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The Space Between

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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

Angie Hauser, Faculty Adviser
This thesis project began with a simple question: How far is it from me to you? This deceptively simple question led to an interrogation of the concept of space. What is space and how is it perceived? What is our experience of space? Through academic and creative research, the performance of my thesis work, *The Space Between*, was an examination of the space that surrounds all of us and what it means to explore the idea of space.

As I began this process, I wanted to examine the space of the theater to challenge and reconsider the audience’s perspective of space. I also wanted to confront and stretch the dancers’ perspective of space, and to evaluate my personal habits and conceptions about space. In addition to considering the space of the performance from an academic perspective, I was interested in using improvisation both in the rehearsal process and in the performance as a way to explore internal and external space for the dancers. I wanted to emphasize the singularity of the performance and the dancers’ individuality, as well as unlock new potential in my creative work.

When I first entered the space of Theater 14, the performance venue, I was interested in interrogating the actual space of the theater. How could I use the whole theater space choreographically? I wanted to create movement that was performed, not only on the stage, but also off-stage in the traditionally unused spaces of Theater 14. I was curious about the possibilities of the audience space, the apron, and the sides and backs of the stage beyond the wings and back curtains. My goal was to work with the totality of the space from a choreographic perspective and to highlight space for the audience. I was interested in using
movement and dance to draw the audience’s eye to the full space of Theater 14, and to the space between the dancers, objects, architecture and the audience itself.

I believe that each performance is a singular experience. Though a piece may be performed many times, each night of a show is unique to that performance, on that day, with that cast and those spectators. For this reason, I am drawn to site-specific work in which the performance is intentionally situated to call attention to the singularity and oneness of the performance and venue. In this site-specific vein, much of my work has been performed outside the theater, usually in visual art galleries or lobby spaces. The decision to perform in alternate venues originally stemmed from a desire to create performance opportunities in conjunction with my visual art peers, but presenting work off the stage also allowed me to question set assumptions about audience focus, and the separation of performer and audience. I am drawn to site-specific work as a way to draw attention to the space of the performance and to the non-habitual use of that space. This uniqueness also extends to the individuals involved in the performance, both performers and spectators. I am interested in each audience member’s experience of a performance as singular, from her own unique perspective. Likewise, I am drawn to each dancer on stage as a separate individual who brings her own selfhood and experience to the inside of a piece and how that singularity can emerge. From my experience making work in nontraditional venues and my interest in ‘singular’ experiences, I entered into this process approaching Theater 14 as a site-specific location. My desire was to consciously craft the audience’s experience of space during the performance of *The Space Between* as a way to highlight the specificity and individuality of Theater 14.
Similar to my interest and belief in the singularity of location and each person’s experience, I also value difference. As a mover and improviser, I am continuously looking for ways to challenge my movement habits and compositional choices. I strive to access new and different ways of moving and different ways of perceiving as a way to grow as a dancer and as an individual. In this project, I was committed to using improvisation to explore the idea of space both for the dancers and for myself, using improvisation as a way to grow in my approach and perception of space. In the past, my creative processes primarily used improvisation as a rehearsal tool, either to generate movement or for experiential purposes. For this piece, I was interested in exploring improvisation both in process and in performance. I wanted to push myself to use improvisation in ways that I hadn’t before. Through improvisational exercises and the crafting of the performance, I sought to interrogate my own approaches to space as well as those of the audience and performers.

My background in improvisation is eclectic and encompasses different methods of generating and creating. The work that I have done with dance artist and teacher, Chris Aiken, has been especially influential to my ability to move past movement habits and to find different physical sensations. In improvising with Aiken, I have become more attuned to the different physical dimensions of my movement and have found new ways of experiencing my body through dance. Through focused exercises, such as tuning into the physical sensation of weight in different limbs or bringing awareness to the feel of my skin in contact with different surfaces, I have encountered improvisation as a way to further my movement choices. This approach to improvisation has allowed me to tune into different sensory experiences within my body.
I have also worked with improvisation through a different lens under the direction of Stephanie Maher, Kathleen Hermsdorf, Meg Stuart and Maria Scaronni while in residence at Ponderosa, an experimental dance community in Stolzenhagen, Germany. Both Stuart and Scaronni’s classes use different improvisational scores to work towards accessing different ways of being. Through new approaches to physicality and imagination, Stuart and Scaronni are interested in accessing “alternative states” as a way to free the body and mind from habit. We would often begin class by shaking or doing repetitive movements for extended periods of time, letting go of a conscious level of awareness. We were encouraged to go into our personal head space, to access the potential of imagination, and let go of our assumptions about what was “normal”. Instead of projecting an outside eye of what the body should or could look like, we were investigating an internal dialogue. What are the body’s deepest impulses? What does my imagination tell me about myself and my surroundings? Opening up to exhibitions of the internal has heightened my awareness of the substantial nature of the imagination. By directly encountering my own imaginative space, I have found myself opening up to different ways of being.

I have found both these approaches to improvisation informative and challenging, each expanding my understanding of sensation and my ability to release into my imagination with abandon. I wanted to bring my experiences with these approaches to the studio as a doorway into experimenting with different ways of being and different ways of perceiving. I wanted to work improvisationally throughout the process and performance of *The Space Between*, using improvisation as a tool to propel myself into new artistic territory and to interrogate my own choreographic approaches to movement creation. I also wanted to use improvisation as a way to
interrogate my choreographic habits in how I use the space of the stage. In using improvisation as a tool, I hoped to create space for accidental moments of magic, or for new movement that went further than what I created in my head. I had a strong desire to use this process to experiment and try new things, to create room for possibility beyond what I could imagine.

In this process, I wanted to take my own observations and explorations from my physical and creative research of space and bring it into the studio to work with the dancers in crafting this new work. I was especially curious about ways to use improvisational tools in order to expand and explore the dancers’ approach to space. Two of my questions as I began this process were “how can I guide the dancers and attune them to the external space around them?” and “how can I facilitate an environment where each dancer can heighten their awareness of their internal space?” I was also interested in translating these experiences and awarenesses to the stage. In the performance, I wanted to experiment with improvisation scores that dealt with space to see if the internal/external spatial continuum of the dancers would be visible to the audience. Would it be possible to make the dancers internal experience of space transparent to the audience? Could I use the dancers’ exploration of the theater choreographically to expand the audience’s awareness of space? This was an opportunity for me to translate my experiences and improvisational techniques to my choreographic process; a chance to find out what was valuable as process and what worked as performance.
Chapter 1

What is space? Not galactic space or outer space, but the omnipresent space that we each inhabit. As we move through life, interacting with one another and with the world, we interact with space. We measure our world in distances, and we constantly perceive and re-perceive ourselves in relationship to the people and objects that surround us. But what does it mean to experience space, or the idea of space? How does one experience the elusiveness of space?

