TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CORPOREALITY,
IMPROVISATION AND INHABITED SPACE

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led research project probes how to sustain the methodology of a well-developed solo practice as performer/maker, whilst moving toward choreographic development on other bodies.

The research project, ‘Toward an understanding between corporeality, improvisation and inhabited space’ is the culmination of two years of research toward my Master of Choreography at the Victorian College of the Arts and MCM, University of Melbourne.

Grounded in an investigative improvisation workshop, the research explores the process of creation for new dance work by allowing corporeality, real-time attention to space and our living experience to influence movement choices, thereby highlighting a personal performance idiosyncrasy. Outcomes and insight of the research have allowed for interest to emerge around the interconnected relationships and influence of corporeality, improvisation, choreography and intuitive processes.

Through both a reflexive first person account of values and practices and also engagement with theoretical discourse from performance theory, art theory and philosophy, this writing explores the above key interests in relation to the making of the performance piece connected with the project, The Space Between.

This research was undertaken through three key phases, namely: ten months of solo improvisation exploration, a five-month improvisation workshop and performance season with three other dancer/makers, and an 8 month writing process providing insight and understanding into the previous two phases.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

1. The thesis comprises only my original work toward the Master of Choreography except where indicated.

2. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

3. The thesis is less than 18,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

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INTRODUCTION: Research aims, approach and context

The paper is written to shed light upon a number of aspects of interest arising through the creation and performance of *The Space Between*. Together, the writing and the performance processes form the research project:

Toward an understanding between corporeality, improvisation and inhabited space.

*The Space Between* was presented at the Grant Street Theatre, University of Melbourne, Faculty of the VCA and MCM, as a series of six live dance performances on March 30, March 31 and April 1 2011.

The core of this research project is the development of understanding of my choreographic practice, and the search for new methodologies that challenge, stimulate and support this praxis. This writing is in part a narrative of a practice and it broadens through the references and relations I share with others to become somewhat auto ethnographic. Such a shift in attention between myself to the experience and perspectives of others enables a more critical and insightful process to the writing.

The concepts of improvisation, choreography, corporeality and intuition are of particular interest in this research. Some definitions of these terms provide an initial conceptual framework for the reader.

**Improvisation**

Improvisation as it relates to dance can be described as the real time act of dancing, with no pre-conceived notion of the sequence of movement to be executed. During improvisation, a dancer creates a series of movements and actions that have not been consciously decided upon previously. As dance writers Blom and Chaplin (1982, p.6) describe, “*Improvisation emerges as an inner-directed movement response to an image, an idea or sensory stimulus*.”
Choreography

Choreography is an intentional choice-making process whereby moments, ideas or dynamics of the dancer are ‘set’ in time and space. Such prescriptions to the dancer contribute to more wholly ‘known’ moments and are able to be recollected during performance. Choreography, in the case of this research, alludes to the choice-making process of framing and staging improvised dance. Choreographer Deborah Hay within Foster (2000, p.xv) states “The choreography is simultaneously the conscious choices I am making within the form”.

Corporeality

Corporeality refers to our internal residue of learning, resulting from our prior experience. Corporeality reflects the body’s ability to store previous training, experience and memory, and infers the surfacing of this through the real time act of improvisation. Dance writer Sondra Fraleigh (1987, p.17) writes, “My entire lived experience determines my body; my choice to be athletic or sedentary, my habits of walking, talking, eating, and even dreaming”.

Intuition

Notions of intuitive decision-making connect the concepts of improvisation, choreography and corporeality, and within this research allude to a decision-making ability that is perhaps not perceptible in the moment. Scientist and writer George Ladd (1979, p.3) writes, “In philosophy, intuition is defined as immediate knowledge attained without conscious deliberation or reasoning. In the theory of knowledge, intuition is the immediate apprehension of truth”.

The project spanned three distinct periods of research. These comprised:

• 10 months of solo studio practice deepening my own understanding of my choreographic practice
• A 5 month improvisation workshop working ‘one-on-one’ with Melbourne dancers Michelle Ferris, Leah Landau and Renae Shadler, culminating in a public performance season of a new dance work titled The Space Between
• An 8 month process of writing and reflection that overlapped and followed the performance season of *The Space Between*

This paper sits somewhere between an exegesis and a dissertation, moving between an explorative narrative of my methodology and practice and grounding within a wider academic/research focus. The writing, largely undertaken after the live performance season, adopts a reflective attitude toward my dance making. Insight and intention arise through following instinctive and intuitive modes of thought; an approach that parallels my performance practice where the modus operandi has been to dismantle tendencies to preplan or premeditate my movement.

The adoption of a ‘stream of consciousness’ writing method has allowed ideas and interests previously imperceptible to me to surface through the writing. Jose Ortega Y Gasset (1975, p.82) writes, “When the object is there itself, there is no room for error”. This writing process has served to give light to subconsciously stored thought and learning. Coupled with this was a strict regime to never allow ‘end gaining’ through the writing, not forcing myself to know, consciously, where the writing was headed. In effect, this instilled an inquisitive and receptive sensibility, allowing me to follow trains of thought, to allow the space between my subconscious and my conscious brain to emerge as visible on a page, rendering previously inarticulate aspects of the live work visible to both the reader and myself. As writer Nicholas Davey (2000, p.378) observes, “a work comes forth from the uneasy tension between its manifestation as art object and its manifestation as artistic or aesthetic idea”.

And what if, the ‘work’ not only comes forth from, but also continues to exist within the tension between object and idea? What new territory is created inside this place?

As Ladd (1979, p.5) states “The more thoroughly your conscious mind has grasped the problem – in general outline and in detail – the better is the chance that your subconscious will produce fruitful ideas”. Represented here by the
metaphor of my conscious mind grasping the process of creation, my subconscious was enticed to “produce fruitful ideas”, namely insights into the outcomes and questions of the creative process. This involved a trust that my experiential learning undertaken throughout the creative process was indeed stored within my subconscious, and that through the insightful process of writing, this learning would be accessed.

Sitting somewhere between true stream-of-consciousness writing and the access of subconscious information via conscious understanding, the outcomes of this research have inevitably been understood through the notation and crafting of thought through writing. In doing so, I feel that two previously independent actions of mine (choreography and writing) have been able to influence and expand my research interests. This is further outlined later in Chapter 4. Ladd (1979, p.6) goes on to suggest, “Writing represents an exchange with oneself”, concurring with my experience where I was aware of viewing myself as two particular subjects through this research, myself-as-maker and myself-as-writer. The interplay of these selves has surfaced strongly through the reflection occasioned by this paper.

Chapter one begins with a discursive exploration of some of the key concepts outlined above; namely improvisation, choreography, corporeality and intuitive/subconscious processes. A survey of relevant literature extrapolates several aspects of these concepts in a search for a deeper understanding of these terms.

Chapter two offers a partial historical time line of my experience as an artist, and highlights several artists who have influenced my own choreographic development, through workshops, classes, and exposure to their creative work.

Chapter three outlines the creative performance making process of this research, from solo practice to choreography upon other bodies, and describes important moments within both the studio and performance processes.
Chapter four is concerned with the major emergent interest of this research: intuitive and sub conscious processes. This chapter explores what role trust in intuition played during the performance making process, and further how this was realised, embraced and indeed partially understood through this writing.
CHAPTER ONE: Exploration of key concepts

In the following I expand upon the brief introduction to key interests of this research: improvisation, choreography, corporeality and intuitive/subconscious processes. These terms have formed part of contemporary dialogues defining and contributing to the development of performance culture. The voices of both performance makers and theorists – especially those with whom I have had contact - have been selected and discussed further.

1.1 Perspectives on improvisation

As rich as its own history, so are the plentiful uses of improvisation within movement based practice and research. Whether as a generative tool to create set choreography, as an exploratory tool adopted to deepen a dancer’s understanding of movement, or as a performance mode itself, improvisation forms a practical methodology for many artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

A number of practitioners and writers have forged new understandings and frameworks for improvisation. Of interest to me are Deborah Hay, Susan Leigh Foster, Rosalind Crisp and Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin.

Susan Leigh Foster (2003, p.3) offers insight into a particular process of an attentive improviser, suggesting “the improvising dancer tracks back and forth between the known and the unknown, between the familiar/reliable and the unanticipated/unpredictable”.

It is a strongly held belief that one of the prevailing elements of improvisation is what Foster implies here: the ability to access movement previously “unknown”, “unanticipated” and “unpredictable”. Foster (2003, p.4) continues, “…we could never accomplish this encounter with the unknown without engaging in the known”.

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Foster here infers a perception of improvisation as one of dialogue between dancing within known movement capacities and using improvisation to navigate new capacities of movement. Choreographer Rosalind Crisp (2002a, p.5) writes of improvisation, “there is a dialogue constantly shifting between the conscious crafting and the unconscious player”.

Crisp opens the possibility for both the known and the unknown to be in conversation, supporting Foster’s “tracking back and forth”. Crisp allows us to see that through her improvisation both ends of the consciousness spectrum are imposing their influence. The unconscious player is allowed to follow intrigue, curiosity and intuition in search for movement, whilst the conscious crafting takes place to create some clarity and meaning through movement. Crisp continues:

... I am interested in accessing the liminal consciousness of the dancing body. I find that in improvisation it is possible for the gap to close between the body and its language...because the dance is of the dancer, it can most explicitly reveal her subjective reality, the body in that moment. (Crisp, 2002a, p.5)

Performance writer Jo Pollitt (2006, p.24) notes that Crisp’s work demands “...the need for complete engagement within the body and the simultaneous phenomenal and objective experience”.

What Foster and Crisp share in common is a dualism and dialogical relationship between the internal (thought, sensation, kinesthesia, perception) and the external (dance, manifestation, object).

Similarly, choreographer Deborah Hay has been described as working with the “generative play between corporeality and consciousness” (Foster, 2000, p.ix).

Hay’s connection to improvisation is further described by Foster (2000, p.xiv) as one that “constructs body as a site of exploration to which the dancer must
remain vigilantly attentive”. Hay’s approach to improvisation works towards destabilising the body and its habitual patterning and thought processes. To achieve this, Hay adopts the use of ‘scores’, such as ‘Dance the collapse of lived time’ or abstract questions of presence like ‘What if where I am is what I need?’. The idea of scores is explored in more detail in chapter two of this writing. My experience with these provocations is that they induce a hyper-awareness and attentiveness in a dancer toward the information perceivable at any moment (sensation, thought, aesthetic). As Foster (2000, p.xviii) writes, “Hay asserts the possibility of a consciously aware and critically reflective corporeality”.

Performance theorists Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin (1988, p.3) also speak in depth of improvisation and their unique understandings of it, believing, “often form is the communiqué entier: it is simply about itself. Movement becomes the subject matter, completely self-sufficient”. Of course, the moment that this is witnessed by another (an audience) the perception of any improvised act takes upon itself a shifted association, connected inherently to the context of space, place, time and an audience’s constructed meaning. As Blom and Chaplin (1988, p.11) explain, “An improv can be just about the movement, but at other times the movement can call forth associations in the form of ideas, memories, or images which become the core of the improv”.

Whilst nowhere near an exhaustive introduction to improvisation practices, these key artists and writers demonstrate that there is more at play within improvisation than a simple set of randomly performed movements. Foster’s highlighting of the known/unknown; Crisp’s dialogue between the conscious crafting and unconscious player; and Blom and Chaplin’s poetics of the ephemeral moment each allude to a complex connection between movement and choreography. The following serves to extrapolate on the complex nature and indeed the differences between improvisation and choreography.
1.2 Concepts of choreography

The following outlines the way I have begun to understand and define the choreographic process and particular understandings and applications of this. Choreography by nature is a process of choice-making, undertaken through the particular values and desires of the choreographer him/herself.

Throughout this research I was aware of information that surfaces through movement, not only through the act of dancing, but also through the process of watching other bodies as a choreographer. As writer Randy Martin (1990, p.94) states, "The dynamics and relations established during this time (of rehearsal) become the practical choreographic process whose effects are displayed in performance". Martin implies that the rehearsal process itself contributes toward choreographic decisions. The wealth of information that surfaces or presents itself through the rehearsal process including physical action, relationships between performer and choreographer, abstract concepts and imaginations actually contribute to the crafting of a choreographic work.

Deborah Hay speaks similarly of this, stating, "What I mean by my choreography includes the transmission from me to the dancer, of the same set of questions I ask myself when I am performing a particular movement sequence that ministers shape to a dance" (Hay, 2011a).

