

HOW CONTACT IMPROVISATION CAN  
INFORM THE CREATIVE PROCESS  
AND ENLIVEN ITS PRODUCT

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the use of contact improvisation in the creative process. I discuss my personal history with the form and how it became my main focus in movement research. A brief history and limited descriptions of the aesthetics of contact improvisation and Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) are also addressed. For my creative research, I applied concepts from Laban Movement Analysis to Contact in an effort to uncover the more expressive possibilities within the form. Finally, I share the several personal insights I gained through the practice of contact improvisation, as well as its application to the creative processes of choreography and performance.

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Ron Humphrey.  
Thank you for making dancing a family priority.

And to my dad, Boyce Cowan Tibbetts (1951-2007).  
Thank you for being excited about *everything*.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

My practice of contact improvisation (Contact or CI) began almost four years ago in New York City. I knew I loved dancing, but always felt one step behind as a technician. I learned movement very slowly and I struggled with inefficient movement habits left over from my years as a gymnast. Ten minutes into my first contact dance, I knew I had found the endeavor for which I had been unconsciously preparing my entire life. Useful aspects of my gymnastics training immediately eclipsed those that were not serving me. My ability to effortlessly invert my body and my comfort with disorientation allowed me to take risks and make discoveries at a much faster rate than many beginning “Contacters”. I learned more about what my body could do in space in that forty-five minute dance than I had in the previous year of technique classes.

When the dance settled, with whom I danced, John Glenn, introduced himself to me. I learned that he had been practicing for sixteen years and had recently begun teaching at Movement Research. I realized that it was the first time I had learned about a physical discipline from someone else *physically*. My previous dance teachers’ and gymnastics coaches’ use of physicality included demonstration or tactile reinforcement of verbal cues. With Glenn, I learned a

movement form in the form's own language. We stayed in physical contact the entire time. I could *feel* where and how he placed his weight and this gave me information about what I could do with my own mass. I have since found that most contact teachers dance with their students, allowing them to communicate their ideas kinesthetically. Perhaps this is why I also find them to be the most skilled at the verbal articulation of movement in general.

As I continued to study the form, I realized that many of my Contact teachers were over the age of forty and they all moved with more efficiency (and many with more daring) than I. Most of them embraced the philosophy of learning by doing, sharing, asking new questions and then doing again. They challenged me with the kind of questions that require reflection upon my own visceral experience. If I asked questions, they looked to their own dancing for answers. I trusted them because they actually practiced what they taught.

Contact improvisation soon changed my approach to dance entirely. I became passionate about the science of movement and the kinesthetic experience of physics. I began to study somatics and developmental movement patterns, which are inroads to mind/body integration that many Contacters study and practice. I applied to the University of Utah where I could simultaneously seek an MFA in Modern Dance and enter into the Integrated Movement Studies™ (IMS™) program (an embodied study of, and certification in, Laban Movement Analysis, developed and led by Janice Meaden and Peggy Hackney). Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) helped me understand and challenge contact



improvisation's place in the greater context of all human movement while the graduate program provided a laboratory for a more structured investigation into the form.

My thesis research explores, more specifically, the use of contact improvisation in the creative processes of choreography and performance. I applied aspects of the LMA system and ideas from the IMS™ program to Contact as I sifted it through each of these processes.

Dance artist and theorist, Rudolph Von Laban, developed what is now known as Laban Movement Analysis between 1915 and 1950 in Switzerland, Germany, and England. Many of the early modern dancers who were part of the Expressionist movement in Germany, such as Mary Wigman and Helen Tamaris, studied the system, then known as Effort-Shape. LMA divides movement into the four categories of Body, Effort, Shape and Space. It is used to describe, categorize and generate movement. It can also be used to improve one's physical connectivity and movement efficiency.

Contact improvisation, as I will explain in the next section, included values that were in stark contrast to those of the Expressionists who initially developed LMA. As I studied both perspectives, I noticed that each of them fed my understanding of the other. I soon discovered this was because the IMS™ program approaches LMA holistically. The framework of the program and delivery of the material proved as meaningful to me as its subject matter. The

work was organized into what Hackney refers to as the “lively interplay” (Hackney, 1998, 34) between the following polar opposites. See Figure 1.

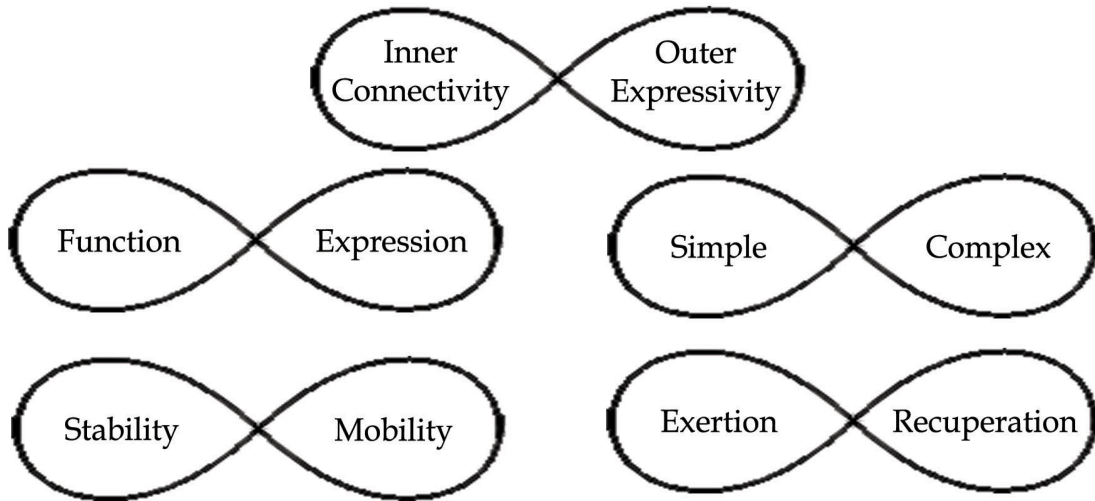


Figure 1. Illustration of polarities in infinity symbols to illuminate “lively interplay”.

These particular relationships informed everything from their lesson plans to the design of the schedule. Meaden and Hackney plugged the movement concepts of LMA into these infinity symbols (lemniscates), and illuminated the power of both differentiation and integration, time and again throughout the program. This approach provided a way for me to challenge my habits by balancing my preferences with their opposites. My main framework for understanding became the simultaneous investigation of 1) two polar opposite concepts and 2) how they inform and relate to each other. This process of differentiation and integration kept my mental, physical and creative growth balanced.