I. Space can be experienced through tangible limitations and through energetic organization

Space is challenging to talk about in many ways, in part because space is often described as an object, such as “look at that space over there,” or “we’re all in the space together.” But space is not necessarily an object. I believe that space is unlimited and ubiquitous and that even objects that we perceive as tangible and concrete are in fact filled with space that the naked eye cannot see. Any container that holds space is an artifice because space is contained within walls, within concrete, in between fibers and molecules. However, to explore space, some type of limitation is essential. I have found the idea of a container to be helpful in laying out a framework to explore the idea of space, using physical structures or limitations as a way to bring attention to the space within.

The places or limitations that highlight space can be referred to as containers, which we will define here through material objects. Because two physical objects cannot exist in one place at the same time, we can use these objects as a framework or point of reference in order to
establish a limitation. Whether these limitations take the form of walls, ceilings, chairs, or other
inanimate objects, these places and material objects all signify something tangible. We can
approach space as what exists between these objects.

However, in this process of researching space, there is a ongoing negotiation of which
objects are best used to establish a container. This creates a Russian Doll approach to the idea of
containers. For example, in this research the largest Russian doll would be the outer walls of the
theater building and the smallest would be at the cellular level of each dancer. The macro
container (the largest Russian doll) is created by the material objects that define the largest place,
but within are increasingly smaller containers of various forms. Each container is both
surrounded and filled with space. The container necessitates a space around them when they are
functioning as the object, or within them if they are functioning as the container.

Furthermore, these containers are constantly being constructed and deconstructed by the
shifting of internal structures and mobile elements. In the case of Theater 14, there is the
container of the stage, which is within the container of the theater itself, which is housed in
Mendelson Hall, which is on Smith Campus, in Northampton, MA, etc. For the purposes of this
essay, we will use the container of Theater 14 as set up by the exterior ceiling/floor/walls of the
theater, the “room” that encompasses the audience, stage, and backstage. However, even within
the “container-place” of the theater, there is the additional container that is set up by the stage
space. This area of the stage where the dancers perform is made up of the “soft goods” of the
theater. These soft-goods include the traditional theatrical curtains and scrims that create what
we think of as the box of the stage. These two containers, the “room” of the theater and the
“stage,” are both applicable here for understanding the space within the theater.
One approach to understanding the container-place of Theater 14 is by calling attention to the immobile structures that create the room of the theater. The “brick and mortar” reality that is created by the macro structure of the building (floors, ceilings, walls, etc), will be referred to here as architectural form. Architectural form is the most concrete and relatively immobile of the structures laid out in this essay. In the architectural form, the container does not move (excluding time-based change and decay, and the movement of molecules). In Theater 14, as in most traditional proscenium theaters, the room is broadly rectangular and includes a stage which occupies roughly half of the total area. The other half includes rows of chairs bolted into the floor and arranged to face the stage. This immobile form exists with or without people, and creates a container in which to experience the space. This container not only serves as a concrete structure to use as a frame, it allows for further exploration of the smaller containers held within. Material objects within the space can be used as framework to create smaller containers. As material elements are moved through space, these smaller containers also change and shift with each new organization, and can hold additional containers within each container, furthering the Russian Doll analogy.

As we move from the largest macro container of Theater 14, additional containers of space are created by all the objects of the theater. In Theater 14, these inanimate material objects include a variety of items including chairs, curtains, lights, and collections of old and future sets and props within the theater. These additional elements within the container of the theater will be referred to here as mobile articles within the space. These mobile articles within the theater create additional smaller containers.
The space within the theater can also be organized energetically, without the limitation of concrete objects. These “spheres” of space can include both the container and the contents within the container. Similarly, the humans that reside within the container also inhabit and create additional spheres of space. Here, these human bodies can be performers or spectators.\footnote{Additionally, the technical crew or staff may also be present, inhabiting the many backstage spheres of the theater. In this instance, we will include the crew within the realm of spectators.}

Within the room of the theater, the three primary elements include inanimate material objects, performers, and spectators. Each object or body in the theater is in constant relationship to the other objects and bodies in the theater; these relationships create simultaneously existing spheres of space. This demonstration of multiple spheres includes the stage as well as less overt spheres: the space between the audience and the performers, the space between the bodies of the performers, and the non-visible space inhabited by the performers and the audience such as internal processes and imagination. Because these spheres overlap and exist simultaneously, to experience space within the container of the theater means that one must consider all of the spheres of space held within, the spheres of space both seen and unseen.

II. Space is not limited to that which we can see

During a performance, audience members and dancers each occupy the space of the theater, engaging with different spheres of space. One question is how are these spheres perceived? Audience members and dancers encounter the space of the theater through different senses. Using Edward Hall’s categorization of how space is perceived as outlined in his book *The Hidden Dimension*, these perceptual understandings of space can be divided into two
categories: distance receptors and immediate receptors. In this case, distance receptors are “those concerned with examination of distant objects - the eyes, the ears, and the nose,” all of which can perceive space far away from the body. Immediate receptors are taste and the skin. These immediate receptors are used to examine the space close to us, the “world of touch, the sensations we receive from the skin, membranes, and muscles.” These categorizations are important in understanding how the work on stage is perceived at different distances.

Immediate and distance receptors are differently activated depending on how far one is from other humans, mobile articles, or architectural forms. In humans, Hall illustrates four distinct distance zones: Public, Social, Personal, and Intimate Distances, understanding that perception of distance is both personal and also cultural. These four categories of distance all use different sensory receptors, each of which communicate unique cues in relation to the perceptions of space.

Public distance, or more than 12 feet of space, is formal and official. This is the distance of performing, presenting, or public speaking. Subtlety is often lost at this distance, and sound and visual cues need exaggeration to register perceptually. For communication to happen, one has to exert or focus attention. Social Distance is the most casual, and is usually between 4-12 feet. To maintain contact through this space, sight is essential, particularly maintaining eye contact. Vision and sound are dominant and heat and smell are negligible. Personal distance extends to the edge where two people can touch if they both extend their arms and reach toward

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3 Hall, “The Hidden Dimension,” 40.
4 Hall, “The Hidden Dimension,” 40.
5 Hall, “The Hidden Dimension,” 40.
one another. At personal distance a person is in her own bubble, and where two people stand “in relation to each other signals their relationship, or how they feel toward each other, or both.”