Both Hay and Martin expose a particular understanding of choreography. Martin’s reference to “effects” and Hay’s reference to “shape” begin to forge an understanding that choreography involves more than simply the moving form. So what is this understanding of choreography? Fraleigh (1987, p.20) would argue “…knowledge and movement are more fundamentally and more basically bound together than a concerted voluntary effort can bring about”. This relationship between movement and something other is further explored by choreographer Sandra Parker (2010, p.79) who writes, “I wanted to emphasise the 'substance' of the choreographic form beyond the superficial appearance of a surface choreographic representation".
Through these snippets of artistic vision (Martin, Hay, Fraleigh and Parker), I can begin to locate my own understanding of choreography. Particularly, through the use of key words such as ‘effect’, ‘shape’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘substance’, these artists uniquely express elements of my choreographic understanding as an act involving the pre-conceived or immediate intent from the mover him/herself. In the presence of this intent movement is imbued with meaning, subtext, clarity or intrigue, namely a particular something more than the action itself. Through my solo practice as a choreographer/performer, the effects of the creative process are enacted upon a stage, they have been crafted into a ‘shape’, I have knowledge of their genesis and the substance of them is clear to me. I imbue movement with an intention originating from my embodied self. These intentions may include:

- the sequence of danced events or moments
- decisions of spatial orientation
- the development of a ‘name’ for scores
- developing a particular sense of inquiry and provocation around the score for a dancer
- decisions pertaining to the performance experience as a whole: interconnectedness of performers, stage craft, and conceptual elements all of which are founded in a body of knowledge.

Sometimes it is easier to define something through stating what it is not, and in this case, that which is not choreography is the dancer’s movement. A choreographic role can be inherent within this, however a distinction is to be made between the decision-making process of choreography and the real time act of dancing.

In this instance, choreography relates to a devised ‘frame’ through which improvisation can be seen or experienced. As Rosalind Crisp (2002b) writes, “I clean the choreography and I feel I have a reason to be out there. It gives me a different freedom - a space to listen and to be present to the moment”. Crisp
allows us to see choreography as a way of creating meaning within the danced experience.

1.3 Considerations of corporeality within practice

By the very nature of choreography as an *active process*, the artist at work inherently imposes his/her own individualism within the creative process. Specifically in dance and choreographic practices this is true as the dancer’s body (along with his/her behavioral patterns and predispositions) not only acts as part of the creative process, but also is in itself a creative tool, the painter’s brush if you will. What scope is there then for understanding (and indeed utilising) the dancing body as a core interest of choreography? A number of thinkers and artists hold concern for corporeality, and those who have affected influence over my own thinking are presented below.

Fraleigh (1987, p.4) proposes that “Every art is expressed through a particular medium, and every artist’s *self* is a conduit for that medium. Dance is not different in this respect”. What Fraleigh opens here is a relationship between the medium of an artwork, and the investment of an artist’s *self* inside this. Fraleigh (1987, p.4) continues, “Along the way it becomes evident that it is ultimately impossible to remove one’s own consciousness”. As an experiential being, the dancing body cannot detach its connection to its individualism in order to create an objective danced experience. It is in fact the subjective nature of the dancing body that, for myself as a choreographer, holds the greatest potential for expression.

The moving body can also serve as a site for profound understanding of the dancing moment. As Bruner (1986, p.5) suggests, “Lived experience, then, as thought and desire, as word and image, is the primary reality”. Bruner begins to deepen the idea of an inherently present self, by contending that the composition of our collected experience is in fact what defines the ephemeral moment, “the primary reality”. As beings who breathe, eat and live only in the temporal, our basis for perceiving and understanding the world actually emanates from within
As dancing bodies, the reality of the committed moment of action, in essence the phenomenological reality, is only known through our “thought and desire” and “word and image”. Bruner (1986, p.5) continues, “An experience is more personal, as it refers to an active self, to a human being who not only engages in but shapes an action”. As experiential bodies, this engagement and shaping indicates a complex set of contributing factors arising from bodily recollection and learning through our prior experiences. In effect, our constituent corporeality plays its influence over both sense-making and decision-making. As dance writer Hubert Godard (2004, p.61) claims, “the complex network of inheritances, apprenticeships and reflexes which determine the particularity of each individual’s movement equally determines her/his manner of perceiving the movement of others”. The connection of a living body’s past, and the influence of the present is furthered by Godard (2004 p.59), who claims “Architecture, urbanisation, spatiality, the milieu in which the subject evolves, will equally have a determining influence in her/his gestural comportment”.

This corporeality is more practically stated by choreographer Rosalind Crisp (2002a, p.3), who in speaking of her practice suggests that in dance “We are both allowing the trainings of our past to emerge in the play as much as we are re-patterning the body. In fact, the two go hand-in-hand”.

Crisp’s use of the term “hand in hand” demonstrates this linkage between past and present inside the dancing body, and she continues, “the dance is of the dancer, it can most explicitly reveal her subjective reality, the body in that moment” (2002, p.5). The subjective reality of the dancer and the dancer’s experience of the reality contained within the moment, strike resemblances with Godard’s comments above.

What begins to emerge here is a common thread of the presence and influence of our past experience. In a broader sense, as philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset (1975, p.83) notes, “Knowledge cannot consist in the possession of a “copy” or a “sign” of being”. The implication being that our first hand experience of the past carries forward with us into the present, shaping and influencing our temporal
experience and choice-making process.

By accessing this store of corporeal experience and learning stored within, dance improvisation then becomes “a way of tapping the stream of the subconscious without intellectual censorship, allowing spontaneous and simultaneous exploring, creating and performing” (Blom and Chaplin, 1982, p.6). This understanding, as the immediate presence of individual corporeality, plays a formative role in the presentation, through performance, of a dancer’s idiosyncratic body.

As Fraleigh (1987, p.3) notes, “There are obvious connections between existential thought, the body, dance, and art in general, since they all are founded in lived and experiential values”. In the case of a dancer undertaking a facilitated improvisation workshop, an intricate negotiation occurs between the corporeality of our history/training/experience, and the more immediate corporeality of undergoing a workshop. This can be particularly insightful within the exchange between a dancer and a choreographer, which is explored further in chapter three of this paper.

1.4 Notions of intuition

This section of writing aims to shed light on how the nature and presence of intuition and an embrace of subconscious processes may contribute toward the development of, and indeed partially become, the intention of a contemporary performance. Of particular interest are the writings of George Ladd, Miranda Fricker, and Rosalind Crisp.

Intuition was previously described as “immediate knowledge attained without conscious deliberation or reasoning” (Ladd, 1979, p.3). Further, philosopher Miranda Fricker (1995, p.58) proposes that intuition reflects a “relation between a set of past experiences and any resultant intuition is an evidential relation”.

Intuition develops without conscious effort. We also have the capacity for
activity in which “Imagination and personal experience interplay, that new concepts, new theories, and new explanations may spring into existence” (Akenson, 1991, p.98).

Akenson and Fricker offer a link between intuitive processes, imagination and our being’s inscribed history. Intuition draws upon personal idiosyncrasies rather than the random surfacing of a sudden insight, and is deeply connected to our corporeality and experience. It is a constituent part of our living make up. Also arising through this exploration of intuition is the concept of imagination, and how the affective nature of the imagination plays an important role in mental processes. In using the term imagination, I find it enlightening to consider, as writers Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd (1999, p.52) do, that “imagination involves ideas by which the mind considers a thing as present”.

Furthering the views on imagination, choreographer Sandra Parker (2010, p.109) states “imagination contextualises felt bodily experience, while felt bodily experience can be understood as organised through the means of imagination, drawing on the reservoir of lived experience”. Through this, we begin to see that imagination has an intrinsic and tightly bound connection with what Parker calls “felt bodily experience” and the lived body. The influence of imagination within this research is further outlined in Chapter 3.2.1 of this paper.

Intuition then arises at the boundary of our consciousness and we might expect it to be present for a dancer interested in exploring the as yet less known terrain of their being. Rosalind Crisp (2002a, p.5) talks about “choosing to work in improvisation because I am interested in accessing the liminal consciousness of the dancing body”. Crisp’s “liminal consciousness” refers to an intuitive intermediacy between the known and the unknown, whilst the “dancing body” infers the conglomerate of the body as experienced in the act of moving. Through this, the idea that intuitive decision-making in fact incorporates our entire living history is expanded. Going further one can see the experiential links between the previously described notion of ‘corporeality’ and the being’s capacity for intuitive processes.
Strategies of attending to our being’s more tacit knowledge and experiences are developed by dancers. The source of understanding can lie within as Crisp (2002a, p.1) observes, "We are not trying to imitate or match the other, but to locate ourselves within our own bodies and listen to the sensation-response we are having in that moment". Crisp’s ‘listening’ alludes to a more intuitive and embodied mode of thought.

Returning to improvisational situations it is interesting to note how a state of receptivity is cultivated and how improvisers become aware of emerging possibilities. This ‘state’ is described by Blom and Chaplin (1988, p.7) as “at once intentional and reactive, casual and accommodating. An organic strategy or plan emerges to take us forward in time”, suggesting a dialogical relationship situated somewhere between control and abandon which shapes the forthcoming action.

What if this intuitive process is embraced within all aspects of the creative process? What scope is there to abandon our own conscious desires in order to access subliminal information, and discover and re-shape process and product?

Chapter three exposes and explores some of these complex relationships between improvisation, choreography, intuitive processes and corporeality, with specific reference to the creative making process of *The Space Between*. The next chapter contextualises this process with a brief outline of my own particular history and experience.
CHAPTER TWO: The emergence of a creative self; a fragmented history of influences and development

The following chapter documents my own artistic history and development, outlining several key influences including improvisation mentors and choreographic inspirations. The chapter charts my experience as dancer, choreographer and audience member, and thus serves to further extend the contextualising framework for the reader of this text.

2.1 Key influences: the beginnings of a choreographic practice

For the past ten years, I have been developing an investigative improvisation practise, based around the possibilities and nuances of my own body. This process was borne from the technical and skill limitations of my body, having had no formal dance technique training until I was 21 years old. From this lack of training and the creative input early in my development from a few key artists such as Rebecca Hilton when I was 21 years old, Paul Romano when I was 23 years old, Ros Warby when I was 25 years old, and Rosalind Crisp when I was 28 years old, a strong interest in improvisation emerged. These experiences have supported the development of an idiosyncratic movement vocabulary and as discussed throughout this chapter, each have contributed to my expanding understanding of choreography and improvisation.

The development of my improvisational practice, works toward challenging my movement vocabulary and choreographic concerns through the use of 'scores'. Scores are instructions or guidelines used to direct my attention as I dance. They help define movement, choices, and specific engagements within my moving body. Scores can range from purely physical stimulus (the connection between the toes and the hips), to perceptual provocations (soft edges of the space), to abstract notions (blurry edges of the skin). These scores arise by paying particular attention to my body, my consciousness and my imagination.

From a young age, I undertook training as an actor through local theatre groups
in Melbourne and subsequently completed a Bachelor of Performing Arts at Monash University (2002). Here I was introduced to Melbourne choreographer Rebecca Hilton, who choreographed a student dance performance: *It’s only rock and roll but I like it* (2002). Engaging in the creation of this work, having not been involved in dance culture previously, I was struck with an overwhelming sense of ‘truth’ within an embodied practice.

*Audiences attending theatrical performance are generally asked to suspend their disbelief within the theatrical construct, in order to better understand character and narrative. As an actor, one is asked to draw upon personal experience to understand character motivations and choices, to better portray characters and relationships. Whilst I believe the portrayal of character to be one of the unique powers of dramatic performance, it is precisely the ‘falsity’ that disinterested me. The portrayal of a persona that was not my own became increasingly unappealing to me. Dance struck me as somehow more honest than the type of theatre I was exposed to, which adhered to conveying clearly definable narrative structures on stage through dialogue and character. My experience of dance practice enabled me to explore possibilities of performance that opened up to many readings or understandings. Upon reflection, I see cohesion between my own values and what theatre theorist Hans-Theis Lehmann (2006, p.38) describes as ‘postdramatic theatre’, where “…gestures, figurations and arrangements are possible that refer to an ‘elsewhere’ in a different way than iconic, indexical or symbolic ‘signs’”.*

### 2.1.1 Inspiration from my experience as an audience

My own experience as an audience member of particular performance works has shaped my choreographic understanding and interests.

Both the performance works *Inert* (Simon Ellis, Shannon Bott, Cormac Lally, David Corbet and Scott Mitchell) and *Morphia Series* (Helen Herbertson and Ben Cobham) exemplify my interest in implicating an audience within performance by providing a heightened sensorial and kinaesthetic experience. More than just
aesthetic pieces of choreography, these two works engage audience members through the use of sensory stimulation, kinaesthetic awareness, and conceptual framing devices. Herein, audience members are made more aware of their own experience and roles within performance.