In IMS™, I learned the subject matter by reading, talking and writing about it. More often, and most importantly, I learned it by moving it. I was immediately drawn to this experiential learning paradigm because it was so similar to what I loved about learning Contact. Again, I was approaching a movement discipline by *moving*.

Hackney and Meaden required articulation of the relationship between each movement experience and my own feelings, opinions, and individual history. They asked me to allow all concepts to move through me rather than expect them to be somehow placed upon me. I learned that making meaning from movement, whether I was witnessing, analyzing, experiencing, performing or executing it, is a very personal and individual process informed by many factors. Hackney and Meaden believe that embodied knowledge is legitimate

research. If I was at a loss for words in describing movement, for example, they encouraged me to get up and move what I was seeing in order to gain clarity. Once again, this was consistent with what I so appreciated about Contact. Theory was *emerging from* practice rather than always being *applied to* it.

I relied heavily upon these learning models throughout my graduate studies. As I became immersed in a deeper investigation of Contact through regular practice, these movement lenses provided tools for reflection. A contemplative process allowed me to more completely embody Contact's underlying philosophies, which affected subtle shifts in my approach to life in general. This kinesthetic approach to movement research became a touchstone for me. My visceral experience continually informed, validated and further personalized my meaning making process. My desire for such authenticity in my approaches to choreography and performance led to the development of my thesis research question: How can contact improvisation inform the creative process and enliven its product?

For me, the most reliable theories come from practice. I feel most authentic when I am experiencing the world around me through my senses. The sensory information that emerged during my Contact practice helped me realize that the form keeps me whole. It has become, literally, a form of recuperation from the exertion caused by my very strong personality. I am perpetually pinned against the rock of my perfectionism. Luckily, Contact is anything but a hard place. In this thesis, I further discuss further how these dominant parts of my personality

are moderated by contact improvisation. I also address how the use of Contact in the creative process moved me toward a deeper understanding of my relationships with others.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORY

#### Contact Improvisation: A brief history, malleable present, and limitless future

No to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved. (Yvonne Rainier, 1965, as quoted by Banes, 1987, 43).

Contact improvisation is a movement form that was instigated in the 1970s by Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith who, like Rainier, wished to challenge the status quo in dance. By laying a foundation for an improvisational form that was purposefully both malleable and nonconforming, they helped unfold what is now referred to as the postmodern movement in dance. They confronted hierarchies in dance companies and fought censorship. They “criticize[d] rigid establishment traditions” (Banes, 1987, 62) and “focus[ed] on the phenomenon rather than the presentation” (Banes, 1987, 67) of it. And, as per Rainier’s series of rejections cited above, one of their goals was to neutralize the drama that had been at the center of most modern dance choreography.

As contact improvisation developed beyond Paxton’s initial experiments, he “decided against trademarking the work, preferring ongoing dialog instead”

(Pallant, 2006, 14). The following is one of many descriptions of Contact that he has offered over the years:

As a basic focus, the dancers remain in physical touch, mutually supportive and innovative, meditating upon the physical laws relating to their masses: gravity, momentum, inertia and friction. They do not strive to achieve results but rather, to meet the constantly changing physical reality with appropriate placement and energy (CQ, 1978-79, Vol. 4).

I admit that I was nervous about utilizing Contact toward my thesis research. My creative process was not motivated by the same ideals as the postmodernists. For instance, I knew I would not remain invested in a project that did not “move” me, both in space and inside. While “moving” others is not the primary reason for my artmaking, having some affect on the audience is at least a desired by-product of my every creative endeavor. Most performances of Contact illustrate the same postmodern ideas that motivated Rainier to write her “no manifesto”. I feared that my more sensational motives would somehow dishonor the form. Strike one.

I also was concerned about how Contact would fit within the formal presentation I had planned for the creative portion of my thesis. According to Cynthia Novack, Contact performances usually involve

*Tacit inclusion of the audience; conscious informality of presentation, modeled on a practice or jam (author’s italics): Proximity to the audience, seating usually in the round with no formal stage space...dancing would be going on when the audience entered, so that the beginning of the performance was indefinite. This performance setup simulates the contact jam, as does the lack of production values (light, props, sets, programs) and the “costumes,” which are practice clothes (Novack, 1990, 122).*

My thesis concert would be in a theatre with a proscenium stage. The audience would be in darkness and the dancers in lights. There would be music (in contrast to the random sounds or silence often used by postmodernists) and a costume design inspired by the content of the work. Clearly, Contact was usually shared in an environment very different from the one in which I would present my research.

Further, Paxton offered the following in 1975 regarding the importance of physical reality as the main thrust of the form:

I want to go on record as being pro-physical-sensation in the teaching of this material. The symbolism, mysticism, psychology, spiritualism are horse-drivel. In actually teaching the *stand* or discussing *momentum* or *gravity*, I think each teacher should stick to *sensational facts*...*Personally, I've never seen anything occur which was abnormal, para-physical, or extra-sensory. Personally I think we underestimate the extent of the "real"* (Novack, 1990, 82).

Paxton later stated that he was "against the inclusion of overtly dramatic, emotional material in contact improvisation" (Novack, 1990, 82).

I felt that the aforementioned collection of theatrical elements at my thesis concert would almost certainly result in some level of drama. Even though I had planned a more 'real' and more rational approach to making the work, I still held the goal of creating something symbolic. Also, I fully intended to allow my emotional self to emerge in the process. Strike two.

Finally, there was my actual thesis question: How can contact improvisation inform the creative process and enliven its *product*? The postmodernists often considered process more important than product and



sometimes considered them one and the same. Often, in Contact, “the aim for the participants is self-awareness and personal pleasure” (Banes, 1987, 68). I wanted to attend to those aspects of the form while also creating dances that considered the perspective of the audience. My research question referred to a creative process whose main focus was to result in a product. I would then present that product as evidence of my worthiness of an advanced degree in Modern Dance at a university. I was about to use contact improvisation as a means not only to an end, but one that was not exactly consistent with the values of the form. Strike three.

Luckily, one cannot strike out that easily in contact improvisation, in part because it is not competitive and goal oriented in the way that sports are. It is cooperative in nature. Paxton explains how “sports rely on conflicting goals and ‘plays’. CI has no point-system and the maneuvers are relatively unpredictable” (Paxton, Steve. 1983-84 reprinted in Contact Improvisation Sourcebook, 1997).

