, and the Lexington Ballet, to name a few. Perhaps his most prized skill, Keith Lee is a master dance teacher. Based upon a lifetime of study and immersion, Lee has taught his own style of dance in schools throughout the Americas including: Jacob's Pillow, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Trikinia Kabilios in Bogota, Center Zena Romette, Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theater, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Company, University of the Arts, Philadelphia School of Dance Arts, The Rock School of Ballet, Lee Theodore's American Dance Machine, Canadian Children's Dance Theatre and regionally, at Virginia School of the Arts, Roanoke Ballet Theater, Arts Council of the Blue Ridge, and Altavista Arts Council. Mr. Lee currently resides in Lynchburg, Virginia with his wife and their three children. He continues his free-lance work in the dance field throughout the United States as a master teacher and choreographer.

KELLIE ANN LYNCH holds a BA in Dance from Rhode Island College and a MFA in Dance from Smith College. She has been dancing with Adele Myers and Dancers since 2008 and also dances with Doug Elkins and Friends' *Fraulein Maria*. Within the last few years she has been seen dancing for Rachel Bernsen, Jennifer Archibald/Arch Dance Company, Kyle Abraham/abraham.in.motion, and Wire Monkey Dance among others. She is a founding member and Co-Artistic Director of Elm City Dance Collective, a non-profit dance organization in New Haven. Her work has been presented and commissioned throughout New England and NYC and she has also been the recipient of artist fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.

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