*Inert* places two audience members upon vertical platforms from which they watch the performance. Two performers dance in direct sight lines of their respective audience. After approximately 4 minutes, the audience is lowered to an almost horizontal position, where they watch a 12-minute dance film, projected onto a screen hung from the ceiling. As the film concludes, audience members are returned to a vertical position upon the platform. Whilst simple in its construction - altering the audience viewpoint to seemingly ‘split’ the live action and the screen work - this has a rather resonating effect. As Melbourne writer Jana Perkovic (2009a) describes: “In the absence of stimuli, even the approach of gravity as we are slowly rotated back into the vertical, is a tangibly unhappy experience: growing heaviness in the lower body, increasing pressure on the feet”.

*Morphia Series* locates audiences within an intimate bank of only 12 seats, and during the 18-minute performance the seating bank gradually moves along the floor, bringing the onlooker closer to a lone dancing figure. The final image of the work is seen as the seating bank is quickly retracted, and a gust of wind touches the faces of the audience as the bank suddenly, yet softly halts. As dance writer Philipa Rothfield (2002) describes: “At one point, the seating for the 12 observers shunts forward jerkily like a ghost train. Losing our bearings, we are exposed to ourselves…”

This is not to say however, that these works were solely concerned with this kinaesthetic experience. In fact, what makes these works so significant for me is the combination of a number of well developed ideas and concepts including in the case of *Inert* ideas of intimacy, multi-modal performance and modes of viewing; and in the case *Morphia Series* ideas of proximity, framing and light. However, it is clear that both of these works had vested interests in the sensory
experience and awareness of the audience. Virginia Baxter (2009) writes that Morphia Series was like “gazing into the deep colours of the huge canvases, overtaken by an enveloping sensory reverie”.

Seeing both of these works in Melbourne’s Dance Massive festival (2009), I noted:

_The work becomes equally ‘about’ your own experience, as much as it is ‘about’ what we see._ (Journal note 14/05/2009)

This interest in audience implication was further explored by Melbourne’s IRAA Theatre. _Private Eye_ (2006) placed the audience inside the work by rendering each audience member passive inside a hotel room cupboard - held as a prisoner by their own curiosity. Inside the cupboard the audience member watches as another enters the room, and witnesses his/her interactions with a female performer. The unfolding of events witnessed from inside this space, are similar to those just experienced by oneself before entering the cupboard. Within this work, I slowly realise that the most interesting moments of this performance, were in watching the ‘audience’s’ interaction with this femme fatale. These moments became the performance (not your own interactions with the performer), and the ‘audience’ outside of the cupboard become the performers.

As IRAA artists Roberta Bosetti and Renato Cuocolo themselves describe on their website:

_The performance evokes those suggestions not through the literature but, as it is usual in the Cuocolo/Bosetti body of work, through a challenge to oneself and the spectator._


Through the subversion of traditional audience and performer roles, _Private Eye_ implicitly demonstrated to me the power of genuine audience engagement.
2.2 The development of an improvisational methodology

As noted in chapter one, improvisation has a wide scope of use within contemporary movement practices. The following section offers a reflection on how my own particular use and understanding of improvisation has developed. In particular some detail is given to the improvisation practices of choreographers Paul Romano, Rosalind Crisp and Ros Warby.

My time working with Melbourne choreographer Paul Romano has been the most formative influence on my improvisational practice, through spending two years involved in a variety of his projects and contexts, including experience as a dancer, lighting operator, and movement researcher. I first met Romano in 2005 during the five day workshop ‘Precipice: Spontaneous choreography in search of the poetic’ at the Australia Choreographic Centre. Here, I witnessed in Romano something all at once profound, complex and intriguing: his dance improvisation was concerned with conveying more than a linear and definable narrative. Romano’s movement vocabulary was incredibly alien to me, abstract beyond anything I had witnessed to date, and suddenly I found myself seeing glimpses of the human being within movement, as opposed to being wholly consumed by watching the choreography within a performance.

It was Romano’s ability to engage with dance work on a deep, conceptual level that I found so inspiring. His capacity to engage beyond the questions of ‘what does this look like’ and ‘how will an audience read this’ excited my thought, just as much as his physicality excited my body. His physical practice, informed by his experience with Simon Ellis, Jude Walton and Rosalind Crisp places the body at the centre of performance. Romano’s approach involves a multi layering of kinesthetic information, conceptual beliefs of dance, and an intricate use of imaginative processes. Romano’s practice reflected my own emerging values of dance as more than the portrayal of narrative or emotional readings. Romano first introduced me to a more kinesthetic understanding of dance and improvisation, using 'scores'.
My interest and desire to explore improvisation as deeply as possible has also been greatly influenced by Australian choreographers Rosalind Crisp and Ros Warby. Both Warby and Crisp have well-established and highly developed personal improvisation practices and use improvisational methodologies within the rehearsal studio and the performance environment.

In an interview with performance theorist Erin Brannigan, Warby states:

*I have always improvised, which is really what I mean by ‘dancing’. When I begin dancing in the studio I start these sessions with a very particular attention. It’s a listening…a patience and diligence in waiting for the body-as-mind to deliver. I then identify particular things from that that interest me and slowly build the choreography or the score with this material.* (Warby, 2001, p.26)

In this same interview Warby defines some of her key influences as Deborah Hay, Eva Karzcag and Russell Dumas. Through a number of workshops with Warby, I have experienced her practice as placing a dancer’s perception at the forefront of movement impetus. The complexity and emphasis on perception of Warby’s personally developed scores such as ‘my perception is the dance’, ‘I perceive you are practicing what I am practicing’, and ‘no need to be creative, here is the dance’ are vividly etched in my memory. They display a clear lineage to Warby’s experience with American choreographer Deborah Hay. These particular ‘scores’ provoked a wider attention within my dancing, split between my body and the perception of the ‘whole moment’ of dance: other bodies, the space, and movement impetus derived from perceptions as opposed to purely physical impulse. For me, through experience with Warby’s workshops, Hay’s process invites a dancer to abandon pre-conceived notions of what dance, improvisation and composition can entail. Such an attitude solicits new movement understandings, demands the dancer invest in their own presence of the moment, and encourages the dancing body to not rely upon habitual movement or thought patterns. ‘No need to be creative, here is the dance’ for example, encourages a dancer to abandon the need to ‘show’ or ‘demonstrate’
anything, instead inviting a dancer to remain invested and attentive to the
movement of the moment.

Similarly, in an interview with Elizabeth Dempster, improviser Dana Reitz (1991, p.23) explains that her improvisation practice is concerned with methodologies that “bring into non-narrative visibility the fluctuating dynamics of motion, thought and intuition”. Reitz’s strategic use of the term ‘non-narrative visibility’ suggest that the visible aspects of her improvisation are in fact those which are not concerned with demonstrating any clearly identifiable meaning.

On her website, choreographer Rosalind Crisp, referring to the project ‘d a n s e’, writes that her practice

> Deals with a volatile group of choreographic principles which guide the
way movement is produced by the dancer. The practice is not about
memorising movements, but rather, about practicing ways of sourcing
movement from any part of the body, at any speed or level, with any force
or direction, for any duration...at any time. It is about the body dancing.
(<http://omeodance.com/index_En.html>, undated)

Crisp’s techniques of magnifying one’s attention of the dancing body was of particular interest to me during her 2009 workshop at the Victorian College of the Arts and MCM, Melbourne. By constantly re-entering the studio with an on-looking peer, followed by reflective discourse with that peer, my awareness of exactly what was occurring in the moment of dancing increased, in effect influencing my capacity to develop a degree of reflexivity around my own movement. It may appear to be a simple and perhaps obvious tool, but this continual questioning of ‘what is occurring’ opened possibilities of deeper understanding as to what it is that I do as an improviser.

Through varying degrees of physical input from these artists, each has contributed valuable information to my expanding curiosity: Romano through shifting what I perceive to be improvisation; Warby through inspiring a dual
awareness of experiential sensation and perception during movement; and Crisp through cultivating a reflexivity during danced moments. The methods acquired such as scoring, the capacity to direct attention, to be sensorially alert and having a whole ‘being’ awareness have contributed to a re-orientation and shaping of my improvisational approach. They also contributed to the development of a reflexive attitude, one that allows the performer a more critical subjectivity but has manifested in other creative directions including writing.

Developing almost concurrently to my improvisation practice was also my choreographic practice. I have, from the early days of my artistic development, maintained a strong interest in and dedication to choreography. Specifically, choreography represents an avenue for dancers to experiment, explore and adapt their dance training experiences into performance outcomes.

2.3 Reflection on my choreographic endeavors

Telling the story of my artistic development – my creative history – is inevitably partial and subjective. However as a reflective practitioner it is useful to focus briefly on some of my creative work in the last decade. This period has relied heavily upon the creation of solo dance performance, where I have predominantly assumed the dual roles of choreographer and performer. Alongside the aforementioned artists, the consideration of these works as a whole highlights the emergence of particular interests within my choreographic practice. It is also an opportunity to discriminate and elaborate on the notions of choreography and improvisation.

My first solo choreographic work, *self storage*, was created in 2005. This work took as its departure point two concepts: a play on words in reference to hired storage units for personal possessions; and the notion of the body as a holding vessel. Conceptually, the work attempted to integrate my recent training, having just emerged from two years of dance tutelage with over one dozen choreographers at Deakin University, Melbourne. What was at the time an experiment in the consolidation of bodily information is now clear to me as an
investigation into the corporeality of the body, and the lineages associated with
the pedagogy of dance training. This performance utilised improvisation as a
generative tool in order to discover dance phrase material, and brought out
issues of transference, interpretation and re-presentation that face
choreographers. As Godard (2004, p.61) notes, “...the complex network of
inheritances, apprenticeships and reflexes which determine the particularity of
each individual’s movement equally determines her/his manner of perceiving
the movement of others”.

In 2008 I was commissioned by QL2 – Centre for Youth Dance (Canberra) and
the National Gallery of Australia to create a site-specific work inside the
Sculpture Gallery of the NGA. This work, fold me tight and don’t let go,
investigated our place within the world and how we arrange ourselves within
strange environments. The work aimed to provide as many individual
experiences as possible, whilst exposing that which is normally hidden. This was
attempted through a number of conventions, including dancers directly
addressing audience through blocks of text written upon costuming, and the
distribution of miniature paper boxes each containing a private note to an
audience member. I was interested in engaging and implicating an audience
inside the performance experience, by subtly provoking thought and active
engagement. As Lehmann (2006, p.141) suggests “the players on stage do not
pretend that they do not notice the audience but instead interact with it”.

In 2009, Home is where the Art is, exemplified many of my interests and
fascinations within choreography, namely our personal experience as creative
stimulus, providing individual experiences for an audience and the exploration of
sound design within performance. This work placed audience members (one at
a time) inside a reconstruction of my childhood lounge room, and via a pair of
headphones asked the audience to complete a simple set of choreographic
instructions. This ‘performance’ by the audience member was sent via a secret
video camera feed to a TV screen located just outside of the lounge room
environment, where the previous audience member watched it. Audience
members were given a personalised written postcard as they entered the space,
and via the experience of being the only person in the space, the use of sound via headphones, and the opportunity to be the only person to witness the dancing of the next audience member, a sense of exclusivity and personal experience was established. Emerging from this work was an interest in creating performance that provides immersive experiences to an audience. It also touched on the capacity of creative work to be personally revealing. As Bruner (1986, p.7) writes, “The concept of an experience, then, has an explicit temporal dimension in that we go through or live through an experience, which then becomes self-referential in the telling”. Bruner is supported by Lehmann who notes:

The task of the spectators is no longer the neutral reconstruction, the re-creation and patient retracing of the fixed image but rather the mobilization of their own ability to react and experience in order to realize their participation in the process that is offered to them. (Lehmann, 2006, p.134-5)

These three works stand out to me as markers in time within my choreographic history where key elements and interests emerged. What is clear through this reflection is that my concerns with the audience/performer relationship, the accumulation of knowledge and training within the body, and an interest in creating performance that prioritises experience over aesthetic values have continued to provoke my choreographic practice.

The accumulation of my experiences as student, choreographer and audience lead me chronologically to where I see myself now, and the emergence of a multifaceted choreographic practice, based upon considerations of improvisation, the body and the theatrical experience. The core of my emergent practice continues to hold concern for challenging my own movement vocabulary and choreographic ideals, in the search of deeper understanding.
CHAPTER THREE: The studio to performance process

This chapter is concerned with the practical research components of this project, in creating the performance *The Space Between*. It adopts both a first person reflective attitude, whilst also teasing out interests with reference to relevant literature and theory. The chapter chronologically works in two halves, the first being concerned with the improvisation workshop phase of the research, and the second with the transition from workshop to performance.