These are just a few ways in which the motivations behind my research differed from those of the original Contacters. However, according to Sally Banes, “the nature of Contact [is] its quality of constant change [which] implies that within the form there is room for elaboration [and] invention” and “many dancers and nondancers...extend the system’s limits according to their own ideas, experiences, and desires” (69). I eventually realized that my research was in keeping with the philosophies around and through which Contact still moves. Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith and many others have been wrapping words

around Contact since its birth in the early 1970s, and have committed to the continual evolution of its definition. Rather than codify the form, Stark Smith began publishing a journal in 1976 called *Contact Quarterly* dedicated to the steady dissemination of this dialogue. Once I was exposed to this brilliant journal, I realized that my inquiries were simply adding to the very slippery stuff upon which Contact has successfully skated for the past thirty-five years.

Before I began “extend[ing] the system’s limits”, I created a working definition of my own to anchor my investigation:

*Contact Improvisation*: a spontaneous movement practice where the primary motivation and source of information inspiring its initiation, continuation, direction, redirection, quality and/or resolve are the point(s) and/or surface(s) of contact between a person and another person, (persons, earth, object(s), perhaps even self).

This is my most sterile definition of contact. Following is another definition (and a comment on attempts to define it) from those who have been practicing since its beginnings:

Danny Lepkoff (CQ, Vol. II, No. 4):

...Two people move together, in contact, maintaining a spontaneous physical dialogue through the kinesthetic sensual signals of shared weight and common or counterpoised momentum. The body, in order to open to the sensations of momentum, weight, and balance, must learn to release excess muscular tension and abandon a certain amount of willful volition to the natural flow of movement at hand. Skills such as rolling, falling, and being upside down are explored, guiding the body to an awareness of its own natural movement possibilities.

Keriac (Contact Quarterly, Vol. VIII, No. 1):

Every time someone asks me “What is Contact Improvisation?” my mind goes blank, even though I have carefully read and studied many written definitions of CI, trying to prepare for this inevitable question. I invariably end up demonstrating physically.

The technical nature of my own definition is due to the fact that I often find myself in the same dilemma as Keriac. Contact improvisation is beyond definition. Still, it continues to evolve because Contacters are continually inspired to define it.

### The Aesthetics of Efficiency and Effort

Although it is an improvisational form with few (if any) hard and fast rules, Contact has still emerged as its own style with recognizable qualities. Smooth, seamlessly flowing movement is more commonly preferred, although bumps and small crashes are often met with laughter and curiosity.

Most Contacters value remaining just a bit off balance. The goal becomes the reconciliation of this relationship with gravity by finding the “easiest pathways available to their mutually moving masses” (Banes, 1987, 65) as they either fluidly tumble to the floor or redirect their momentum into a lift.

I completed a Laban Movement Analysis of contact improvisation for my IMS<sup>SM</sup> final project during the spring semester of my first year of graduate study. I noticed very quickly that there was not a very balanced representation of the Effort category, which is made up of sets of polar opposites. According to Peggy Hackney, Effort

...reflects the mover's attitude toward investing energy in four basic factors: Flow, Weight, Time, and Space. These inner attitudes need not necessarily be conscious to be operative. Effort change is generally associated with change of mood or emotion and, hence, is an inroad to expressivity... Engaging the mover from his/her own inner Effort Intent...*enlivens* movement (Hackney, 1998, 219).

Interestingly, it was only after finalizing my thesis research question (how can contact improvisation inform the creative process and *enliven* its product?) and choosing to experiment with Effort and Contact, that I read the last piece of the above definition. When viewed through the function/expression lens, Contact tends to be more functional with foci in physics, reality, and the moderation of human will. Effort tends to be described as expressive as it can *reveal* one's will and emotional response to physical reality and is often difficult to analyze because one's "inner attitude" is subjective, relative to the more objective laws of physics and therefore more difficult to assess.

The Effort category is made up of four sets of polarities (Figure 2).

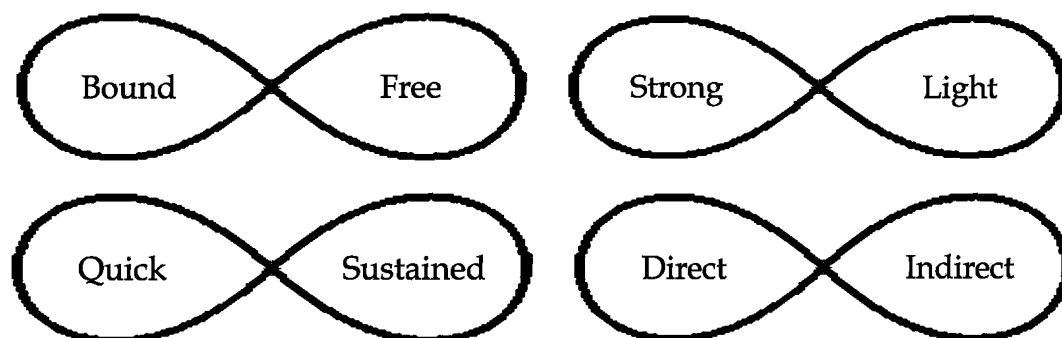


Figure 2. Illustration of polarities in each of the four categories of Effort.

Clockwise from upper left, the categories are Flow, Weight, Space and Time.

Each of the sets of polarities in Figure 2 refers to the mover's inner attitude toward Flow, Weight, Time and Space, respectively. Movers can utilize limitless variations in intensities within this framework, providing a very wide range and great number of dynamic movement possibilities.

The qualities on the left of the lemniscates are referred to as condensing Efforts, and are sometimes called fighting Efforts. This is perhaps why I did not find them occurring in combination very often in my analysis of Contact, which is more about cooperation than combat.

Drama is created, in part, by human response to conflict. Critics of Contact have often considered the collaborative search for the path of least resistance to be a bit devoid of a sense of stakes to be worthy of the concert stage and an audience's gaze. Paxton argues that the risk involved in two bodies simultaneously challenging gravity while attempting to listen to one another are stakes enough for any audience. He also sees the audience-performer relationship as a two-way street. He explains:

Contact improvisation has been a performance form since its inception...the notion that CI performance is 'ungenerous', as audiences have observed, results from CI performers paying close attention to life and limb. If the audience feels neglected due to lack of eye contact, for instance, they might consider that in CI training peripheral, non-focused vision is employed..I do not see the audience-performer relationship as one where the performer has a duty to the audience. I see it as a relationship...they have *with each other*, and if the audience may have expectations of the performer, well, so may the performer have expectations of the audience (Paxton, 1983-84).

I agree with Paxton regarding the reciprocal nature of the audience-performer relationship. However, when I watch dancers attending to their safety, I am also interested in why they might be doing so and how they *feel* about it. As a performer, I do not feel I can fulfill my “duty to the audience” when my life is perpetually at stake.