Sight and sound are still dominant here and breath and body heat are not noticeable. Intimate Distance, or less than 18 inches, is the closest distance between two people, and where the most senses are acting at once. Sight, smell, sound, touch, body heat, and breath are all factored into the understanding of space. Olfaction and the sensations of the skin are heightened. One can sense heat from another body and the breath on the skin. The sensation of warmth from another body through skin and breath is the line between intimate and non-intimate space. Intimate distance is just that: intimate. This is the distance of touch and physical contact, of “love-making and wrestling, comforting and protecting.”

As the space between objects diminishes, the amount of sensory receptors at play increases. At public, social, and personal distances, sight is dominant. Sound is secondary, but sight is the most commanding of the senses. It isn’t until intimate distance that sight is subordinate and the other senses take over.

In dance, multiple distance relationships are being experienced at once by both the audience and the dancers. For the audience members, as each sits facing the performance she is in close proximity or intimate distance with other audience members and may be able to smell or detect the body heat of the person she is sitting next to. Simultaneously, the audience can see the gesture and body stance of the dancers on stage at “public distance,” but not small details such as beads of sweat. If the dancers break the barrier of public distance and move towards social, personal, or even intimate distances with the audience, different senses are activated. The


audience may be able to smell the dancers or feel their body heat, both of which are non-habitual ways of being in this relationship.

Integral to the nature of dance is the expansion and contraction of spatial distances. Dancers are typically within public distance of the audience. On stage, however, dancers may be as far apart as the container permits, or they may be quite close, touching, lifting, or holding one another. These shifts in spatial relationships are also read by the audience. The spectators witness the dancers engaging with one another in intimate space, and reaching out into public, social or personal distances as well. These changing spatial distances give texture and meaning to a performance, allowing audience members to potentially add their own layer of meaning as they witness the ebb and flow of space between dancers and between objects.

But what about the spheres of space that are not and cannot be seen? Here, we will refer to this as non-visible space. Non-visible space includes spaces that can’t be experienced through vision, such as the space within the body, between the bones and the muscles, fascia and skin, or the air within the lungs. In the dancing body, the space of bones, muscles, internal organs and blood are not visible to the spectator. We may see the external form of the body, but we cannot easily see inside it. Likewise, there is also non-visible space occupied by the mind and the imagination. We cannot see these invisible spheres of space such as imagination or memory, but they can still be experienced.

Is it possible to somehow see the space that can’t be seen? As demonstrated earlier, highlighting the material objects within a space showcases the space itself. How can this same objective be achieved if there are no material objects to locate the space? Constanze Klementz makes an interesting case in her analysis of Martina Löw’s “sociology of space” by
distinguishing between “spacing and synthesis-driven activity.”

Spacing describes material objects positioning to show space, whereas “synthesis-driven activity describes a reverse movement - one just as necessary for the constitution of space - where people and material and also immaterial goods are combined into spaces only via processes of perception, imagination or memory.”

This synthesis of the immaterial with the material can only be accessed by modes of sensing beyond sight. The physical internal space of the body and immaterial space of the mind are invisible. Alternate senses, such as taste or sound, and also imagination and memory, can help to realize the space that cannot be seen.

To access non-visual space, it is essential to reconsider sight as the primary method of receiving information. If you take away visual norms and either distort or remove sight as the primary means by which the audience experiences the performance, you can “deconstruct the visual regime of the world we live in and of theater, but also provide an alternative space in which the mental theatre is addressed through a physical filter, or where the gaze, averse to visual conventions, is confronted with a complex internal sensoriness.”

In other words, as an audience member, if you cannot see the performance or cannot see part of the performance, you are forced to use your other senses and your imagination to experience what is happening beyond the limits of sight. Taking away visual norms by obstructing the view of the audience or making the performers hard to view, “forces the spectator to look differently, to imagine a space beyond the images and above all to question his own mental theatre.”

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9 Klementz, “To make visible”.

10 Jeroen Peeters, Bodies as Filters, (Tienen, Belgium: Maasmechelen Cultural Centre, 2004), 59.

medium and primarily experienced through sight, then removing sight may highlight the imaginative, mental, and other non-sight related approaches to experiencing performance and the space of the performance.

This exploration of the internal and non-visual is not limited to the audience’s perspective. It can be applied to the performer’s experience as well. As Jeroen Peeters explains in his essay *Bodies as Filters*, resistance of sight “is linked to the dancer’s proprioceptive perception and an exploration of an alternative space there.”12 Without vision, dancers encounter their own internal space by experiencing the internal and hidden informational processes contained within their internal sphere. By reconsidering sight as the primary method of information transference, alternate space is accessed for the performer, allowing internal imaginative, energetic, and non-visual information to take precedence in experiencing space both internally and externally.

By heightening sensorial awareness, the dancer is able to “visualize” the non-visible space inside the body. This can lead to “a different understanding of space, a specific sensorial proximity wherein a network of connections to the environment is built out of the inner bodily geography.”13 These visualizations of the internal create a different relationship to space. This experience of non-visible space as equally energetically viable as the external visible space of the body allows the dancer to consider their body and movement as a continuum of space that extends from the inside to the outside, allowing both internal information and external information to exist on the same plane. The performer can then use the internal experiences of

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12 Peeters, “Bodies as Filters,” 59.

their internal space as a way to further their own performativity and translate their experience from the inner to the outer.

III. Each person brings her unique perspective to her experience of space

Returning again to the location of the performance and the external spaces in the room of the theater, both audience and dancers are in a nearly constant state of shifting spatial relationships. Within the context of the theater, there are multiple relationships in existence at all times, between the audience and the dancers, between one dancer and another, and between the human bodies and inanimate objects. For any space to be located, a relationship must exist, which implies both a perspective as well as a secondary element against which to measure. In each relationship, there is the perspective of the subject and also the “other,” which corresponds to “both a near and a far, a here and a there.”

Each audience member experiences the performance from her own perspective. Not only does each audience member sit in a different place, encountering the performance from her own singular position, she also brings her own personhood and identity into the experience. For each spectator, she becomes the “me” sitting “here” encountering the dancers as “you” dancing “there”. This same experience can also be applied to the dancer’s perspective. Each performer on stage experiences the performance from her own frame of reference. The dancers encounter the audience as a “them” sitting “there,” and they also experience the “you”-ness of their fellow dancers on stage. The individual perspective of both audience members and dancers means that

there is no universal perspective. Rather, each person’s perception of space is unique and
integral to her sensory experience of live performance.