3.1 The development of ‘scores’

*The lived body concept attempts to cut beneath the subject-object split, recognising a dialectical and lived dualism but not a dualism of body-soul or body-mind. A phenomenological (or lived) dualism implicates consciousness and intention and assumes an indivisible unity of body, soul, and mind.* (Fraleigh, 1987, p.4)

What Fraleigh proposes here is similarly the relationship I explore through dance improvisation - the subliminal conversation between mind and body. I am interested in the overwhelmingly large amount of information we have experienced and subsequently stored somewhere, and how, either consciously or subconsciously, this carries forward into the here and now, playing a role in the pathways the body travels.

Attempts at considering embodied creative practices in terms of the shapings or choreographic forms alone are somewhat limited. “Soul, spirit, and mind (or varying aspects of the psyche if you will) are not separate from what we call the physical; rather, they are intrinsically tied up with it” (Fraleigh, 1987, p.11)

In remaining ever-present in improvisation throughout the solo studio phase of this project, I attend to kinaesthetic sensation, sensory stimulation, and the surfacing of memories and experience, and probe how I can render this as performance.
Within the studio, I address this in a number of ways. The foremost of which is the use of a score that arose some time ago: *speak that which is noticed* - *anything noticed. Small noticing. Profound noticing. Noticing that I notice. Noticing the way in which I notice.*

Increasing the capacity to notice ultimately helps define and give meaning to movement impulses. This has become an extremely effective method of discovering new movements, recognising patterns and pathways, both through and by my body.

Through this process one becomes self aware, as Crisp observes,

> My pursuit of subjective movement - of movement of the self - means that my practice is essentially a discipline in self-acceptance. To dance of the self, one needs to embrace that which one knows oneself to be through the body in that moment, in each moment as one enters the studio. (Crisp, 2002a, p.5)

The practice of speaking/naming that which I notice allows me to discriminate and define key elements of movement interests, what I call an ‘anchor’: the seed of an idea, which allows exploratory divergence from a particular point, and enables a commonality to emerge across explorations stemming from this anchor. This anchor point may be as simple as an increased awareness of a body part, the underside of the feet for example, or may be something quite different, an attention to the influence of space for example. After an anchor becomes set, I make note of it and keep it at the front of my attention. I allow this ‘seed’ to consume my dancing and begin to exhaust the movement possibilities that it affords and the influence it plays upon my moving body. This process continues for a time, until I realise there are actually no limits to its influence. This is when this ‘thing’ becomes a score; something that will continually challenge and yield differing responses; something that persistently asks for my attention to notice
the shifting dynamic body, the influence of space, and my perception of my own movement.

Once an anchor has transformed into a score, it is held at the back of my mind, quietly bubbling away until I call this thing back into focus. This usually occurs when it becomes time to begin crafting a performance. This period of the process is what I consider the process of choreography, and is outlined in more depth later in chapter 3. During this process, scores can be abandoned (for example if a score doesn’t feel ‘right’ in combination with other scores), developed, simplified or manipulated. During the choreographic stage of performance making, scores are placed alongside other scores, the performance environment, other physical and sensorial elements of the performance (i.e. sound and light), or the intentions of the choreographer. What occurs then is a judgement period as to ‘what is right’ for the performance – a subjective exercise undertaken by the choreographer. In doing so, the combination of all constituent elements of the choreographic process create and manifest a new performance experience.

Each new performance practice signifies a conscious re-invention of my mind. Beginning with a puzzlingly simple feeling or integrated experience while I am dancing, I attempt to articulate and then devote myself to exploring and measuring the consequences of this fleeting logic. (Deborah Hay 2000, p.20)

Hay’s “integrated experience”, “conscious re-invention” of the mind, and devotion “to exploring and measuring the consequences of this” speak strongly to my own practice, clearly placing the maker in a relationship between that which is present in the moment (integrated experience), our corporeality (conscious re-invention of the mind) and a search for new information (exploring and measuring the consequences of this).

Performer Dana Reitz (1991, p.25) acknowledges that “it’s not a matter of imposing something, some directive from the outside (“Now I should think about
space and shape”) but just directing your attention so that these things are attended to, refined perhaps, in a conscious way”.

Both Reitz and Hay respectively imply active levels of consciousness in attending to the moment through the terms ‘directing your attention’ and ‘conscious re-invention of the mind’. Through this I begin to locate my own improvisation practice in light of Hay and Reitz.

3.2 Directing other bodies

With a desire to create performance work other than a solo, I invited dancers Leah Landau, Michelle Ferris and Renae Shadler to share in a 5-month improvisation workshop, leading to public performance. Within this writing, I bring focus toward two of these processes: those with Landau and Ferris. I have chosen to do this as Shadler and I have an existing artistic relationship, however the processes with Landau and Ferris were more exclusively bound up in the learning of this research.

Initially I opened this channel of research in the hope of creating distinct solo dances, each attending to my interest in a dancer’s idiosyncratic movement vocabulary ‘style’. Essentially, I began this to explore how a well-developed solo practice can be maintained, whilst moving toward choreographic development on other bodies. My intentions were not unusual, for as dance writer Sally Gardner (2007, p.36) observes, “In modern dance each artist's choreographic oeuvre was almost always developed in the first instance in solo form; and 'choreographer' and 'dancer' were initially one and the same person...”

However very soon after beginning this process, a synergy between the developing works emerged, with each piece informing the development of the others. Through the constant that was my physical presence, it became interesting to notice the surfacing of my personal aesthetics and values through this process.
The more time I spent with each dancer independently, the more I realised that through my active provocation of each solo, there developed a commonality, some sort of Gareth Hart essence in each. As writer and philosopher James Akenson (1991, p.101) states, “…the choreographer uses movement as the opportunity to make one’s own perceptions public”.

The research soon developed into an investigation as to how I can transfer my solo choreographic practise onto other bodies, whilst simultaneously maintaining openness to the possibilities this may yield. Further, I wondered how can distinct solo choreographies created by the same artist but in response to the corporeality of dancers, be crafted into a cohesive public performance?

With varying degrees of experience in improvisation, dance training and exposure to creative processes, the difference in process between each dancer was as disparate as their own unique movement aesthetics. This project sought to embrace these idiosyncrasies and intriguing moments of performance.

3.2.1 Working with Leah Jane Landau

The first of the dancers I began to work with was Melbourne performance maker Leah Landau. Landau herself maintains an improvisation practice, and previous to this project, we had never worked together in a creative capacity. I had seen Landau perform in June of 2010, and through conversation I gained a basic understanding of Landau’s use of improvisation within the studio.

Thinking how much do Leah and I share as moving bodies?, two ideas became the starting point of the studio process: the breath of the body, and the micro shifts within the body at ease, what has been coined the ‘small dance’ by contact improvisation artist Steve Paxton, and further elaborated on by Sandra Parker. Parker (2010, p.43) writes “I began in stillness, working towards building a ‘receptive’ state, focusing inwardly on my physicality by removing distracting thoughts, concentrating on the felt sense of my body”. I asked Landau to pay attention to the perceptible movements and rhythms of the body at rest and
subsequently to ‘invite breath into the body’. By focusing attention on the movement of the body without extraneous force, a form of authentic movement began where improvisations were instigated from the naturally occurring fluctuations of Landau’s own body. In essence, beginning to dance from noticing what was kinaesthetically present in the ‘now’.

By enticing Landau to focus upon internal sensations, movement intrinsically connected to Landau’s own body began to emerge: a corporeal ‘autobiographic’ dance of sorts. By continually re-entering the rehearsal process and asking Landau to respond to ideas surfacing from previous rehearsals, we began to collect moments of movement or attention that repeatedly arose. In effect this allowed the work to crystallise from beginnings as ‘free’ improvisation.

After approximately six weeks of this ‘free’ improvisation, I began to set structures and scores in place. Structures act as crafting principles, which bind and connect the overall disparate elements. In this case, structures can include the layering scores upon each other or choices to the order in which scores will be attended to.

Moving toward the setting of scores, Landau and I engaged in open dialogue after each improvisation. Watching one particular dance I was intrigued by what was occurring as Landau danced, and subsequently why this was so compelling to me. Through our discussion, Landau explained that she became aware of an image whilst dancing: an island, sandy banks of beach, and a floating raft. This was instantly fascinating for me, primarily as Landau mentioned this was something that initially arose during a generative writing workshop with Melbourne writer and theatre director Jenny Kemp. It is interesting that images arising from our imagination reoccur, without apparent force. “Frequently the product of the imagination is a link between things that were not formerly seen to be connected in any way” (Ladd, 1979, p.3). This image formed part of Landau’s living makeup. In recalling this image, Landau inadvertently made a connection between her experience with Kemp’s writing workshop, and the present physical improvisation workshop. Whilst we were unable to fully
understand this connection which we attempted to tease out through dialogue, we both instantly understood that this surfacing of something already within Landau’s imagination, arose for a reason. Through discourse, I soon learnt that within improvisation Landau is finely attuned to her imagination, as she finds great inspiration inside this. As such, maintaining a commitment to paying attention to that which arises, this image became a major focus of the workshop. Whilst Ladd’s quote infers that links between ideas arising from imaginative places are perceptible, it was true within this process that the link itself was not ever fully understood. What was understood was that this image was profound for both performer and choreographer.

Within this moment I sensed the potential for this image to form an ‘anchor’. As such I began to ask Landau what it looked like, where she was placed within it, who else was there? I invited Landau to improvise again, and asked her to bring back into her attention this image. During the next ten minutes, I was struck by how specific her movement became, her gaze sharpened as if actually seeing something, and her movement adopted a clear directedness through the space. After this improvisation, we noted and discussed the specific detail of what had occurred from our two perspectives.

In a third improvisation, I fed these noticings back verbally. In response, Landau’s movement seemed unintentional, ambiguous and riddled with an underlying sense of disbelief in what she was doing (as if Landau was ‘going through the motions’).

In dialogue with Landau after the event, Landau expressed that she struggled with the fundamental order of the process I was asking her to go through. Having worked solo in the studio for so long, I have subconsciously developed a cyclical score-making process of ‘dancing, finding interest within my body (an anchor), knowing/naming this interest and subsequent re-engagement with this for further development’. However Landau’s inclination is instead:

*Doing – deepening – knowing (naming). I cannot give something a name at this*
stage, it restricts the possibilities of the movement. (Personal communication with Landau, 2010).

And what a radical difference this is! It became clear that appreciating small discrepancies between Landau's and my own practice was required and facilitating a productive creative period meant flexibility in my own choreographic values and processes.

Whilst it is important for me to have a clearly definable anchor for the score (i.e. 'moving the rib cage through space'), Landau found fundamental difficulty with such prescriptive detail. To define or name something in such specific terms (i.e. the rib cage) before exploring the range of its possibilities was restricting. After several weeks of further exploration the anchor became clear for Landau, and resulted as 'allowing imagination'.

These simple discrepancies between my own improvisation practice and Landau’s instigated our negotiation of the territory between dancer and choreographer in improvisational processes. Writer Sally Gardner (2007, p.43) claims "A choreographer develops a kind of training or dance technique for her/his dancers that is consistent with her/his choreographic values – which are deep values that encode a specific understanding of how the dancing body constitutes a mode of representation”.

3.2.2 A corporeal dialogue - working with Michelle Catherine Ferris

On seeing a short solo of Michelle Ferris’ in 2010, I was struck by a sense of similarity between Ferris and myself. This similarity was somehow connected to my conceptual understandings of improvisation and performance. Watching Ferris perform, I was fascinated by what I perceived as the slippages between her kinaesthetic sensibility, the shifting relationship between her and the particularity of the space she was in, and the immediacy of shared experience between the audience (myself) and herself. I felt that on some complex level I was engaged in a form of active relationship with Ferris as she performed, and
within this moment I sensed a dancerly empathy of some kind – as if Ferris invited me to share in her dancing. Of course, this is only what I perceived and perhaps not Ferris’ intention at all. All the same, this experience fostered an interest in working more closely with Ferris.

The rehearsal process began in a similar fashion as with Landau: a lengthy period of open improvisation in search of improvisational anchors, becoming scores.

Quickly it became clear that Ferris was stimulated most greatly by mystifying ideas or conceptually ambiguous phrases. It was here that another fascinating learning occurred: although I was transferring my choreographic practice onto other bodies, the nature (and indeed language) of the ‘scores’ developing collaboratively were sometimes radically different to those that arise when improvising myself. Whilst this seems an obvious notion to me as I write this, it was something that provided deep influence on the development of the performance work. Personal experience and corporeality may indeed have resonating effects on more than simply the movement aspects of choreography.

Through this realisation it became apparent that these solo works would highlight the idiosyncrasies inherent in each dancer, and as such this research slowly develop concern for the inquisitive journey into the layers of difference shared between other makers and myself. As Crisp states in an interview with journalist Jo Pollitt (2006, p.26), “as an improviser many questions are posed. Namely, how is this process different, and where do I separate my own work from it, or is this even possible?”