In my analysis of Contact, I also noticed the “peripheral, non-focused vision” that Paxton refers to. Other teachers call it a “soft” focus that allows simultaneous attention to internal sensation and external environment. Since awareness of self, partner, surface of contact, the earth, and the dance space are all necessary to the safety of Contacters, a *diminished* Indirect Space Effort is almost always necessary. In LMA language, attention to space is referred to as Direct and Indirect Space Effort. The former is a pinpointed, laser-like focus. Conversely, Indirect Space Effort is about seeing *everything*, as if one has eyes all over one’s body. Since Contacters’ Indirect Space Effort is split between inner and outer sensation, it becomes more about keeping the visual field open to allow in necessary information rather than actually taking an interest in *seeing* one’s surroundings.

Since Effort deals with dancers’ inner attitudes, I wondered how an application of this aspect of LMA would affect the aesthetic of contact improvisation. Scores are sets of rules or parameters that are applied to improvisations to increase the range of qualitative possibilities within them. In the Fall of my first year of graduate study, I created scores using three of

the four fighting Efforts (Bound Flow, Strong Weight, and Quick Time). My experiments with these scores were the basis of my IMS™ final project.

I worked weekly with four dancers (two duets). They all had less than a year of experience with Contact and very limited exposure to the LMA system. When I began complicating their practice of Contact with Effort scores designed to challenge the form, it was as if the rug were being pulled out from under them just as they put their weight on it. I feared I was tainting their perception of both perspectives by asking for an integration of the two before I properly introduced them separately.

I began warming the dancers up with short lessons on Effort and basic Contact exercises before asking them to integrate the two. They still struggled, which was surprisingly interesting to watch. Their most willful selves were brought forth by the Effort work, yet their most successful moments in Contact were when they put that will aside. Sometimes, their “fighting” moments threw them into a dangerous position or direction and they had to rely upon their Contact skills to guide them to safety. This illustrated how Contact can hone one’s reflexes, allowing for greater efficiency and safety in the performance of more dramatic work. The moments when their willfulness gave way to cooperation reminded me of how relieving it can be to let go of resistance. This relationship between cooperation and conflict would resurface during the creation of my thesis concert.

*Settling the Score: The Importance of Practice in the Creation of Theory*

I learned very quickly that the practice of scored contact improvisation must be balanced by an equal amount of practice in the most distilled version of the form (in short, dancing only according to the breath and the point or surface of contact). I eventually came to call this return to simplicity *settling the score*. It keeps dancers' analytical and self-critical minds from becoming overwhelmed. It also enables them to monitor how the scored practice affects their overall experience of the form.

*Settling the score* was especially meaningful to me because it kept the essence of contact improvisation present throughout my thesis research process, even as it moved into product. Even today, permission to dance the form without any academic application helps me honor the values of Contact's instigators, continually reminding me that I am working with an improvisational form that is spontaneous, sensory, and as simple as it is complex.

When I finished my LMA project, I turned the rehearsal time into a weekly (and sometimes biweekly) jam, the setting in which Contact is usually practiced. Jams are informal, nonperformative meetings where people move freely in and out of contact improvisations. The jam was a physical and temporal space that allowed me to *settle the score* weekly. It gave me the freedom to apply anything I wanted to Contact because I knew that regular attendance at the jam would keep me grounded.



In the greater context of an academic training program (the University of Utah's Department of Modern Dance's curriculum includes 10 hours per week of technique class), the jams kept me connected to what my body needed and wanted to say. In technique class, movement is specific and the students apply material from the teacher to their bodies. In an improvisational setting, one must allow the subject matter to emerge from within. Repeated discovery of identity occurs when one stays in touch with the self as source. With regular practice of improvisation one can begin to claim such discoveries, further refining one's personal aesthetic. After seven years of studying dance in a higher education setting, I found classes dedicated to this skill to be the most underrepresented in curricula.

As my experiments around Contact became more complex throughout my next two years of graduate study, *settling the score* kept me from taking my examination of the form too seriously. I stayed in touch with the joy and rewards that came by simply practicing, listening, playing and getting lost in the dance.

## CHAPTER III

### CONTACT IMPROVISATION AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

#### Revealing Relationships: Choreography and the Role of Control

Choreographers are in a position of control. I have a strong (some might say dominant) personality, and I struggle to moderate it in most of my relationships. My first creative process involving the practice of Contact helped me realize how the form relieves me of my need to control, even when I am directing the work. When I step into the role of choreographer, taking the lead down the path of the creative process becomes an asset only if I walk backwards at the front of the line. The success or failure of my agenda for the dance depends upon my ability to simultaneously see the dancers, and to hear them direct me as our line continues to travel.

When I finished my IMS™ final project, I made a quartet (two male/female duets), called *Evolving Autonomies*. The piece consists of two sections of set choreography that serve as bookends for scored Contact dances. It was the first time I allowed contact improvisation to remain a part of my creative process even after it became a product. Previously, I had always made a conscious effort to reveal who the dancers were in my work rather than utilizing them to expose parts of myself. Still, I was always so specific and particular

about *how* the work was performed that I often felt burdened by the need to stop every practice run to either change it or direct it further. The set sections in *Evolving Autonomies* allowed the rigor and specificity I so valued, while gently forcing me to completely let go of control every time I watched the dancers create, in the moment, during the improvised sections.

I began by developing a gestural solo and taught it to the woman in each duet. Next, I watched both duets engage in Contact dances. The men had very different qualities of touch and ways of approaching their female partners. Each of the women's responses was also very unique. One duet was quite rough and aggressive, whereas the other was softer and more cooperative. I created scores based on these dances, adding specificity to each dancer's assignment so that the two duets looked as different as possible.

One man's score was to approach his partner gently and allow his support of her endeavor to be the motivation behind their contact. I asked the man from the other duet to undermine his partner's every move. I gave both women the tasks of engaging as deeply as possible in the dance initiated by the men. I also asked them to perform their entire gestural solos, with as much clarity as possible, toward the audience. Both men kept their attention on the women.

Each couple performed a set, choreographed section, their scored contact dance, followed by another set section. The exchanges that took place during their improvisations illuminated the dynamics of manipulation, power struggle and the rejection of support. The duet where the man was undermining the

woman often became aggressive. Her reaction to his suppression resonated with me. Her determination increased and she fought harder, which is what I tend to do when someone tries to control me. To keep from injury, she had to immediately soften when their struggle led to a fall. In the duet where the man was more supportive, the woman responded in a way that was less familiar to me. She was reluctant to accept his support. I wanted to honor her natural reaction, but I also wanted the improvisation to develop. I further refined their score by asking her to give him all of her weight, for at least five seconds, somewhere toward the end of their contact dance. When I saw her grapple with this, I realized I was asking her to 'try on' my response to support in relationships. It took several weeks before she could consistently and completely relinquish her weight.