No two people can exist in the same location of space at the same time and the
circumstance of existing in the world signifies an otherness or singularity to each person’s
perspective. Our physical experiences are separate and distinct and create an understanding of
“me” and “you” which correlates to a “here” and “there”. This singular experience of existing in
space means that “there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences.”15 These
spaces are constantly being constructed and deconstructed by the relationships between all the
elements and people in the space. The interplay of spaces and spheres in the theater “leads to the
materialisation of several spaces in the same place at the same time,” or multiple spheres within
the larger sphere of the theater.16

This understanding of space is both inherent and integral to the dancers’ work. It is
through movement that choreographers and dancers create composition and relationships,
actualizing the space of the theater through their particular points of view. Not only do the
dancers’ movements call attention to the spaces and relationships between themselves and the
other elements within the space, dancers’ movements also create spatial pathways. Because
dance is a time-based art form, the dancers are acting in the moment, and their changing spatial
relationships and pathways “refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by.”17 These
pathways exist in the past yet awareness of the space as it is inhabited lingers to inform and give
context to the present and future. These pathways and actions created by the dancers allow their

16 Klementz, “To make visible”.
“intertwined paths [to] give their shape to spaces.”18 As de Certeau explains, “in that way, he makes [the spaces] exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.”19 The history and passage of actions in space are where pathways and spaces materialize for the spectators. In this way, dancers create space through their presence in the theater, and the movements of the dancers allow this space to shift and morph throughout the performance.

In dance, multiple spatial relationships are being experienced at once by both the audience and the dancers. This is a lot of sensory information to take in, and helps us understand the importance that these spatial relationships can have in relation to the performance. Because audience members and performers experience multiple spheres of space at the same time, visible and non-visible spheres of space are likewise interconnected and synchronous: spheres of space that are visible are concurrent with the spheres of space that are non-visible. This means that to acknowledge the space within the container of the theater means to acknowledge multiple spheres of space simultaneously. These visible and invisible spheres are interconnected and integral to the understanding of space within the container. This exploration of space means that “the outside and the inside are one continuum.... That's quite a fantastic image, and a beautiful globalisation of space itself.”20

As dancers move through space, they take the viewer on a journey, beginning at one point and ending at another. As de Certeau explains, “every story is a travel story - a spatial

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20 Peeters, “Materials”.

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practice”. A linear understanding of time and space leads to a sense of not only traveling from here to there, but beginning here and ending there, which creates a narrative or story to the journey. In dance, the shifting of movement through time allows stories to be generated through gesture and movement. This is where the excitement is as well, the continuous shift of space and the merging and emerging relationships between spheres of spaces, and between the elements within the container.

In the next two chapters, I will explore the journey of the performance of The Space Between and the road to get there, looking at both external and internal space and the relationships of the spaces and people within the theater.

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Chapter 2

My creative process incorporates my thesis research in two primary ways - exploring external and visible space, and exploring internal and non-visible space. This chapter will focus on the external space as viewed in the performance of *The Space Between*. From the beginning, I was inspired by the notion of the audience members and performers sharing the space of the theater. To consider space within Theater 14 would mean to explore *all* the spaces of the theater, not just the space around the dancers on stage. I was curious about ways in which I could highlight space within the theater. How could I showcase or bring the audience’s awareness to the space of the architectural form of Theater 14. How could I also show the space in between the dancers on stage and in between the audience and the performers. I wanted to intentionally expand and contract the perception of space within the theater, both for the audience and the dancers, as a way to show the space of the theater and to bring the audience’s awareness to the singularity of Theater 14 as a unique and specific place.

One of my initial inquiries was finding strategies to draw the audience’s attention to the architectural form of the theater. How could I challenge their assumptions about the container of the theater? At the beginning of the process creating *The Space Between*, I envisioned the audience members moving through the space to experience the architectural form of the theater in new ways. I was interested in the audience becoming aware of their own spectatorship by having them see each other. I wanted to create a re-consideration of the theater space by having the audience see the space from different vantage points, to have them shift their perspective of
the stage in order to shift their perspective of the performance. After exploring the theater, I
elected to have the audience remain in their original seats during the performance. Instead of the
audience moving, they would experience a shift in the structure of the theater through the space
changing around them. I moved mobile elements as a way to call attention to spaces in the
theater that are not normally seen and to highlight different spheres of space within the larger
spheres of the theater. I wanted to show the audience the specific elements of Theater 14, to
imply that there are more spheres of space beyond the container of the stage and to show Theater
14 as a specific place, not just any generic stage space.

In the performance of *The Space Between*, the front curtains open to reveal the full space
of the theater, the “room” that is normally hidden from view. The back curtains and wings are
raised, and the “work-lights,” or non-theatrical everyday lights are on. The architectural form of
the building is revealed including the floor, ceiling, and all 4 walls extending from the audience
space through to the back of the stage. Various theater debris and old sets are stacked and stored
against the walls. Midway through the piece the “full blacks,” or back curtains, are slowly
lowered which visually separates the stage from these objects and the architectural form of the
room. Later on in the piece the side curtains, or “wings,” are flown in one at a time, further
delineating the space. These curtains and wings allow the space to become a “stage”.

These choreographic choices were designed to bring the audience’s awareness to the
architectural form of the theater to allow them to see the uniqueness of the space around them.
By being aware of the room of the theater, I wanted to show Theater 14 as a specific location
rather than a neutral or universal stage space. By hiding what had previously been visible (and
revealing what had previously been invisible during the first half of the concert), I was interested
in probing what that change would do to the perspective or experience of that space for the audience. Depending on where each audience member was seated, they could see more or less of the space “backstage.” I intentionally wanted to create moments that were not equally visible to everyone as a way to highlight the uniqueness of each audience member’s perspective. I wanted to explore each audience member’s individual vantage point as integral and situated within the container of the theater to show their perspective and experience as being unique to them.