I had not considered previous to working with Ferris, that the nature of the scores I develop on myself would not be stimulating to other dancers. During a particular improvisation I became fascinated by Ferris’ engagement with a movement motif of stumbling. Ferris and I spent two weeks trying to flesh out the core of this idea. Using vocal prompts such as ‘stumble through the space’, ‘stumble softly’, ‘allow weight to move you through the space’ we were unable to
re-find the potency of the movement I first witnessed. Through exploration of our understanding of ‘stumbling’, the intricate process of choreography began. This involved a period of trial and error, developing performative responses to questions surrounding stumbling, including: How can one stumble through the arms? How can one perceive stumbling without enacting it? What is the internal sensation of stumbling? Whilst this questioning was primarily undertaken to rediscover the essence of an initial movement response, this process also allowed Ferris to explore, play and discover the possibilities of stumbling, which in effect increased her capacity to be invested and interested within an idea. Choreography had begun.

Through discussion, we finally reached a consensus, a name for the score: ‘the sound of stumbling’. Freeing up the parameters of the score’s name actually enlivened sensitive engagement in Ferris, where the sound of stumbling could be perceived sensorially (the influence of the sound of your feet), perceptually (noticing the sensation of stumbling), and imaginatively (stumbling through bones, blood, muscle). As Lehmann (2006, p.32) aptly notes in speaking of ‘postdramatic theatre’ “it is often a matter of the authentic presence of individual performers, who appear not as mere carriers of an intention external to them – whether this derives from the text or the director. They act out their own corporeal logic within a given framework: hidden impulses, energy dynamics and mechanics of body and motorics”.

Through discussion, Ferris explained that a seminal influence on her development as a maker and improviser was her experience with Deborah Hay. Ferris explained that the influence of Hay’s work created an inherent problem in responding to such defined scores as ‘stumble through the space’. The specificity of this instruction (based upon my own improvisational methodology) was jarring to Ferris. The resulting score of ‘the sound of stumbling’ allowed enough ambiguity that Ferris was able to physically explore the range of parameters stumbling could entail. As Hay (2011b) herself writes, “The question stimulates the body’s curiosity and responsiveness”.
Working to nurture and involve Ferris’ corporeality, the scores developed through the studio process allowed “curiosity and responsiveness” to be at play. By remaining open to shifting elements of my practice during the workshop phase, both my curiosity in the idea of stumbling, and Ferris’ inclination toward non-representational scores were satisfied, indicating to me a new collaborative and inclusive mode of working within performance development.

The experience of working with Landau and Ferris highlights one of the key facets of scored improvisation: our idiosyncratic and personal relationship to language and concepts. It demonstrated the variations of individual understandings of choreographic concepts and issues in the use of language in the score naming/labelling process. It highlighted the influence that our living experience, history and corporeality play upon the development of scores within an improvisation process.

The second half of this chapter is concerned with the transition between the relative privacy of the studio, to the performance venue. I start with considerations of the audience. This section uses a predominantly first person perspective, exposing some of my value systems and aesthetic interests of performance, contributing to my narrative of artistic research. In doing so, this section highlights some of the major research aims and questions, namely how can improvised dance material remain improvised, and be crafted into a performance? How can distinct solo dance works be crafted together to form a cohesive whole? What role does an audience play within a live performance context?

3.3 Audience considerations

Often when performing as a solo improviser, the complexity of the dancing moment with its fluctuating dynamics, rhythms, habits and intent, provide the most intricate (and indeed pleasurable) moments of moving. Conversely, as an audience member, the moments when I feel the most ‘engaged’ are those where I am not spoon fed the answers, where there is an inherent complexity in both
choreographic structure and movement, and where performers are perceivably dedicated to something.

Some years ago, watching another dancer improvise, choreographer Paul Romano remarked to me “the reason that is interesting [to watch] is because there is an investigation there”. Whilst I was unsure what this “investigation” was, I was compelled to watch this unfolding dance, and I became aware that, indeed, my fascination was largely derived from the dancer’s fascination and investment in the task.

So how then, as a choreographer, how do I induce this in other performers? How can a dancer remain intrinsically attentive and aware as they move? Through my own dance practice I find the creation of multiple inter-related scores and instructions the most useful tool. However, through this the question arises: what is it that occurs and is shared between an audience and a performer, and how can a choreographer create something compelling and fascinating for both parties?

It is impossible for me to ignore the presence of an audience within a performance context. The acknowledgement of this presence can manifest in numerous of ways, and whatever this may be I become more invested and interested in performance when I am asked, somehow, to engage on more than a passive observer level.

In speaking of installation art trends during the 20th century, critical theorist Anna Gibbs (1994, p.52) writes, “What fascinates me in the practice of interactive installation is something to do with performance: specifically, the way an audience transforms itself from a putatively passive spectatorial body into manifestly active receivers of a work”. Gibbs (1994, p.53) furthers, “It doubles, on an imperceptible level, another movement, one that also complicates relations of object and subject, active and passive, as it draws the viewer into participation and collaboration”. What opens here is the possibility that installation art can foreground the varying degrees of active participation of
those who witness an event – an audience. Indeed it could be argued that theatre maintains a similar capacity to subvert and complicate the “relations of object and subject, active and passive”, through the manipulation of traditionally held beliefs of the roles of audience and performer. Jennifer Monson (1999, p.150) states in an interview with Eleanor Brickhill, “...dancing, these days, is more about immediacy, multi-layered complex experience, and a performer’s capacity to relate to an audience”.

By adopting and indeed fostering an active relationship with an audience, one may extend the parameters of the live performance, providing profound experiences for an audience. As Monson (1999, p.154) furthers, “...the exchange of information and energy with an audience during an improvisational performance is so dynamic. It’s the audience which makes a performance happen”.

The remainder of this chapter discusses some of the pertinent considerations in shifting from an improvisation workshop toward the performance of The Space Between. Particularly, focus is given to:

– The crafting of studio based movement into performance material
– Working toward engaging an audience inside the performance experience

3.4 From studio to performance: the development of meta-scores

Charged with the responsibility of performing responsively to surfacing information, performers were given instructions aimed to increase awareness of the dynamics of each moment. I view these instructions as ‘meta-scores’ to the performance work, conceptual ideas that remain present during an entire performance, and induce some form of unified intention between performers. They seek to connect performers to each other, the multiple scores, each moment, the dynamics of the performance space and an audience. In reference to her own developed scores, Hay (2011b) writes, “The dancer is thus decentralized and continually repositioned in relation to time, space, and other”.
Collected from pieces of writing I had read, these meta-scores were:

*The unity of thought, then, is the criterion of both being and knowing*  
(Gasset, 1975, p.90)

*Each individual body exerts a casual force on others, and each is in turn constantly impinged on by others*  
(Gatens and Lloyd, 1999, p.13)

*The human body requires a great many bodies, by which it is, as it were, constantly regenerated*  
(Spinoza, cited in Gatens and Lloyd, 1999, p.13)

*The intensity of the present can eclipse all thought of the future*  
(Gatens and Lloyd, 1999, pp53)

*We witness every minute the miracle of related experiences, and yet nobody knows better than we do how this miracle is worked, for we are ourselves this network of relationships….*  
(Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.xx)

These meta-scores were fed to performers verbally, with no extrapolation as to their intent (or my own subjective understanding of them). What these ‘meta-scores’ share with Hay’s scores is that they ask performer’s to invest in every ephemeral moment of performance. Performance maker Tim Etchells (1999, p.48) writes, “Investment is what happens when the performers before us seem bound up unspeakably with what they’re doing – it seems to matter to them, it appears to hurt them or threatens to pleasure them, it seems to touch them, in some quiet and terrible way”.

It was my intention here to place performers within an attentive and responsive state of being (through dancing), in relationship to the entire live event, the
dynamics of the moment, and heightened attention toward their own intuitive choice-making process. Further, each performer was asked to remain simultaneously aware and perceptive to their own experience, the shared experience with other performers and the negotiation of a relationship with an audience. As Bruner (1986, p.11) writes, “...the performance itself is constitutive. Meaning is always in the present, in the here-and-now, not in such past manifestations as historical origins or the author’s intentions”. Etchells (1999, p.48) writes of a similar experience saying, “This privacy of investment doesn’t make a solipsistic work or a brick wall to shut the watchers out. Quite the opposite – investment draws us in”. Through the use of meta-scores, meaning and shape were constructed from within the performance each time dancers took the stage.

In responding to Rosalind Crisp’s ‘Omeo Dance Project’, critic Eleanor Brickhill (1998, p.40) states “There are meetings in this dance, responses, awareness of each other’s presence, self-containment, listening”. These “meetings” highlight the inter-connectedness and inter-subjectivity of Crisp’s work, and are reflected in a similar performance awareness I sought to induce in The Space Between.

3.5 Framing the performance

The creative development period comprising choreographic development by myself and time with other dancers, provided opportunity to probe deeper into the choices I make as a choreographer. I continually asked myself what needed to shift in order to make the studio based movement material transform into constituent elements of the performance experience? However, the subjective nature of the choreographic process dictates that choices made in this process, influenced by an ever-expanding bank of learning, will likely not be the same choices made in another ten years. So instead of learning about ‘how to do this’ as a modus operandi, all I can attempt is to forge an understanding of what occurred during this process and the ramifications of these choices within the context of my temporal subjectivity: why they were right (for me) in this process.
The strongest decision I made during this period of research was in committing the studio findings to remain improvised as performance moments. This seemed particularly important, as there was inherent concern within the process about the individualised performer, and the influence of corporeality and experience in performance. Further, I believed that the thought process (not simply the scores) for a dancer could influence movement choices, and that the decision-making process during improvisation is also particularly idiosyncratic from dancer to dancer. It is my own experience that to perform a piece of tightly choreographed material demands all of my attention, reducing my capacity to pay attention toward the shifting dynamics of the moment, rendering performance as a process of recollection, as opposed to responsiveness.

Committed to maintaining the improvisation element of The Space Between, a major question arose: *What important framing and contextualising devices can I provide to assist the meaning-making process whilst maintaining the integrity, attention and subtlety of the score based material?*

In answering this, a number of decisions were made, namely:

- Setting the place on stage where each solo would take place, in effect making the performance travel from stage-right to stage-left
- Actively pinpointing moments in the performance where the space would be co-habited by all performers
- Provoking performers to increase their awareness, and subsequently their relationship with light, sound and space
- Asking performers to pay particular attention to the inter-corporeal relationships of the multiple bodies on stage

These decisions (or directions) were adopted to investigate the meta-performance construct, exploring the inter-relatedness between the solo works, bringing each solo dance work into the scope of a greater whole. This process began approximately four weeks prior to the opening of the public performance, and during this time dancers were empowered to remain vigilant to the genesis of their solo work from the studio process.
Working with a responsive mentality and awareness, performers were asked to broaden their perceptual awareness during improvisation creating room for a number of things: engagement and awareness with an audience, creating live relationship with sound, light and space; and attuning to dynamic and rhythmic inter-corporeal relations with other performers. In doing this, it became apparent that performers were highly conscious of their own place within the performance. Specifically, speaking of her performed persona, one performer asked:

*Does she want to be seen? Can she be seen? Can she see the other people in the space?* (Renae Shadler, personal communication, 2010)

Much of the lead up toward the performance season became about exploring the relationships between the bodies and selves within the space.

3.6 Many worlds colliding: performer, choreographer and audience
tintersubjectivity

Holding this desire to explore the responsive body within performance, there is scope to investigate the triangular relationship between ‘choreographer’, ‘performer’ and ‘audience’. In casual conversation, I once heard Paul Romano describe the complexity of improvisation in terms of a Venn diagram. This simple mathematic drawing shows two overlapping circles, creating a shared third space.

![Venn diagram](image)

Romano described improvising with another dancer to be similar, as there are three ‘spaces’ or ‘worlds’ at play here. The world you inhabit as yourself, the
world your dancing partner inhabits by themselves, and the world you co-habituate and create together.

Theorist and theatre practitioner Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2002, p.1) argues, “In all cases, the audience member, the spectator, becomes part of the performance, and is therefore an integral part of the space itself”. Art journalist Gay McAuley (1999, p.275) speaks of a similar belief stating, “The audience is participating in the performance as cocreators rather than receivers”. Both arguments by Jones and McAuley implicate an active audience within the theatrical event. As such, through this engagement we can begin to see that two previously separate worlds (one of the audience and one of the performer) amalgamate to create another form of the Venn Diagram metaphor, a new ‘world’ where the exchange of live performance occurs.

The creation of a new ‘world’ is multiplied when there are three parties at play, as there were within this research: the world of the choreographer, his thoughts, desires and practices; the world of the performer, in fact three performers, each with idiosyncrasies, inherent curiosities, corporeality, habitual movements, and personalised ways of thinking; and the audience, or a group of audients, each with their own body histories, expectations and experiences with artistic process. And then there are the delicate overlaps that exist between each of these worlds.