Curiously, I was able to let go of control every time I watched the dancers perform the improvised sections in *Evolving Autonomies*. Releasing control quieted my critical mind and I watched the piece unfold as an audience member. Instead of sending energy to the stage loaded with my notes from the last run or what I felt I needed to rework in the piece, I just watched. I had finally found a way to distill my perspective from that of choreographer/dancer/MFA candidate to that of a curious and open-minded audience member.

The downside to my release of control was the terror I felt on behalf of the dancers every time they entered the improvisations. The success or failure of that work suddenly rested on their shoulders. If something went wrong during the

Contact dance, they would not have choreographed steps to bring them out of the panic induced by a goof up on stage, and back into the dance. Further, they had to consider any bumps in the road as a part of the composition of the piece and their next choices would have to deal with their development or resolution. Again, nothing less than their full presence was necessary on stage. They had to concentrate on the score, sense the point or surface of contact, attend to the audience, keep themselves safe, and compose in the moment. The dancers shared with me that their biggest challenge was to divide their attention as equally as possible among the various tasks, rather than focusing on one at a time.

My fear was the result of my own perfectionism. I became so wrapped up in what could go wrong that I had forgotten the main reason I included the improvisations in the first place. They were not supposed to be perfect. The organization of the set work juxtaposed to the immediacy of the scored Contact dances revealed a significant shift in the dancers' presence on stage. Once they completed the transition from the *performance* of a composition to the *experience* of an improvisation, their entire selves were finally on stage. Their vulnerability was completely unfeigned. Instead of accessing their humanity through awkward steps designed to communicate human frailty, their attempts to create something devoid of awkwardness exposed it for them. When their attention shifted from the fourth wall (in the set work) to the 360 degrees of space around them (in the improvisation), they were paying attention in a way that kept mine. Their precise engagement to every detail drew me in to the dance as an observer.

It was the exposure of their effort that interested me. My next goal was to experience this vulnerability first hand in order to learn more about it.

### The Integration of Cooperation and Conflict

Noting the differences between how the dancers dealt with being controlled or supported in *Evolving Autonomies* began to clarify my own tendencies within relationships. Throughout the next year, I embodied my investigation and began 'trying on' new roles in the context of my Contact relationships.

My first experience was a Contact relationship inside the interplay between function (safety) and expression (performance) in Eric Handman's *Alone in this Together*. Josh Anderson and I danced a contact improvisation on a round table about three feet off the ground. Handman assigned two separate, conflicting scores. The first score required Anderson to fall off the table, while my job was to make sure he stayed on. The second score challenged me to try and jump onto the table and for him to keep me off. Anderson and I took Handman so seriously, that a few refinements to the scores became necessary.

Obviously, Anderson did not want to slam into the floor, but he came pretty close as he placed more and more trust in my ability to catch him. The height of the table gave gravity more time to work, making him quite heavy. Our differing goals also created conflict. As drama ensued, Anderson's falls became more frequent and more dramatic until they began to hurt me. We shared this

with Handman. He agreed that if Anderson took more time between falls, not only would it make the dance safer for me, but it would also give the audience more time to register each fall and prevent the dance from climaxing too soon.

In the second score, Anderson had two advantages in our contest. I fought for my place on the table from the floor three feet below. This made gravity my opponent and his ally. He also has a greater mass than I, making it fairly easy for him to keep me from leaving the ground at all. When Handman asked him to let me onto the table long enough for a Contact dance to arise and develop, I wondered if it would appear authentic, since the odds were so obviously against me. It ended up reading as further manipulation. Anderson sometimes allowed me to come all the way to standing on the table, only to sweep my legs out from under me.

Although we had opposing goals, we still communicated and cooperated, both verbally (between runs of the dance), and kinesthetically (within the dance). This dialogue served both the aesthetics and the safety of the piece. I had previously enjoyed watching this interplay between cooperation and conflict during my IMS™ final project. Experiencing this integration first hand felt like a physical expression and representation of what happens in my own relationships off stage. I realized that, for me, the painful aspects of both physical and emotional conflicts stem from the excess tension they elicit in my body. When I relax my muscles and let go of my physical resistance, the conflict ceases to exist, but I am left feeling passive and disconnected. On the table, I had the physical

experience of asserting myself while remaining flexible and responsive during the moments of perceived rejection.

For my thesis concert, in the Fall of 2007, I created and danced in a scored contact improvisation called *Unsettling the Score* with fellow graduate student, Emily Fifer. She had just finished her first summer of IMS™ and attended the Contact jams regularly. Since she had experience and interest in both perspectives, I decided to revisit the integration of contact improvisation and the LMA material that had been the basis of my final project for IMS™.

We began the process with a thirty-minute improvisation that we videotaped. Our only score was to remain in contact as much as possible, separating and coming back together only in ways that supported the unique dance unfolding in the moment. We also experimented in and around any parts of the LMA system that came into our minds or bodies during the dance.

That very first dance was surprisingly successful. We watched it together and it kept our attention for the entire thirty minutes. We analyzed it through our Laban lenses and began articulating what made it work so well. Specifically, there was a section where Fifer tried to move me and I decided to use Strong Weight Effort to push against her. This means that I used my weight actively to resist her. Due to the harmonious nature of Contact, this type of resistance would usually lead into a lift or one person might melt into the resistance in order to keep the dance flowing. Instead, she pushed harder and I refused to budge. When we watched this tension on video, she thought I was able to stand my



ground simply because I was stronger than she. I disagreed, arguing that I was simply more stubborn. We decided to test our differing theories by reversing roles. When placed in a defensive position, Fifer was just as strong as I. When we both committed to an active use of our weight (Strong Weight Effort), but both had different goals, the contention was suspenseful.

After much practice, we finalized the score for that section of the dance. Fifer stood in the middle of a small pool of light. I used Strong Weight Effort in an attempt to push her out of the light and she did the same to stay in it. If I could not move her, I would try a new angle. Whenever she tired of matching my strength or I was able to shift her, the resulting movement dialogue was recuperation in the form of a cooperative contact improvisation. I then experimented with the opposite Weight Effort by rarifying my weight, touching her as softly as possible. When I made contact with Fifer using Light Weight Effort, she responded exactly to the physical direction of my touch and allowed me to guide her to the next section of the dance.