One compelling aspect about the movement of these specific mobile articles within the theater is that the back curtains and side wings visually create a new container. As touched upon briefly in Chapter 1, the curtains, wings, and 4th wall create a smaller container within the container of the theater. It was my goal to utilize both of these containers in the performance of *The Space Between*, the container of the architectural form of the theater, and also the smaller container of the stage. I was interested in exploring different approaches to space, both as a way to explore the broader idea of the theater space, and to explore space in a more traditional way on stage. By beginning the piece with the architectural form of the theater visible to the audience, and then altering the mobile articles in the theater to create a new container, my intention was to make the artifice of the theater space visible to the audience to show the uniqueness of Theater 14 and the full expanse of space within the room of the theater. Within the smaller stage space, I was interested in using the full stage and creating spatial pathways for the dancers in a way that would challenge my own spatial preferences in stage dance and create a greater sense of movement and action on stage.
In the performance of *The Space Between*, the dancers perform in the space beyond the container of the stage, highlighting the “room” of the theater. The dancers’ locations call attention to the architectural form of Theater 14, and change the distance relationships between the dancers and the audience members. The dancers begin the piece off stage at the back of the theater during intermission (behind the audience) and slowly make their way to the front of the stage traveling through the audience. By crossing through the audience’s space, a non-traditional performance space, the dancers call attention to the space of the theater that is usually designated solely to the audience. This action changes the spatial relationship between the dancers and the audience and also makes the audience aware of their own presence in the theater. By observing the dancers traveling through the audience space, each audience member is watching not only the dancers, but also the other audience members seated near the action. Each audience member observes herself in relation to both the performers and the other spectators.

As the piece progresses, the dancers again use non-traditional space by performing at the very front of the stage. Theater 14 is a traditional proscenium stage, and also has a large “apron.” This apron is a 4-5 foot extension at the front of the stage that separates the audience from the dancer’s space. This space is rarely used in dance performances, not only because it has limited stage lighting, but also because it feels quite close to the audience. In Theater 14, the first few rows of audience chairs are at the feet of the dancers. For these viewers, dancers on the stage appear as though they might step into their laps at any moment. This apron is important in visually separating the dancers from the audience, creating a safe boundary for the audience that helps to separate “them” from “us.” During *The Space Between*, I made use of this space in a solo where a dancer traverses from one side of the apron to the other, dancing all the way to the
edge of the stage as well as into the corners of the apron near the walls. Later in a second solo, a
different dancer performs in the corner of the apron, in a space in-between the audience area and
the stage. By using the apron, I wanted to have the dancers feel unusually close to the audience,
not to make the audience uncomfortable, but to highlight the distance between dancers and
audience. Performing in this different space was a way to circumnavigate the audience’s set
spatial perspective and vantage point and have the dancers and audience interact in personal and
intimate space, pushing both groups past their habitual spatial relationship.

As illustrated in Chapter 1, dancers are typically in public distance, or more that 18 feet
from the audience. At public distance, the audience actively focuses their attention on the
performers and they mostly use visual sense to explore the space and the performers. I wanted to
interrogate the distance between the dancers and the audience members during the performance
of *The Space Between* by having the dancers perform in the audience space and on the apron to
place the dancer within social or even personal or intimate distance of the audience. This shift in
distance meant that there was the possibility for different sensory receptors to be enacted by the
audience. The audience could experience the change in distance through sight, but they were
also close enough so that their other senses were highlighted. They might have been able to
sense the body heat of the dancers or pick up on subtle sounds of the performance such as the
dancers feet on the floor or heavy breathing, thereby disrupting the audience’s expectations of
the use of the space and calling into question their spatial relationships to the dancers.

I was interested in having the audience recognize their role in the performance as
observers and integral to the experience because I wanted the audience to bring their own
individuality to the space, to be aware of themselves as individual humans rather than a sea of
spectators. I was curious about subverting the audience’s expectation of how and where they would encounter the performance, and I was also interested in having the dancers perform in close proximity to the audience as a way to open the audience up to the awareness that they were being seen and observed by the dancers. The audience was being observed by the performers just as they were doing the observing. Not only did I want to have the audience encounter the performance, I wanted to have them be encountered by the performance. I have deeper and related questions about how and where audiences access performance. By having the dancers cross over into the non-traditional space of the theater, this was a small and subtle way for me to play with audience expectations within the performance space.

We also investigated external space though the process of creating *The Space Between*. Two specific exercises, “Compassing” and “Measuring,” provided tools for the dancers to experience the spaces around them. I adapted both exercises from choreographer Meg Stuart’s book “Are We Here Yet,” and used the prompts to direct the dancer’s focus to the active space around them.

The first exercise that we used to explore the space in between bodies was adapted from Meg Stuart’s exercise “The Chase”:

> “Stand outside in a public space with a partner. Determine a fixed amount of time for the duration of the chase, perhaps 30 minutes. Start. One is on the run, hunted by the other; chased constantly, not allowed to rest unless they hide. The action slips in and out of the real world, blending into that place’s reality; be it a market, a park, or a busy street. All the while, you remain in the fiction of the chase.”

For my purposes, I was less interested in the chasing aspect of the exercise and more invested in the exploration of space that I hoped this activity would provide. I was also concerned that

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describing the activity as a chase would lead to a predator/prey relationship that would then imply dominance or attack. I didn’t want to insert a direct emotional aspect to the work, rather I wanted to approach space on a physical level. I decided to refer to the exercise as “Compassing.” I guided one person to be the “center” of the compass and their partner to be the “needle” that moves around the center. By having the dancers emulated inanimate objects, it lessened the emotional aspect of being chased. In fact, the dancer in the center wasn’t being chased or attacked, they were in control, magnetic and powerful.

In our rehearsals, we played Compassing many times. One dancer would be the Compass Center, and their tailbone would become a magnetic point that the other dancer, the Compass Needle, would follow behind. The Center would move through space, walking and running, playing with speed and direction. The Needle would then follow the tailbone of the first dancer, playing with how near and far they were from their partner adjusting their radius and speed to stay behind the Center.

We first played Compassing outside, using the campus and woods as our playground. We also played Compass inside, using the smaller space of the studio for exploration. Though Compassing never made it into the final performance version of the piece, the work that we did in this exercise in the rehearsal process was especially helpful in tuning the dancers and myself to the space in between each dancer. By tracking the tail of the person in front and using a limited movement vocabulary, the distance between one dancer and the next was the only variable that the dancers had to play with. This contraction and expansion of space between dancers allowed consistent focus on distance and proximity in between dancers. This effectually tuned the dancers into the space in between each other. This exploration of space from the
dancers was vital for my purposes in this piece. In order to highlight space for the audience, I needed to find ways to highlight space for the dancers first, not only as research for my choreographic process, but to have the dancers then be able to translate their experience and knowledge of space through their experience of the performance. By bringing the dancers’ awareness to the space around them, I hoped that their attention to space would then impact the audience’s experience of the space in the theater. Through having the dancer’s truly see and experience space, I hoped to make that readable for the audience, allowing the spectators to witness what the dancers were witnessing.