These places of overlap may take many forms and understandings; they can represent the act of a dancer being in the same space as an audience; they may represent a shared understanding of a score between a dancer and a choreographer; they may allude to a shared perception between audience and
performer of what is occurring on stage; or they may imply something much more subtle such as an awareness of oneself, other performers, audience and choreographer. Many people have written about aspects of this, such as Ann Dils (2001, p.467) who writes of the video performance ‘Ghostcatching’, “a connecting up between the dance and the viewers’ internal storehouse of images, movement, and personal experience always happens in watching dance, but in these works you connect, seemingly, with real-life people, rather than people as theatrical entities”. Here, Dils infers a subtle shared space, where an audience perceives a particular something, based on the offerings of a performer.

Dance journalist Jo Pollitt (2006, p.25) also speaks of this shared space, in relation to Rosalind Crisp’s work, writing “Through following her attention/body/breath she gets to a place that is interesting, or that ‘turns her dancing on’, practises it and watches it develop and unfold in the bodies of those working with her”.

My experience as both a performer and choreographer offers some insight into these ‘spaces’ or ‘worlds’. When performers are improvising based upon scores developed and crafted collaboratively by choreographer and dancer, a space begins to be shared. In this setting there are moments when the ‘I’ of the performer is dedicated wholly to the task of paying attention to the score (inhabiting a space by oneself), and there are moments when this attention shifts, and ones awareness of the audience, of noticing being watched is increased (inhabiting a space shared between performer and audience). There are many more ways in which one can locate themselves within a shared space, and as a choreographer it is when I sense these complex spaces emerging that the potency of live performance begins to reveal itself. I begin to sense something unique occurring, something that is special to the particular moment, and replacing my choreographer hat with an audience perspective (however subjective this may still be), I sense the potential for something profound to be experienced. As McAuley (1999, p.235) writes, “If the performance event can be defined as what takes place between performers and spectators in a given space and time, then the spectator has to be seen as a crucial and active agent in the
creative process”.

3.7 Inhabited space: the Grant Street Theatre

A crucial element of the performance experience for me was the space itself: the Grant Street Theatre. Having not presented work in a traditional theatre setting for many years, I was acutely aware of the space, and interested in the contribution physical space and design would make toward the construction of a performance.

Stated simply by Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (2002, p.2) “The reception of that space becomes part of the total theatrical experience”. Lehmann (2006, p.31) speaks similarly of environments in that “It is no longer the stage but the theatre as a whole which functions as the ‘speaking space’ (Sprechraum)”.

One may begin to ask what influence physical space has upon the context and presentation of improvised dance, or indeed what synergies between movement and space can exist. As such, the first staging decision within this research occurred: the black drapes of the theatre were stripped away exposing the internal brick walls and structures of the building. Through this choice, I probed what stimulation could be found in what is permanently present in the building itself.

Serving a similar purpose to the ‘meta-scores’, the subtly altered aesthetic of the space provided the possibility of a constant feed of information to each dancer. Hay (1996, p.66) writes that her improvisation practice is concerned with “…including what I see in what it is that I am practicing”. Performance maker Rosemary Lee (undated) speaks of being in a state of heightened awareness, in her writing The Velvet Stream, posing, “there is definitely something of an affinity to being in a state of oneness with yourself and with the environment that is similar to being on that velvet stream...”. Whilst these may be specific examples of the relationship between body and space, Hay and Lee begin to explore the potential for the performing body to be in constant relationship, and
perhaps draw influence from a performance space itself.

It seemed to me that striking the theatrical curtains from the space and working against the use of props and sets, in some way invited the audience to see behind the façade of theatrical convention. Whilst there remained a clear demarcation between ‘performance area’ and ‘audience area’, I was interested in subtly manipulating these spaces, in order to explore what this could contribute to the experience of the work for an audience. In reference of site-specific performance, Lehmann (2006, p.152) writes, “When a factory floor, an electric power station or a junkyard is being performed in, a new ‘aesthetic gaze’ is cast onto them. The space presents itself. It becomes a co-player without having a definite significance.”

Similar to my earlier works ‘fold me tight and don’t let go’, this research sought to subtly expose normally hidden elements of a process, namely the concealed aspects of the theatrical space itself. What is normally understood as creating a space of neutrality, the use of black curtaining seemed to imply a theatricality that was not present within the choreography.

Philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994, p.12) writes, “Space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at play”. Through the removal of the theatrical conventions of black curtains, can the imagination of an audience be activated? Instead of creating the imagined world of a performance within the confines of black curtains, this choice provided an opportunity for an audience to create this imagined place for themselves. Bachelard (1994, p.14) argues “the reader who is “reading a room” leaves off reading and starts to think of some place in his own past”. By provoking imaginative responses in audiences, a sense of participation in the reception of live dance work can be increased. Above all else, the stripping away of curtains reveals an intentional choice by a choreographer/designer. In doing so, I was hoping that audience members might in fact give some consideration to the space in which they sit. As noted by one audience member, “The layer of this room...the room I started in & the layer of sounds pressed close to my ears against the sound far from me, filling the whole space. Spaces within
spaces. Rumbles from the greater space calls for my awareness and attention. Calling for me to come outside a cotton wool bubble” (Elanor Webber, 2011).

As Jones (2002, p.6) succinctly writes “theatre space dictates so much of the emotional and sensory impact on the spectator...”.

So inside this ‘raw’ space where imagination was faintly enticed, inside the worlds concurrently inhabited by audience and performer, how is a choreographer able to satisfy his own penchant for creating intimate performance experiences?

3.8 Creating an intimate performance experience

Based upon an intuitive feeling that large en masse audience groups would experience difficulty in connecting with the performance experience, I decided to limit the number of audience members to 24 per performance.

Deborah Hay (1996, p.68) writes of her dancing practice, “I am being perceived – or even if I am my own witness I am seeing myself – and that is an intimacy, that is such an intimate experience”. With openness to being seen, to be perceived, dancers inherently invite an exchange of intimacy with audiences. This could be said to be particularly true during improvisation, as Tim Etchells remarks

> There are some people who can simply sit in a space or stand quite still in it and still be at risk, ‘left open’, leaving me open too. In the complicity of the performers with their task lies our own complicity – we are watching the people before us, not representing something but going through something. (Etchells, 1999, pp.48-49)

How then, once one is aware and attracted to this exchange of intimacy, can a choreographer increase this phenomenon, push it beyond a conscious by-product, and instead use it as an intentional and exploited aspect of performance?

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A large amount of the sound relayed to the audience during *The Space Between* was the naturally occurring sounds of the dancing body. By utilising live microphones in the theatre, the sounds of breath, footsteps, rustling clothes and skin touching skin were picked up and transmitted to the audience, who each wore a set of wireless headphones throughout the performance.

The sound of movement may be noticeable as we sit in the audience and watch the unfolding dance, we may see the sweat of a dancer working hard, we may see the heaving of a chest as the dancer struggles for air, and indeed a dancer often breathes audibly. But are we, as audience members, aware of the complete gamut of sound that radiates forth from a dancing body? Live recording of the performer is one way of enhancing audience sensory awareness and access. In large venues it can provide the close encounter that the physical separation of performer and audience often can’t achieve. Today’s technology allows us to manage live streaming of visual/sound media including amplified or closely miked sound and ‘tight’ camera positions.

Ann Dils (2001, p.464) notes how “Sound helps the viewer trace the dancers’ paths through limitless space. As they recede into, emerge from, and cross over the void, their footsteps and breathing grow softer, get louder, or seem to streak past”. Dils describes some of the possibilities of enabling an audience to be in more direct relationship with the performers, referring to the location of sound within a theatre allowing audiences to place themselves within a physical relationship to sound and movement. In heightening this direct relationship, audiences can become empowered to feel ‘closer’ and more connected with a sound genesis. In *The Space Between*, this proprioceptive relationship with sound was present in a different form, by transmitting sounds through wireless headphones. Audiences were afforded an intimate experience, bringing this sensory experience into a heightened proximal context. The physical closeness of the sound emitting from the headphones allowed them to “trace the dancer’s paths” through both the physical and metaphoric environments.
Sound has considerable affective capacity as members of The Space Between audience noted that “The whole work was deliciously delicate: the celestially ambient sound-scape, the heightened sensory experience of having such "small" sounds amplified by having the room miked” (Karina Smith, 2011) and “I wonder if the earphones helped me into a place where you can hear these sorts of murmurs, feel them, sense them? They made me feel safe and one would imagine they would create a division between me and my surroundings yet they seemed to engender a lovely intimacy somehow. Connecting me with my imagination, and the imaginations of the performers...focusing the sound into pure thought, shutting out the white noise” (Michaela Pegum, 2011).

It would seem that sound can be used to place audience members in a direct relationship with performers and the performance experience, highlighting the inherent human qualities of dance and assisting toward creating an intimate experience.

Another possibility of bringing the space to life is the process of ‘spatializing’ the physical actions with the help of a sonic space created with microphones and loudspeakers. For example, the heartbeat of the dancers becomes audible by means of a heart sound amplifier, or their heavy exhalation and inhalation are amplified through a microphone and fill the space. Charged by physical energy, such immediately spatialized body-time aims to communicate directly with the spectators’ nervous system, not to inform them. The spectators do not observe but experience themselves inside of a time-space. (Lehmann, 2006, p.152)

As an audience member, intimacy allows me to share something with those on stage: a sharing of something personal, or special, the revealing of part of the performer that I may not be privy to otherwise. As Etchells (1999, p.48) notes in speaking of his work with UK company Forced Entertainment, “Something is happening – real and therefore risked – something seems to slip across from the private world to the public one – and the performers are ‘left open’ or ‘left exposed’”. So why is this compelling for an audience? This intimate context
appears to allow scope for subtle connections with an audience; connections that expose part of the person behind the performer.

*Investment forces us to know that performative actions have real consequences beyond the performance arena. That when we do these unreal things in rooms, galleries and theatre spaces the real world will change.* (Etchells, 1999, p.49)

Etchells’ ideas above, introduce two interesting terms: investment and risk. Whilst these are specific enquiries within his practice in *Forced Entertainment*, there are resonances, within this research that are worthy of reflection. Both of these sentiments infer the presence of something real within the theatrical experience, which exists two fold: firstly, real for a performer, whereby through the act of ‘performing’ the human body, psyche and brain are undergoing an experience; and secondly, where audience members are able to perceive this ‘truth’ within the performer, and in that moment of perception understand that this truth has affects both on and off the stage. Within ‘The Space Between’ this was particularly important. Although I was aware of the ‘performance’ context I was particularly interested in creating and performing work that was intrinsically connected to the experience of the performer. We (both performer and choreographer) maintained a commitment to performed action being a real, lived, experiential response to stimulus. This was inherently connected to memories, experience, and real time attention to kinesthesia and environment. Therefore, performers were asked to ‘invest’ themselves, which further placed the performer ‘at risk, left open’ to the nuances of the ephemeral moment. By maintaining the improvisation context, the sense of ‘risk’ was indeed heightened, by removing the safety of pre-determining the sequence of movement. Thus, the reliance of the performance was not in remembering movement that was perceived to ‘work’, instead placing reliance upon the performers investment within the moment to deliver choreographic intentions.

Suggesting that the pretense of theatre is no longer enough to satisfy some audiences, Etchells’ insight into the intimacy of the theatrical exchange begins to
locate theatre in a wider scope than serving the purpose of entertainment, foregrounding something much more real, perhaps more human, as important within theatre practice.

3.9 Reflection

An integrated experience of sound, movement and space was sought during this performance-making period of the research. Specifically, the research explored how these disparate elements could contribute toward the same goal: creating live performance that pays particular attention to the exchanges and relationships between performer, audience, sound and space. Each of these elements worked collectively toward creating an intimate performance experience for an audience.

Reflection upon this stage of the research – the performances - has allowed insights to emerge, some of which came well after the performance season had come to a close. Through this process, I have a greater understanding of the intuitive working methodology adopted through the process. This intuitive process is reflected upon further in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: Intuition and corporeality in improvisation

This chapter documents some of the practical and theoretical viewpoints of intuitive processes within a creative capacity, makes an argument for trusting in the intuitive feelings that surface during the choreographic process, and further how this trust can also influence the development of writing.

4.1 Intuition and corporeality in the search for something new

...of course it’s never completely new; there are always habits and histories. (Rosalind Crisp, 2002b)

The whole person defines the instrument; accumulated experiences, values, tastes, and desires all qualify how the body will respond. (Blom and Chaplin, 1988, p.4)

Within these two ideas lies a sense of the importance of the past as we undertake fresh quests and endeavours; that the search for something ‘new’ is in fact deeply connected to our own prior learning. Whilst these quotes refer to the act of dancing, I see synergies with the choreographic process; where learning includes past choreographic works, and the accumulated interests and insights arising from these. Lehmann (2006, p.27) writes, “Art in general cannot develop without reference to earlier forms. It is only a question of the level, consciousness, explicitness and special manner of reference”.