Similar to *Alone in this Together*, Fifer and I were involved in an interesting balance between struggle and support on stage. In this case, the relationship implications were even clearer and more intentional. We used words like “stubborn”, “defensive” and “determined” to describe our different ways of imposing our will. The shift from Strong to Light Weight Effort reminded us of the old adage “you catch more flies with honey than with molasses”. The act of

making these metaphoric connections informed our performance and illuminated our habits within relationships.

I also realized that Fifer's physical answers to my attempts to control her varied according to the quality of my advances. When she *responded*, she matched my strength using her own solid relationship to the floor. I could feel the yielding moment when she allowed my pressure to travel through her body, sensing its quality. She used that information to determine how, where, and in what direction she would push back. If I approached her more quickly, or in a way that surprised her, she *reacted*. She leaned first, then pushed, but her grounding was already compromised. In these cases I became the truss that held her up; if I moved, she fell. By reacting, she sacrificed her independence.

I began to notice what happened in my own psychology during both reaction and response. While *settling the score* at the Contact jams, I noticed it was easier to identify and attend to the less comfortable parts of my personality. Contact's focus on physics took the emotional charge out of my tendency to control and allowed me to look at it more objectively. In these dances, I felt more *responsible* for myself when I *responded*. I took in more information before and during my physical 'replies'. Attending to sensation allowed a more accurate perception about how much weight I could give, or how far off my own center of gravity I could go, before risk turned to danger. When I reacted, I felt the kind of fatigue that comes from spending too much time in survival mode. A fight-or-

flight approach to the give and take of weight proved to destroy the very 'conversation' that makes Contact so satisfying.

In my relationships outside of the studio, I am beginning to utilize the moment of yielding that I felt in Fifer's responses. If I feel I am being controlled, I usually react because my sense of self is threatened. Now, when I feel attacked or controlled, I take a moment to find my own grounding so that I can respond rather than react. My replies are softer and more specific because I take time to confirm that my physical relationship to the earth is solid and so, ultimately, I have nothing to fear. When the fear is gone, I can *choose* cooperation or a more dynamic, constructive approach to the conflict.

## CHAPTER IV

### *ENTERING NOW*

#### The Whole Dancer

At the heart of my need to control is a paralyzing perfectionism. I understand that perfection is not possible, but it is only during improvisation that I am fully able to let go of the need for it. I sensed a connection between my neurosis and being present in my entirety. What part of me was hiding behind my pursuit of perfection? Since my primary mode of understanding is kinesthetic, I must sense, perceive and act through a process to fully embody it before I can attempt to articulate it. For my thesis concert, I decided to dance in my own work and include an improvisational element in each piece so that I might identify the part of me that was repressed by the inner critic behind my perfectionism.

My priority in all of my thesis work was to approach it as holistically as possible. I placed almost every idea in a lemniscate and examined its opposite. This process kept me out of my comfort zone and broadened my perspective. These investigations of the more dormant parts within me led to a more active engagement of my whole self. My thesis concert was called *Entering Now*. It was a shared concert with fellow graduate student, Shannon Mockli. It was she who

suggested the title. Ironically, the title held important insight into how contact improvisation neutralizes my perfectionism. Throughout the performance run of *Entering Now*, I learned that my need to be perfect disappears only in the present moment.

### *Unsettling the Score*

I chose to work with Emily Fifer because we conversed very fluidly in the language of improvisation. She fell more easily into the role of follower in Contact, while I usually tend to lead. Her variations in timing and phrasing were not always the result of the point of contact, but they never took her attention away from it. She was comfortable with repetition and found her inner 'leader' in those moments. We also managed to stay in contact when we were not physically touching. What I enjoyed the most about dancing with Fifer was the fact that we were both interested in the overall composition of each improvisation. The ease we both felt while dancing together gave me the confidence to attempt the performance of a contact improvisation that was not anchored in choreography.

After we created the aforementioned Strong/Light Weight Effort score, I decided on a more holistic investigation of the LMA system for *Unsettling the Score*. Fifer and I continued our process of practice, observation, analysis, and discussion of our videotaped improvisations. We arrived at a ten-minute score using four different LMA scores (one from each of the categories of Body, Effort,

Shape and Space), a spatial pathway, and musical cues that guided us from one score to the next. The complexity of the score made it difficult to dance without an agenda. *Settling the Score* became almost impossible as we found ourselves discussing Body, Effort, Shape and Space at the Contact jams. A title was born, and we continued to breathe and focus on the point of contact when we danced outside of rehearsal. *Settling the score* allowed us to look beyond the LMA particulars toward the overall composition of the piece.

The distinct differences between the four categories of the LMA system might have made for too many movement motifs had it not been for the through line provided by the Contact vocabulary. We had to change our approach to both the LMA work and contact improvisation if we wanted to allow a dance to emerge.

The most difficult part of the process involved letting go of whether or not I was staying 'true' to the form of contact improvisation and to the definitions of the Laban work. They are very different perspectives and are both extremely important to me. It was difficult to place more emphasis on the piece and the perspective of the audience ahead of the authenticity of the two forms that inspired it, especially since I usually consider process more important than product. I also wanted each form to remain an inspiration rather than become a restrictive limitation.

The goal became to focus on the product and enjoy the process. Letting go of 'correct' approaches to LMA and contact improvisation tempered my

perfectionism. When I stopped controlling the process and began listening to it, I felt more at ease in the present moment.

One of our compositional goals was to identify themes as they emerged during the beginning of the dance that we could revisit, and perhaps even develop further, as the improvisation continued. This required a bit of recall or commitment to the past. Still, it was the present moment that received most of our attention. Fifer and I often had different ideas about what movement to bring back and how to further it. If we were not present with each other, listening and responding to what the other was doing at that moment, our differing agendas took us on separate paths and we lost our connection.

When Fifer and I first began showing the work, I was terrified that something ridiculous would happen and the piece would fall apart before the audience. Yet somehow, every single time, a cohesive dance manifested. Even when the dance felt awkward, the video revealed something interesting.

My fears remained throughout the run of the performance, but my trust in the present moment grew. *Entering Now* proved to be a literal way for me to stay out of the future that I so wished to perfect and the past that I knew was less than perfect.

### Guarding and Guarded

My interest in experiencing, first hand, the shift that I saw in the dancers in *Evolving Autonomies*, inspired the other two works in my thesis concert.

*Guarded* is a duet consisting of both choreography and contact improvisation. In the related solo, *Guarding*, I tested my own definition of Contact (especially the part that referred to “the point(s) or surface(s) between...person and earth...even between person and self”) by allowing Contact dances to affect the creation and performance of a solo work.