A second improvisation score, “Measuring,” was also integral to the rehearsal process for *The Space Between*. Measuring was also adapted from Meg Stuart, and like many of our improvisations, we initially used Measuring for experiential purposes. I began Measuring in one of our rehearsals by having the dancers lie on the floor, feeling their weight sinking down, as I slowly talked them through the exercise.

> “Measure your own body. Use an analytical, unemotional approach to find your density, weight, temperature, the length and width of your body parts, their flexibility. Measure your heartbeat. Measure your lung capacity and your breathing rate. Measure the space around you, including the temperature, the pressure, the humidity. Measure the architecture of the space. Measure the distance between objects in the room. Measure your thoughts. Measure your aura. Measure the distance between you and the sky.”

The first few times we did Measuring, I stayed with the above text, but throughout our rehearsal process Measuring continued to evolve. The dancers would measure the spaces within themselves, the spaces between themselves and the human bodies and inanimate objects in the room, and the spaces of the room itself. Through focused attention and observation, the dancers

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23 Stuart, “Are We Here Yet?” 163.
tuned into their physical spaces and also to the spaces around them, measuring objects and the distances between objects. We also explored how the dancers explored the distances in the room, how they perceived or experienced the spaces around them. They primarily relied on visual sense, but I also asked the dancers to perceive or experience the space through senses other than sight. Could they smell the space around them, detect heat or cold through their skin, or hear differences in space?

As the rehearsal process continued, we translated Measuring into a group improvisation that was then used in the performance of *The Space Between*. This score became the seed for the improvisation that the dancers performed in the audience space during the Intermission of the shared concert. For four of the dancers, their specific score was to move from the back of the theater to the stage while climbing over the balusters, measuring the space around them. Each dancer could use all the senses that she had available to explore the architectural form of the theater and the space between. The fifth dancer had the same improvisation score but was on stage, exploring and highlighting the expansive visibility of the theater space beyond the back curtains. In performance, the dancers’ exploration of space was a way to invite the audience to see the full space of the theater. As the dancers moved through the room, the spectator’s gaze travelled with them. As the dancers explored architectural details, the audience became aware of those same elements within the space, giving the dancers the ability to highlight different spheres of space within the theater.

The exercise of measuring and tuning into the space around the dancers created a rich visual and energetic texture to the space. By stretching senses and interrogating space, different spheres and pockets within our location became more active and visible which allowed the
dancers and I to see the space in a new way. In our post-rehearsal discussions, several dancers remarked how different the rehearsal space appeared to them after Measuring. It changed the way they saw the space and gave them a different relationship to the spheres of space within the larger space. The rehearsal room no longer felt homogenous. Different spheres within the room were imbued with energy and the memory of the actions that had occurred there. The dancers were also more familiar with the unique characteristics and details of each rehearsal room.

Through rehearsing Measuring in different studio spaces (including my house), the dancers were more aware of the details of their surroundings and how details changed with each new location. By tuning into each space in the rehearsal process, we were able to practice noticing space and detail without projecting assumptions or ideas about the performance onto our experiences. When we finally entered Theater 14 during the rehearsal process, we explored the space, not as a theatrical performance venue, but as a room with different textures and details. Using Measuring as a score allowed me to have the dancers experience Theater 14 as the specific room of the performance, which in turn helped to attune the audience to the specifics of the theater. I wanted to give the performers knowledge of the space so that they could show and share their spatial awareness and intimate knowledge of the theater with the audience. By having the dancers connect to the space, I hoped to imbue them with a sense of familiarity and ownership so that in performance the dancers would feel comfortable performing in all the spaces of the theater. I hoped that this comfort in the space would allow the dancers to feel more at ease coming into close contact with the audience, thereby making the audience more at ease with the shifting spatial distances between audience and dancers. Creating a heightened awareness of the specifics of Theater 14 struck at the heart of my inquiry. I wanted to use
improvisation both in the rehearsal process and in the performance as a tool to examine and stretch the dancers perspective of the performance space. I was interested in using an enhanced awareness of the theater as a way to open up new perceptions of space for the dancers, the audience, and for myself.
To be in close proximity with someone means to engage with the personal space of that person in ways beyond visual sense. As illustrated in Chapter 1, when humans are within intimate distance from one another, senses other than vision begin to take precedence. At extremely close distance, vision becomes blurred, and the smells, sounds, and heat from another body become more prominent. There is a sense of familiarity and intimacy at this distance when created by choice, though when done against personal will, intimate distance can feel invasive and uncomfortable. In rehearsals for The Space Between, I wanted to explore this close proximity of space between the dancers, both as a means to highlight the space (or lack of space between the dancers), and also to explore how the space in between the dancers is experienced.

I am interested in dismantling a sight-driven approach to exploring space. In this project, I found the exploration of proximity and its impact on the perception of space to be essential in re-thinking a traditional sight-driven approach to space. Two specific improvisation scores, “Skin Duets” and “Breath Duets,” emerged during our rehearsal process as a way to explore non-visual space through intimate distance.

Skin Duets initially came out of an improvisation experience I had while working with Meg Stuart at Ponderosa, in Stolzenhagen, Germany. In this improvisation, I was dancing next to a friend, Ayelet, aggressively pressing into her as she stood her ground concentrating on her own task. As the dance progressed, I had the sense that I was trying to fit myself inside her. I was literally trying to re-form my body inside of her body, to get inside of her skin. I tried every
angle and every body part looking for an avenue into her body. As we moved apart, I was left attempting to fit myself into an empty space, trying to meld my body into the memory space of her body.

This was a powerful experience for me. My own experiences with contact improvisation and dance partnering have involved saying yes, nonverbally agreeing with my dancing partners as we work together. There is often a tacit assumption that we will be gentle and careful with our touch. My duet with Ayelet was a departure from this fluid and comfortable contact. The movement was extremely physical. This was not a gentle or sensuous sliding of skin on skin, it was a rough, aggressive, concerted effort to achieve the impossible and transform my body into her body. This new partner relationship felt more connected and tactile than previous partnering. I was curious about what this tactile sensation would look like from the outside. I wanted to recreate this idea choreographically and direct it from the outside to explore the structure of the improvisation and the visual effect of this sensation-driven experience.

Working with friction and a solo approach to partnering was both exciting and uncomfortable for me. I wanted to propel this idea forward in my rehearsal process as I worked with the other dancers as a way to create a different kind of movement. I was also curious about the potential for the dancers to be discordant with one another as a way to create conflict, and to have the dancers stay focused on their individual tasks while remaining in close proximity. I was curious about how this state of non-agreement would be experienced from the outside. Would it come across as an intimate and sexual experience, or would it seem violent or angry? I wanted to explore ways for the dancers to be in intimate space with one another in a way that wasn’t sensual, sexual, or gentle. But I also wasn’t interested in recreating violence on stage. I wanted
to push the dancers to be in intimate space with one another in a way that would highlight the lack of space between two bodies without having an overt emotional overtone.