Within this research project, ‘new’ refers to the discovery of previously unknown, or un-noticed understandings of choreography and the performance experience.

Bruner (1986, p.8) states, “Experience and meaning were in the present; the past was a memory, a reproduction; and the future was always open, linked by expectation and potentiality. However, present experience always takes account of the past and anticipates the future”. 
In light of this, a fundamental question arose in the choreographic process, *how can I remain open to the influence of my prior experience?*

To do this, it became important to trust in the presence and influence of this surfacing corporeality, allowing intuition to act as vessel between practical choices in the studio process, and the attention being subconsciously demanded by my bank of experience.

4.2 Trusting intuition as a way of moving forward

Approximately half way through the workshop process of this research, I found myself completely lost and misguided, unsure of the trajectory upon which the choreography was traveling, and an awareness that I had no idea how I wanted it to develop. Where previously I had maintained some foresight as to the development of my choreography, the rehearsals for *The Space Between* began to feel confusing, riddled with a sense of being lost within something. Small moments of clarity would present through the dancer’s bodies, moments of insight into a particular ‘something’ that struck me as significant, for example the image that arose in working with Landau and the essence of stumbling discovered working with Ferris. However, these things, more often than not, possessed the power to both compel me and confound me as both a watcher and choreographer. Yet before I completely abandoned these moments, I fell back into the support of an old cliché, that: *sometimes we have to move backwards to travel forwards.* So it was that I began to strip everything back, and re-connect with where the studio investigation had begun, *a sense of accepting and noticing that which arose through attentive improvisation.* Instead of trying to make sense of every moment, one of my roles as choreographer became ensuring that the scores and structures of the developing work were complex and stimulating enough to hold a dancer’s attention. As performance artist Ruth Zaporah (2003, p.23) writes, “I remain relaxed and imagination thrived. I knew that if I was fascinated, so too would be the audience. All of this knowledge integrated into my awareness. Awareness danced”.
I began to make way for an ability to accept the sensorial, perceptual, conceptual and experiential offerings of the moment and foster something meaningful from these. Granting myself permission to abandon the need to understand why moments of dancing seemed so profound, in a way abandoning the need to be in control, allowed me to trust that the choreographic development would occur as long as I remained vigilantly attentive to the intentions of the improvisation process. As Jose Ortega Y Gasset (1975, p.79) writes, “When the object is there itself, there is no room for error. The place error might occupy is taken up by the object itself. And this very displacement of error is itself the definitive, analytical sign of the truth we are looking for”. Within improvisation, I view this object as that to which a dancer is attentive. This may take the form of something arising from the workshop process, or alternatively something noticed in the moment of performance. If this ‘thing’ is receiving attention, and a performer is aware and responsive to it, then error cannot occur. If error is to be understood as something which does not deliver on its intention, there can be “no room for error” when a dancer has attuned their awareness to this object. It is delivering on its intention, by remaining attentive.

The surfacing of, and subsequent attention paid toward an intuitive mode of working had resonating effects within the creative process. Instead of perceiving moments of understanding as to ‘what’ I was creating, this embrace of something deeper that I did not fully understand led to moments of an intrinsic belief that ‘something is right here’. As Sandra Parker (2010, p.101) writes of her choreographic process, “I resisted forcing or over emphasising my viewpoint, discounting possibilities that I could not feel physically. Over articulation would make the connections between movements defined from a visual perspective rather than an inner-felt one”. Parker here highlights her focus upon less-conscious forms of knowledge, that of an inner impulse. Parker (2010, p.110) continues, “By keeping the atmosphere of our work together within the studio as informal as possible I tried to take the focus away from rigorous fixation upon choreography as precise and defined”.
Performance maker Rosemary Lee (undated) writes of her own choreographic process, “I know that it’s only in letting go that you can be swept away, it’s only through acceptance and openness that connection can happen”.

Both Parker and Lee offer insight into attuning a choreographic perception toward techniques of performance making that reside outside a conscious clarity. It surfaces that choreographers may resist defining goals or holding expectations and begin trusting in an evolving and emergent process. As Miranda Fricker (1996, p.184) writes, “…it is primarily the intuitive mode which enables us to solve new problems in the light of old…”. By allowing trust in our intuition to be present and influential, we are able to move forward and progress our research and understandings, “in light of the old”.

Within this moment, something else became blatantly clear: I was not interested in dictating the understandings, experiences or readings of either the process or the product of this research. What I was in fact interested in was the negotiation between performers as individuals and the choreographer.

\[\textit{Collaboration then not as a kind of perfect understanding of the other bloke, but a mis-seeing, a mis-hearing, a deliberate lack of unity. And this fact of the collaborative process finding its echo in the work since on-stage what we see it not all one thing either – but rather a collision of fragments that don’t quite belong, fragments that mis-see and mis-hear each other. A kind of pure play in that too. (Etchells, 1999 p.56)}\]

What then, can two distinct beings working together within the dance studio produce?

Further, a particularly vivid moment working with Landau speaks to this, a pathway that ended in the development of the score ‘breathe the surrounding fog, feeling its cold touch inside your throat’. This score was the result of weeks of negotiation between choreographer and performer. It was the result of creative input from both parties, developed based upon what I perceived as the
swallowing of air, and the development of language that Landau found stimulating. Over weeks of trialing, and many failed attempts, this score evolved as a testament to the fruitful potential of “a mis-seeing, a mis-hearing, a deliberate lack of unity”. Collaboration and negotiation allowed the seed of an idea to formulate into a score that encouraged choreographic development. Allowing a less consciously understood belief of the potency of this moment with Landau enabled the creative process to grow and develop over time, without extraneous critical judgment to stifle arising interests. Our combined intuition that something was occurring, allowed enough interest to be sparked to foster a sense of enquiry within choreography.

4.3 Synergies of approach between writing and choreography

Reflection upon the process of writing this paper has led to some very interesting insights, namely a perception of the synergy between my writing and choreographic processes. This similarity has previously gone un-noticed by me, and I find it important to shed some light upon this.

Like my choreographic practice, this writing has adopted an intuitive trust allowing strands of thought to develop into meaningful insight. Reflection and self-critique after the moment have allowed for thoughtful distillation and clarity to emerge. It is interesting to note that both processes involve periods of gathering, sifting, refinement and discovery. Far from a piece of text which began as a structure with a specific cohesive contention, this writing has come about by adopting the use of an automated process - a form of stream-of-consciousness writing. Through this, tangents of subconscious thought are brought into conscious visibility through writing, to develop and expose choreographic learning.

Like following synaptic snaps with the brain, these tangents would connect, relate and contribute to a larger whole upon the page. Similar to the improvisation process of allowing corporeality to exert influence within the workshop process, this writing practice has granted me access to the
corporeality of my mind: the learning that is stored deep within, difficult to access (as can be the case with physical improvisation), and often the most pertinent.

As Ruth Zaporah (2003, p.24) aptly notes, “Movement, speech, action. It is all dance – emanating from the inside out, one moment nourishing the next, uncoiling itself”. I would go so far as to say this is also adaptable to writing, with this particular text “emanating from the inside out, one moment nourishing the next, uncoiling itself.” The term ‘uncoiling itself’ evokes images of both the choreographic and writing process having lives of their own, exerting subconscious affect on their evolution, creation and development.

The writing process has been used to “…explore, track down and render articulate what would otherwise remain dimly felt”. (J.R. Nicholas Davey, 2000, p.385). Lehmann (2006, p.25) writes similarly “The task of theory is to articulate, conceptualize and find terms for that which has come into being, not to postulate it as the norm”. Far from a doctrine on the choreographic process, this writing is located within the cross over of the two Venn diagram circles, somewhere between the intuitive decision-making of choreography, and conscious clarification through written form.
SUMMARY

This paper lays out some of the creative processes used within the choreographic process in making *The Space Between*. It reflects upon the influence on my creative process from other artists including Deborah Hay, Rosalind Crisp, Ros Warby and Paul Romano. Through the making and writing periods I have become aware of particular ‘aha’ moments, including the metaphor of the Venn diagram, the similarities between the workshop process for performer and experiences of the audience, and the relationships between choreographer/performer, performer/audience, performer/performer, subject/other. This has occurred by opening space for thought to emerge freely through writing, and abandoning the need to ‘control’ the trajectory of such thought.

To conclude this paper, I summarise some of the key points of discussion, and reflect upon the writing process itself.

The use of improvisation as an exploratory and performance medium

The research explored way in which improvisation can be used as both an explorative tool and a performance mode. Adopting an open attitude within an improvisation workshop, and a pliability to work with the offerings and idiosyncrasies of performers, served to focus attention on the individualism and corporeality of the dancers. This particular focus mediated tendencies to feel pressure to create ‘something’ or meet pre-existing expectations.

Through performance improvisation, this project empowered performers to remain vigilantly attentive during improvisation, and through this to re-create new meanings and readings of performance time after time.
Intuitive trust and the subconscious

Through adopting a trust in intuitive thought processes, my choreographic practice begins to move toward a place where discovery of exciting and unchartered terrains takes place; a place where the learning of my past can subconsciously influence my present and ultimately stream forth into my future. As a practitioner who constantly seeks ways to challenge and invigorate choreographic practice, this attendance toward intuition aids in my emerging understanding and values of choreography.

So what is to be said then of intuition and the subconscious, given that both reside somewhere in the less perceivable parts of our understanding? Intuition fosters a trust within oneself that ‘something is right here’, allowing a choreographer to move forward and continue to develop choreography, without having to fully understand in the moment why an interest arose. Our subconscious allows movement toward understanding why particular intuitive decisions were made or beliefs held. Our subconscious grants access to previously experienced learning: either as a dancer within the studio evoking memories and learning from the past, or as a researcher allowing insight to emerge without extraneous force.

Corporeality

It became apparent that the influence of our corporeal selves could affect every aspect of a performance making process. From conceptual understandings of improvisation, to our particular trainings and experiences, our living accumulating histories play an influential role within improvisation. Further, intuition became a way in which dancers could allow the influence of corporeality to be at play.

This corporeality produced fascinating outcomes with the workshop process. For performers, corporeality was encouraged to enact influence over the act of dancing, and thereby highlight the personal idiosyncrasies within performers.
Investigating the roles of and exchanges with an audience in performance

Through the strategic use of both sound and space, a performance environment was created where audience members were afforded a more intimate experience of the live choreography. Exploration of the work of other practitioners and theorists served to demonstrate the intricate relation between an audience and performer within live performance culture, foregrounding the need to recognize, value and attune to this relationship in the creation process.

The intricate relationship of choreographer and performer

The writing highlights some of the key concerns in the negotiations between choreographer and performer, namely how subtle shifts in the use of language and the adoption of a flexible choreographic outlook can inform the making process. Upon reflection it is interesting to note just how these subtle shifts resonated with both choreographer and dancer, helping to create a dynamic and productive working relationship.

Synergies of writing and choreography

Uncanny similarities have emerged between my choreographic methodology and my writing practice. Through the latter I have been exploring a reflexive writing sensibility in relation to the choreographic process, and by adopting a specific openness to following intuitive strands of thought, the writing constantly dialogues and reflects upon the creative practice of the performance work, inherently feeding and deepening my choreographic understanding. It is a process requiring at times considerable effort.

Emergent interests for future exploration

Through this research, I begin to notice a particular relationship between object and idea, represented here respectively by performance and writing (although I
see many cross over’s with these two forms), where neither exists to justify the other, instead their dialogue and interplay continue to deepen understandings of each. Where the object (as both performance and process) is more known to a choreographer through the lens of the writing, and the idea (as both writing and process) is constructed and argued through the learning of the practical. Through this a harmonious picture of the cultivation of thought and creative enquiry exist.

Upon reflection, many things have become apparent. Not only did I begin to understand some of the intricacies of the choreographic process but insight also emerged into my own improvisation process, afforded through the need to communicate my own improvisation values and methodology to other bodies.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Live audience responses

These responses to the live work are provided here as they offer another viewpoint to the experience of the live performance. All responses have been given freely, and appropriate consent has been granted from each author.

Audience Response # 1

So I loved the way that Edward was lit as part of the work, which he indeed was! But because he was wearing headphones with the rest of the audience members it was like a bridging between performers and viewers.

Knowing your history of how you generate your movements, your solo practice process and what makes you tick in your presentation of this, I loved loved loved seeing your movement idiosyncrasies shine through in other people’s bodies. Without having detailed knowledge of whether it was set movement, or scores, I found it most engaging to see you in this way. I particularly loved the solo with the gal with the short blonde hair half tied up.