I usually take an expressive inroad to the creative process. I make dances about feelings, experiences, and interesting characters. I draw inspiration from other works of art and almost always create based on my emotional responses. The use of scores and analyses proved to be a more linear and cognitive process than I was used to. Taking a more functional approach was another way to move beyond a habit by trying its opposite. In the case of my solo, *Guarding* and *Guarded*, it allowed for a more holistic, integrated process involving a “lively interplay” (Hackney, 1998, 34) between both functional and expressive choices.

I began by videotaping a thirty-minute Contact dance between fellow student, Chris DelPorto and myself. Next, I videotaped each of us, individually, in an improvisation where we tried to re-create a solo version of the Contact dance that had just happened. I then created a small phrase of solo material based on the footage.

In the next jam, I played with the solo material in the context of my Contact dance with DelPorto and videotaped it. Based on that footage, we began the tedious process of watching and rewinding that goes along with trying to steal something that rightfully belongs to the art of improvisation. We captured



several lifts and created transitions between them. I let DelPorto leave early and gave myself the score of dancing from the physical memory of our Contact dance that day and added the task of experimenting with points of Contact between different parts of myself. I taped the improvisation and added pieces of it to my solo material.

This grueling process continued for a month. Adding movement to dances without a clear understanding of its emotional motivation made me feel like a fraud. One of my goals upon entering graduate school was to make a dance inspired by movement (in this case, movement inspired by points and surfaces of contact) rather than emotion. My previous choreography had always served meaning before movement and this process resulted in theatrical works with little locomotion. I wanted to put seemingly arbitrary movement together first, and allow metaphor to make its own entrance through the door of practice. I spent the next two rehearsals performing my solo material, over and over again, while holding the questions, "What is this about for me? What situation or frame of mind does this movement feel like?" I trusted that every movement coming through my body during the improvisations had an emotional, expressive source. I kept repeating it until my life penetrated the movement or the meaning of the movement bubbled to its surface.

Six months before this process, I was in the middle of the most difficult academic semester of the program. I was taking twelve required graduate credits, one additional elective credit, attending two Contact jams per week,

working part time, preparing to re-stage two different pieces of choreography for an upcoming festival, and finishing a piece of my own choreography for an upcoming concert, when my father surprised me by moving to town after three years of little communication. We had a long and troubled history but he was still my best friend, and most definitely the reason I became a dancer. He came into town on Sunday, and I blew off my responsibilities on Tuesday and Thursday night to reconnect over dinner, laughs, and long talks about his newfound sobriety. That Saturday, he died suddenly in a work accident.

Luckily, Spring Break followed his funeral so I had a few days of quiet with my family before re-entering the seemingly impossible semester I had left behind. Still, I came back to the same competitive program that had proven unforgiving of my vulnerabilities throughout the previous two years. The huge list of responsibilities was still there when I returned, and I did not feel comfortable allowing my circumstances to affect the quality of my work.

I kept the soft, overwhelming mess of my grieving private and approached school with a stiff, linear hyper vigilance. This dichotomy emerged in the movement that sprung from my unconscious mind during the recorded solo improvisations. I had to physically repeat, live in, and listen to, the phrases for a while before those feelings and realizations fully surfaced. I believe that if my original intention were to make a dance about my father's death, it would have probably consisted of me sitting in a pile on the floor, emoting a long string of auditory and kinesthetic nonsequiturs. Placing myself into a more left-brained,

technical process distilled that which would have otherwise been too overwhelming to approach creatively.

I continued to allow the feedback loop between the solo and duet to influence my movement choices, and each grew very slowly. I also continued applying the solo work to our Contact dances, allowing scores appropriate to the fledgling duet to emerge. DelPorto shared that he was unsure about performing contact improvisation. He was not interested in attending to the audience because the pleasurable aspects of the form were why he practiced it. He preferred to remain in sensation rather than concern himself with presentation. I decided to work *with* this new information, rather than against it. I created scores that considered his preferences regarding his attention and the audience.

The first score consisted of us kneeling and facing upstage. We improvised using our arms, heads, spines, a few set movements and musical cues to organize the two-minute contact improvisation that opened the piece. With my back to the audience, I felt a greater sense of patience with my partner. I was able to soften my visual focus and drop deeper into the present moment. The adrenaline that usually feeds my fear was drained before we stood up and I could feel the floor before I faced the audience.

The second score served to end the dance. It began downstage right where I brushed DelPorto's eyes closed. I stood in front of him with my arms out to the sides and kept my focus in Direct Space Effort toward downstage right, which had been a focal point throughout. A slower, larger and more careful dance

began. DelPorto kept his eyes closed and relied upon me for direction. I divided my focus between the tasks of leading him, keeping my direct focus, repeatedly returning to my starting position and ensuring that the dance traveled backwards from downstage right to upstage left over the course of two minutes.

Although it was quite a complex score, I was able to manage it all, partly because I was the leader. DelPorto and I had been dancing together at the jam for two years and both agreed that he fell more easily into the follower role and, as I learned with Fifer, my tendency was to lead. Most of the time, we both worked to neutralize these inclinations. For the piece, we both decided that the path of least resistance would be more appropriate for the end of the dance. Even though there were many rules dictating the improvisation, including a clear leader and follower, there were still surprises. Sometimes, I gave him a very specific physical suggestion and his response was very different from the one I had tried to elicit. Letting go of control prevented me from feeling rejected in such moments. Further, my commitment to the present moment allowed his responses to affect my choices. The only way that my perfectionism could pull me into the past was if I judged his responses.

The easiest way for me to suspend judgment and remain in the present moment was to dance Contact without an agenda. This is where the hours we spent *settling the score* supported me in the context of performance. With the burden of the past and future lifted, my attention to the present moment allowed my well-honed reflexes and experience with kinesthetic listening to keep me

safe. Our regular practice of Contact enabled us to use physical laws to our advantage when we found ourselves in danger.

I finished setting my solo after I completed the duet. I made very functional, compositional choices that emphasized each dance's reference to the other. The solo was based on the duet, and the duet on the solo. For instance, *Guarding* began with me, upstage left with my right arm straight out to the side and my left arm holding DelPorto's imaginary head by my side. The music was a loud, dissonant, scrambled sound that faded in over ten seconds. I ended *Guarded* in the same way, with DelPorto's actual head in my left arm to the same sound, using a ten second fade out.

The absence of DelPorto in my performance of *Guarding*, followed by his presence in *Guarded*, allowed me to experience the subject matter of the dances with and without the physical support of a partner. When I moved between the improvisations and set choreography in *Guarded* I was surprised to find that the biggest difference in my approach to each had to do with which parts of me were attending to my past, present and future. The choreography required a simultaneous commitment from my body to physical recall (past) and from my mind to the next move (future). The aspect of me that spent the most time in the present moment was the one that was relating to both DelPorto and the audience. When the Contact dance began, relating became central and I had found another way into the present.