In the rehearsal studio, we entered into Skin Duets through the idea of having an impossible task. I would give the dancers an impossible task like “try to fit your body inside your partners body,” or “try to touch each part of your skin to your partner without looking at them,” and then pair dancers at random to see which scores created conflict or harmony. Eventually the scores became codified and specific to each individual. One dancer was told to spread her skin like peanut butter on her partner’s skin. Another dancer needed more structure, so she was told to stand her ground and be as firmly rooted as possible while her partner moved around her. Not only did each dancer have an individual score to focus on during the improvisation, they were also given different degrees of effort to use in their task. I would assign each dancer a different level of effort, 1-10, with 1 being light and gentle and 10 being aggressive and rough. At an effort level of 9 or 10, each dancer was really going for it, really trying to attain the task, taking risks with her weight and with her partner.

As one dancer remarked afterwards, there was something inherently dis-satisfying and aggravating about these scores. The tasks were impossible, and there was an irritation in trying to do something that could not be done. Like an itch you cannot scratch, these tasks were frustrating and grating. As research, this was quite interesting. This sense of dis-ease about the duets carried over into the execution of the movement. The dancers were in extremely close proximity with one another, and vision was almost irrelevant in exploring the space between them and their partner. Their aggression towards the score kept the movement from feeling
sensual or sexual. Instead, there was a sense of conflict as both dancers struggled to occupy the same space at the same time.

These duets were a way to create discord and a different approach to partnering, but they were also a way for me to engage the dancers in an exploration of space beyond the visual senses. Because the dancers were in intimate distance of one another, vision was subordinate to their other senses. The dancers were forced to use perceptive tools other than sight to experience their skin and body in relation to their partner’s skin and body. This was important to me as relevant research and process. I wanted to create a larger possibility for how the dancers could encounter one another, to have them experience space through non-visual senses as a way of opening them to other sensory receptors. It was also essential for me to work with the dancers’ sense of space first before attempting to translate an exploration of non-visible and internal space to the audience’s perception of the performance.

These duets did not make it into the final performance of *The Space Between*. Like a one note idea, once the dancers engaged with each other, the intrigue was gone. Performatively, these duets were not very interesting and they could only hold the audience’s attention for a short while before becoming uninteresting and repetitive. As research though, these duets were extremely valuable in offering the dancers a way to access the space of themselves and the space of their partner beyond visual sense. Through rough, physical contact of skin on skin, the dancers experienced the tangible nature of their bodies in contact with their partner, and the distinct lack of space in between their bodies. They were actively investigating their partner up close, gaining insight into their partner through all their senses.
In addition to Skin Duets, Breath Duets became another improvisational score that was used to access the non-visual space of the dancers, using close proximity as a way to subvert reliance on the visual world. We began Breath Duets by playing a version Meg Stuart’s improvisation score called “Change”. In Change, the dancers would move from action to action or movement to movement every time the director or choreographer called “change!” I used this same principle, but adapted the score to use breath rather than movement. I had each dancer stand face to face with one another and with each call of “change!” the dancers would switch to a different kind of breath. They would wheeze, pant, laugh, hyperventilate, sigh, hold their breath, and perform every kind of breath variation they could think of. I then asked the dancers to synchronize their breath, so that as one dancer inhaled the other exhaled. This called forth imagery of exchanges of breath, a sense that “I am inhaling your exhale.”

As rehearsals went on, we codified and structured these breath duets, the dancers changing and altering their inhalation and exhalation as they exchanged breath with one another. At first, the dancers were involved in the exploration of the exchange, the ebb and flow of an inhale into an exhale that would alter or reshape their partner’s breath. However, as the piece progressed, the duets became static and known. It became less about the investigation of breath between the dancers and more about the movements or series of events that included the breath, turning into simply a series of movements with choreographed inhalations. Through re-choreographing and improvising, we worked to make the duets more investigatory and less choreographed or set. However, with each iteration the breath remained secondhand to the movement.
I expected this highly intimate exchange of air to be significant for the dancers and to be visible by the audience, but as one observer remarked during a rehearsal, it just looked like the dancers were blowing on one another. I needed to restructure the duets in a way that called attention to the space in between the dancers. I was looking for a way for the dancers to personally explore distance while making this exploration discernible to the audience. I also wanted to find a way to show non-visible space. Throughout the process I was interested in an investigation of space through senses other than sight. I wanted to restructure the duets in a way that would bring to mind different sensory experiences, using intimate distance to lessen a reliance on vision and to have the dancers experience the space through all of the senses available to them in order to share this exploration with the audience.

I began to shift the improvisation score. In rehearsal, I had the dancers stand close to one another, a few inches apart. With eyes closed, I asked them to sense the space between their partner and themselves. Could they feel the heat from their partner’s skin? Could they smell their partner, feel their breath, or discern their movement? Could they use all their senses to feel their partner’s proximity? The evolution of breath duets into a new exploration of the space in between the two dancers struck much closer to my original intention. It ceased to be about exchange of breath and became instead a palpable exploration of using multiple senses to explore the space between two bodies in intimate distance.

These new versions of Breath Duets became Sensing Duets, and are included in the performance of The Space Between. Sensing Duets became the heart of the piece for me. In the three sections that included these duets, I found space to be the most palpable. In these duets, the dancers actively investigate the space between themselves and their partner through all of their
senses including sight, sound, smell and body heat. The dancer’s aren’t just looking at their partner, they are smelling them, testing the distance of their partner’s body heat, feeling their breath, listening for exhales and heartbeats. The experiential nature of these moments is a more full exploration of distance. They are discovering, measuring, testing, and exploring in the moment.

Two dancers engage in a Sensing Duet both at the beginning and the end of the piece. They stand face to face on the apron of the stage, separated from one another by a few inches. One dancer leans forward to listen to her partner. The other measures the heat of an ankle, and smells a shoulder. Breath is exchanged. This same idea is repeated again in the middle of the piece; two dancers face each other, this time separated by the full length of the stage. To call theatrical visual attention to the space, I added boxes of light that appear on the floor. As before, the dancers play with sensing the space in between themselves and their partner through sound, smell, heat, touch, taste, etc. However, by separating the dancers into public distance I wanted to create a disconnect as a way to further highlight the expanse of space in between the dancers. The dancers use their sensory receptors that are active at intimate distance while separated to a distance where those receptors are unable to be activated, creating a discord between distance and the sensory exploration of each dancer.