The whole work was deliciously delicate: the celestially ambient sound-scape, the heightened sensory experience of having such “small” sounds amplified by having the room miced, and the beautiful lighting design.

I anticipated the performers stepping into the light to be your “bow”, as if you had taken your exploration of the “moments in-between” where you bow, we clap, and you had pressed pause. In fact, I would have been satisfied with this as your ending, even though I loved seeing you grinning at the end, so I could grin back at you.

Super engaging, a pleasure to watch. Well done my wonderful friend

Karina Smith, 2011
Audience Response # 2

It was so soft - delicately complex - obviously constructed with a strong clarity and a fine sensitivity - yet it was a structure that didn’t make itself known loudly, it had so much grace and allowed something deeper to precipitate through it. I love this approach to time based art – where things evolve with their own organic sensibility. No gimmicks, no tricks – its not about the form of the work its about something beneath this. This is one of the reasons I think your work resonated so beautifully and continues to in me – it had a presence and a life of its own and seemed to working with the genuine spirits of the performers. To me this is the true magic of live performance and this glittered all the way through your work. It washed over me like weather.

I wonder if the earphones helped me into a place where you can hear these sorts of murmurs, feel them, sense them? They made me feel safe and one would imagine they would create a division between me and my surroundings yet they seemed to engender a lovely intimacy somehow. Connecting me with my imagination, and the imaginations of the performers…focusing the sound into pure thought, shutting out the white noise.

All the performers were so unique and different, there was a beautiful diplomacy in the sharing of the space, something so honest about it, a lovely balance between inhabiting their own worlds with integrity and sharing the space with the others.

There was a real, quiet sophistication in how this was managed, and again it was invisible so it allowed me to pass further into the work. I had the feeling that I had really experienced something. It was a ‘happening’ but not in the self conscious – self proclaiming manner that some performance works adopt – which is fine and its good to be in an open conversation within a performance experience sometimes, its fun and exciting and bold and important…yet I find that your work with its subtlety lets something far more profound occur, it passes through into a realm beyond words, lets us be in that place, of the spirit.
I think this is probably a very difficult thing to do (particularly with a number of performers) – to create something that is constructed and repeatable yet maintains the live-ness and grace of something naturally unfolding, so that you almost don’t notice it entering you and I think that you really achieved this. It was beautiful Gareth, I look forward to seeing more.

Michaela Pegum, 2011
Audience Response # 3

Entering venue immediately set up something. The ‘performance event’ literally started when I walked through the door. I loved what the couches, table with tea and headphones suggested – but their was freedom in how you interacted and responded – therefore not confronting to an audience. You could simple sit and wait for the event to ‘start’ or engage with tea, headphones.

I loved the surprise of how the first performer entered the space – unexpected. She was captivating to observe as she floated through the space. Her movements seemed to hold the presence – perhaps because they were unpredictable – hence the improvisational nature of the performance, however I found that she as a performer could have demanded more presence?? – a little difficult to explain.

I was wondering about her intention – was she wanting to be seen? Allowing herself to be seen? Watched? Or was she oblivious to us?
I did not get a sense that she was particularly on a search or pathway
I really enjoyed the intimacy that the headphones created – that despite sitting in an open room with other people, it felt like private performance for each individual audience. Clever! I found the soundscore I was listening to interesting, and couldn’t help but look for connections between movement and sound - although I know this was random, it made it even more delightful when moments where movement and sound worked together occurred.

It was nonetheless a nice prologue to the performance.
Being lead into the theatre and being greeted with a soundscore that was equally captivating was a smooth transition and continued the flavour of the performance style for me. I enjoyed having to negotiate how to walk around Edward – and how others negotiated this decision.
I enjoyed sitting with the improvisational score through out, although there were definitely highlights...

I enjoyed the set up of how performers entered/joined in – yet your pathways became predictable very quickly, and I just wanted you all to ‘get there’. For me - I felt like you were all clearly searching for a connection with each other and establish the improvisational score – which was distracting and I ended up watching you searching for this rather than the movement, energy and dynamics of the performance landscape.

I clear highlight and the strongest moment for me was when you and the girl with the brown hair?? Had a jam towards the end of the piece. It added a dynamic shift to the overall sustained performance – where I did drop out for a bit. The large, deep space did allow for some perspective and vastness, which I think complimented the improvisational style, yet it also left my attention wandering in moments when two or more performers where populating the space, yet all moving slowly – the movement textures not offering any contrast ?? This may be my only criticism – that the sustained nature and length of the piece become a bit spacey?? Like it trailed off the topic and began to mumble???

So when you and Brown-haired-girl created this strong, clear connection – your movements playing off each other and really driving the improvisation – this was delightful to watch.

Some beautiful moments of mysterious and seductive lighting.

The soundscore – for me – is what was able to keep to the improvisational landscape together, and the real red thread.

Overall it was a pleasure to sit and experience the event.

Dani-Ela Kayler, 2011
Audience Response # 4

It has been little awhile, but residue from your presentation keeps coming up for me, from your show, that I have found interesting. These are impressions, images and adventures that it took me on.

Subtle exchanges, sound sits in layers. Peaks. Poetry. The layers slip:
The layer of this room again the room I started in & the layer of sounds pressed close to my ears against the sound far from me, filling the whole space.
Spaces within spaces. Rumbles from the greater space calls for my awareness and attention. Calling for me to come outside a cotton wool bubble.

I’m a strange voyeur as I am being watched by my watchee.
In fact, hang on, these tables are turned! I am now being watched more than I am watching -and I am told this fact in plain language.

I enter the titles of this world. I read the who’s, the tone is fed to me in a drink, the feeling soaked up by my ears the arrival of myself leaving a deep and deeper impression upon the couch as time passes.

No jolts. Smoothly I am stirred to wake for a meeting. Barely notice it happening - this is the art of a Real magician.

I enter a world where a different kind of creature has arrived. It dawns on me what I had been hearing before.
They were sounds from behind the wall where this creature was arriving and unfurling its alien limbs.
Its uttering had been seeping into the next room before its tentacles reach through and drew us closer and deeper into this dark place, its central system. From its extremities we have been snuggled closer to its mind.
I am seeing it flex and function. A precious sight.
The buzz in my ears is not unlike the buzz surrounding my pretend life. The fridge. Plumbing. The TV. The sound system that I forgot to turn to "off" last night bores through my dreams.

In pretend life my neural system is route out in ways I am not permitting and would not permit if I had a choice in it.

But I do have a choice here, in this place. And so I slide the buzzing cotton wool away for a full gulp of the air outside. But only every-now and again. These gulps are delicious. I can hear feet slide and flop. The rumble the rattle against my skin.

Over this time the creature has meandered closer to us, until I see its eyes and it sees my eyes.

Then with thickly descended darkness it speeds away, faster than comprehensible, far back to where-ever it came from. But not before giving me all these little pieces.

Elanor Jane Webber, 2011
APPENDIX 2 – Information on DVD Footage

The accompanying DVD was recorded as part of the live performance season of *The Space Between*, recorded on March 29, 2011. The DVD consists of two separate perspectives: a shot taken from the back of the theatre; and a close up shot outlining some of the performance detail.
PROJECT TITLE:

**PRE, PRESENT, EVER-PRESENT**: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CORPOREALITY, IMPROVISATION AND INHABITED SPACE

A Master of Choreography research project by
Gareth Hart, student researcher
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This practise-led research encompasses the creation of a live performance and supporting exegesis (15,000 words). The research culminates in a new 40 minute dance work of solos choreographed by Gareth Hart (student researcher) in association with three voluntary participants, to be presented at VCAM in April 2011.

The project aims to use dance improvisation as a way of accessing corporeal information stored within the body, as well as recollecting memories and sensorial information from dancer’s pasts.

This project employs a critical, experiential and reflexive process into improvisation, and seeks to explore how individual corporeality blends with real time sensorial information, influencing the decision making process within improvisation. It is grounded in the exploration of the ephemeral nature of improvisation, and seeks to deepen understandings of presence and absence within live performance culture.
As a practise led research project, studio based dance improvisations will form the core of the working methodology of this project, via a six month facilitated workshop led by student researcher Gareth Hart. The workshop will work towards eliciting responses to tasks set by the student researcher, designed to illuminate a range of personal, sensorial, environmental and emotional memories from participants past. As such, the project seeks to create performance that is imbued with the performers real self, moving away from performance where artists embody and act out a character.

The project will use this physical workshop as a means to investigate human being’s relationship to environment, and the associated psychology of known/unknown spaces.

Participants in this project will be asked to engage with research methods in a number of ways, including:

- An ongoing **studio based workshop**, responding to various stimulus and provocations from Gareth Hart. This workshop is intended to try out various physical tasks and will culminate in the creation of movement for a public performance. These workshops will begin at a maximum of one session per week for up to 3 hours at a time. Closer to the performance date of April 2011, these may increase substantially, up to 5 sessions per week for up to 4 hours at a time. This workshop process will be conducted at the Victorian College of the Arts and Music. These workshops will be filmed via video and audio recording devices, and kept under strict security measures.

And

- Engaging in a **verbal dialogue**, as a form of reflecting and refining upon the research elements. Some of these dialogues may occur outside of the workshop studio, elsewhere on the VCAM campus site. These dialogues may be recorded via an audio device or video recording device, and kept under strict security measures.

And

- Partaking in an ongoing **writing process**, in the form of journal notation, as both a retention tool (for movement material) and as a method of enquiry. Most of this writing will occur within the workshop period, however some of this writing may occur off-site at participant’s own homes, in their own time. Participants not involved in the creation of the performance
itself may be asked to write a short response to the live work, based upon their experience of the work. This is entirely voluntary.

All participants in the project are involved in the process willingly and voluntarily, and have a reserved right to leave the project at any stage. Where possible, any contributions made by a participant towards the research before leaving the project, will be withdrawn. Given the small number of participants in this project, and the nature of live performance, anonymity of participants cannot be guaranteed.

Data collected in this research project including, but not limited to, performance material, written material and dialogues, will be used to form the written thesis of this project. Written acknowledgement of correct authorship of all material will appear in the thesis and program notes.

Upon request, a copy of the thesis and DVD of live performance will be made available to participants.

Any recorded audio data collected during this research project will be held in locked facilities at the School of Performing Arts, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music. This data will be stored for five years after the conclusion of the research project after which it will be destroyed. This information is subject to legal obligations and may be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions.

This project has gained approval by the University of Melbourne Higher Research Ethics Committee.

For issues relating to this project that participants feel cannot be discussed with Gareth or Helen, then the Executive Officer of Human Research Ethics, University of Melbourne can be contacted on: (03) 8344 2073 or fax 9347 6739.
THE FACULTY OF THE VCA AND MUSIC
SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:
PRE, PRESENT, EVER-PRESENT: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CORPOREALITY, IMPROVISATION AND INHABITED SPACE

A Master of Choreography research project by
Gareth Hart, student researcher
0421 808 289, ghart@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

Helen Herbertson, responsible researcher
Graduate Coordinator/Lecturer, Dance
03 9685 9392 or herenth@unimelb.edu.au

Participant Name:

1. I consent to participate in this research project, the details of which have been outlined to me, and I have been provided with a copy of the plain language statement to keep

2. I understand that my involvement in this research project will involve undertaking an ongoing a combination of studio based improvisation workshop, a workshop-based writing process, verbal dialogue, public performance and/or reflective writing process with the student researcher.

3. I acknowledge that:
(a) The possible effects of participating in the **studio based improvisation workshop**, **writing process**, **verbal dialogue** and **public performance** have been explained to me to my satisfaction;
(b) I understand that I am participating in this project willingly and voluntarily, and that I may withdraw from the project at any stage, and that any unprocessed identifiable data supplied by me will be withdrawn;
(c) The project is for research purposes;
(d) I understand that data collected in this research may be used to form the written thesis and public performance of this project. Written acknowledgement of correct authorship will appear in the thesis and program notes;
(e) I have been informed that the workshop process, performance, and verbal dialogue will be video and audio recorded and I understand that this information will be securely stored for up to five years at the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, after which time it will be destroyed;
(f) I have been informed that data collected and securely stored is subject to legal limitations and may be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professionals;
(g) I understand that that small number of participants in this project may have implications for protecting my identity;
(h) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings, including a DVD of rehearsal/performance footage and the written thesis will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to partaking in the ongoing improvisation workshop (video and/or audio recorded), writing process and verbal dialogue (video and/or audio recorded).
☐ Yes  ☐ No

(please tick)

Signature:

Date:

Once signed and returned, this consent form will be retained by the student researcher (Gareth Hart)
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Author/s:
Hart, Gareth Owen

Title:
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