I wanted to find moments on stage where the dancers could access non visual senses as a way to have them experience the space of the theater beyond sight. I was interested in having the dancers actively using all their senses to approach the space as a way to invite the audience into a similar exploration. By creating a full sensory experience for the dancers, I hoped to encourage the audience into a corresponding state of awareness, where they might also tune into
their senses beyond the visual, whether consciously or not. It was my intent to interrogate the
dancers sensory exploration of space to engage in the dancers’ internal space as well as their
external space and to open up a similar possibility for the audience.
Chapter 4

*The Space Between* was an exhaustive effort, in more ways than one. More than any other creative process, this work challenged my approaches to art making, to artistic organization, and forced me to let go and hold on in new and different ways. My original vision for the piece was quite different than the work that was produced on stage. Initially, I envisioned this piece as a multi-layered and textured integration of digital media and live performance. I expected to use video projection throughout and I anticipated the audience moving through the space during the performance. Ultimately, neither digital media nor audience interaction fit within the theme or scope of the work. During the process, I continually asked myself how much was I projecting external ideas onto the work and how much was I listening to the piece itself. Was I using material because it was germane and connected to the intention of the piece, or was I holding on to ideas because of a rigid mind set or external pressure?

The process of creating *The Space Between* involved letting go. Throughout, I was continually forced to acknowledge the space of the theater, the cast of dancers, and my creative limitations as I created this piece. One challenging aspect was working with the space of Theater 14. Several elements of the process made exploration of the theater difficult, namely access to the space and to the production elements of the theater. I was not able to hold rehearsals in Theater 14 until more than halfway through the rehearsal process and the first time I was able to see the curtains fly in and out was less than a week before opening night. Because of this, my choreographic exploration of the space, particularly how I moved the material articles of the
theater, came out of my imagination and what I envisioned for the space rather than from a trial and error approach to experimenting within the theater. This lack of connection to the space made me aware of my own creative limitations in envisioning how I might use the theater, and it also highlighted the importance of working with the realities of the space at hand.

This top-down approach to creating *The Space Between* also emerged in the choreography of the piece. At the beginning of this project, I was committed to using improvisation both for process and for product. As rehearsal process, the improvisation scores I worked with felt successful. I noticed a positive shift in the dancers throughout the process in how they related to the space around them and how they existed in their own bodies. As performance, these improvisation scores were less successful. Most of my cast members had limited experience with performing improvisation, therefore I did not feel I would be able to achieve my intentions for the impact of the performance while leaving elements of the performance and movement vocabulary up to chance, no matter how tightly I might structure the scores.

I elected to focus my attention on crafting the performance of *The Space Between*. As illustrated in chapters 2 and 3, the improvisational scores we used in the creation process were illuminating for both the dancers and myself as a way to access internal space and explore external space. However, I didn’t know if the dancers would be able to stay in an investigation of space during the performance in a way that would be transparent to the audience. In rehearsals, the dancers were clearly investigating *something*, but it was not obvious from the outside what their investigations were about. Working with dancers on their improvisational performance skills is both interesting and valuable to me as research and process, but it didn’t
feel germane to my intentions for this piece. Rather than diving into the improvisational
performance skill sets of the dancers, my primary interest was creating an exploration of the
space of Theater 14 for both the dancers and the audience. I wanted to craft the journey of the
space. I elected to restructure the piece to show space primarily through set material rather than
through improvisation. I kept improvisation as a performance score for one dancer who had
more experience with improvisation, and I also used improvisation during intermission. The rest
of the piece eventually became set material, which was more comfortable for the dancers and for
myself. In doing so, I didn’t push my own choreographic boundaries as much as I had intended,
but in exchange I was able to craft the piece with greater intention. By using set movement, and
orchestrating the details of each dancer’s spatial pathways on stage, I was able to tailor the
experiential nature of the piece in the way that I wanted. I was able to arrange and direct the
dancer’s focus and intention on stage as a way to guide the audience’s gaze and awareness to
different spheres of space within the theater.

I also had to let go of my original ideas about the organization of the work. Several
weeks before the performance I had created an order for the sections of the piece. I felt external
pressure from the dancers and the technical crew to leave the organization of the piece as it
stood. However, the work felt static and forced, and I was holding onto irrelevant material. Two
weeks before the show, I reorganized the structure of the piece to highlight what the piece was
actually about: space. Though this late-process restructuring was scary both for the dancers and
for myself, restructuring the arc of The Space Between allowed me to clarify my relationship to
the space of Theater 14 in a way that was less linear and more experiential. I learned that the
creative process does not stop two weeks before the performance. By taking a “radical eye” to
the work, and in particular, the transitions, the final performance of *The Space Between* felt like a more textured and complex arc, with an ebb and flow that challenged and pushed me past my initial ideas for the structure of the work.

The process of creating *The Space Between* both through research and creative process has fundamentally changed the way I view space. I am more attuned to the space and containers that surround me. I am also more aware of the spatial distances between myself and others. I notice when personal distance moves towards intimate, or when social distance extends to public. I am far more attuned to the spaces on stage and how and where I engage with stage space. Enhancing my awareness of space has allowed me to notice my spatial habits choreographically and has opened up new avenues of possibility. I am currently working on suppressing my tendency to use diagonals and to find ways to use the vertical and horizontal space of the theater. I am also aware of new performance space possibilities and ways I might incorporate them, such as projecting video onto the ceiling above the audience, or delineating the audience’s perspective to give them a consciously limited view of the performance action.

As I move forward as an artist and director, I want to stay in a radical research mode. I want to challenge my comfort level and my boundaries, to not stay safe, to experiment and be radical. With this work, I placed a certain restraint on myself artistically by using set material, omitting digital media in the performance, and limiting the dancers’ time in the audience space. Because of the proscenium stage and the high-stakes nature of the thesis, I held on to the reins of the piece tighter than I expected. Going back into set choreography rather than staying with improvisation felt like a safe choice, one that I’m not sure I would make again. As I continue to make work and expand into new territory artistically, I hope to move past safety, comfort, and
rules. I would like to have the audience move around the performance space despite logistical limitations. I want to overtly subvert space, to have movement happen behind walls and offstage or ask the audience to wear blindfolds. I hope to stay in the unfamiliar. I want to continue to propel myself to be unafraid of chaos and the unknown. I aspire to be radical, to be an artist, and to actively interrogate my experiences of the world.
Bibliography