*Entering Now* was beginning to take on a whole new meaning. It described the shift I so enjoyed witnessing in *Evolving Autonomies*. Once inside, I discovered that this transition from choreography to improvisation always included a deep breath. My feet settled into the floor and the back of my body gained volume. I could *see* my partner more deeply when I looked at him because I was searching for information. Timing was internally motivated and communicated through touch rather than the sound of the music.

I listened for these sensations outside of the dance. Eventually, the breath, grounding, and attention to the back of my body became physical inroads to the present moment. I had finally found a way to access the present with only the ground as my Contact partner.

When I started graduate school, one of my main choreographic goals was to make dances with *dance* in them. My expressive inroad had previously resulted in works that were full of character and almost completely devoid of locomotion. Focusing on movement first, and content second, allowed *Guarding* and *Guarded* to become my first two *moving* dances.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Action is the foundational key to all success

Pablo Picasso

What I know is not as important as what I do. In the Age of Information, I will rely on contact improvisation to help me remember this. As dance theory continues to build upon itself, I believe that the need for perspectives that rely on embodiment, such as Contact and IMS™, will increase.

Physical manifestations of my perfectionism are already beginning to show up in my body. When my perfectionism is at its worst, I cannot act for fear of the inevitably imperfect end result. Sometimes the flaws of my past endeavors, which are greatly magnified by my impossible standards, immobilize me. My solar plexus literally binds inward and downward, so tightly that I cannot fully inhale. My tightly held gut does not 'control' anything around me, but instead limits the mobility in the center of my spine causing crippling spasms.

My practice of Contact has already begun to temper my obsession with quality because it requires full focus on the present moment. There is no attention to spare for judgment and I am reminded to loosen my center toward qualitative rather than quantitative goals. I love Picasso's description of 'success'

because, like Contact, it is not about quality control. Rather than worrying about doing it right, I trust that simply doing it will prove beneficial.

The more functional, less emotionally charged, and more physically realistic approach to movement taken by the early Contacters made it easier to address the more dramatic and intense parts of my personality that were not serving me. By simply *doing* Contact, I was able to experiment with new ways of being through contemplative practice and performance before trying them in actual interpersonal relationships. Further, I did not need to sacrifice my expressive aesthetic to utilize Contact in my creative process. The contrast between the aesthetics of contact improvisation and my own movement signature did prove to *enliven* my end products. The marriage of the soft, responsive quality of contact improvisation to my own reactive movement style created a sense of conversation in my work that made it much more satisfying for me to perform.

The presence of Contact in the context of my set choreography allowed the work to continue to evolve, well into the run of the performance. Every evening, the improvisation was slightly different. This allowed the dancers (or me) to shift the dance according to their (my) needs at the moment of the performance.

When Fifer and I performed Contact without the 'support' of pre-planned movement, we feared failure every single night we performed. We dealt with our anxiety by patiently sensing the point or surface of Contact in search of



grounding, information, and solace. Our dynamic interdependence required that both of us remain fully present and committed. The authenticity of each exchange gave the dance breath and kept the work alive.

Since I began dancing almost eleven years ago, I have had the goal of dancing until the age of eighty. However, when I watch most older dancers move, what I usually notice first is their sense of caution. It manifests as a kind of muscular armor, a perpetual 'fight or flight' type of bracing in the muscles of the body. It is as if each year of dancing has cut the surface area of the soles of their feet in half.

Last summer, I had the privilege of watching Nancy Stark Smith move at a jam in Northampton, Massachusetts. She was a young adult in the early 1970s when she first started dancing Contact. Not only does she still dance the form beautifully, but also she has an intimate relationship to the floor and her surroundings, both solid and spacious. She moves with the efficiency of a cat and the curiosity of a child. I was surprised by how supple her body seemed compared to video footage I had seen of her that was taken over thirty years ago. It appeared that her practice had exponentially cultivated, rather than deteriorated, her physical ability over the years. She performed with the wisdom of a mature woman with a rich history and her functional capacity allowed her to communicate that depth with impressive clarity. It was one of the most beautiful integrations of function and expression that I had ever seen. I believe that Stark

Smith will still be dancing when she is eighty years old. My desire to teach Contact stems from that belief.

Since students at the University of Utah have only a limited exposure to contact improvisation during their degree program, I was thrilled to find myself in the role of teacher during the jams. I began to notice other students experiencing positive physical changes. I finally became a part of a dance community beyond the ten students in my graduate class. Most importantly, many of the dancers, myself included, found creative inspiration at the jams. I believe this was due, in part, to the absence of pressure to create. I soon came to believe that contact improvisation was as important an addition to a modern dance curriculum as ballet. As the jam grew and I began to teach more, I was increasingly inspired to illuminate the usefulness of the form within a university context.

The dancing does the teaching, the teacher points to that.

Steve Paxton

Paxton's teaching philosophy has profoundly influenced my own. Throughout the process, I learned that my favorite part of teaching Contact is dancing with students. Sometimes the goal is to gain physical information about their tendencies (physically) so that I might offer them more informed feedback about their dancing. More often, however, I try to remember Patti Moss's description of effective teachers who "give [her] intimations of a vast region to be

explored, a few signposts and maybe a sketched map, but never a guided tour” (Moss, 1977-78, 35). This reminds me to loosen my grip on the role of teacher and dance with the student as a fellow human being, trusting that they will ask for directions should they get lost.

Either way, I am reminded of my tendency to lead within the first minute of almost every dance with a student. While this might seem a convenient proclivity for a teacher, I found it to be the opposite. Agendas made me deaf to my students’ unique skills and masked the lessons I was meant to be learning from them. In the end, it was during my examination of the role of leader that I finally learned to follow.

As I acted on my curiosities, each area of application fed the others. Applying Contact to my choreographic process motivated me to perform it. Watching my students while teaching the form created more questions that I later addressed as a choreographer. While making dances using Contact, I coached dancers toward the aspects of the form that interested me aesthetically and this, in turn, gave me even more subject matter to address while teaching. There were an endless number of such connections and crossovers throughout my research, both between different areas and within each. The “lively interplay” between my subject matter (Contact) and myself ensured that my investment remain holistic.

Moving forward, I intend to share Contact with as many students as possible. I believe that teaching will help me remain invested in my curiosity and

grounded in holistic inquiry. This thesis is my first attempt to integrate the very process-oriented form of contact improvisation into a very product-oriented institution. While bringing this project to fruition, I learned that the best way to advocate for contact improvisation is to continue sharing how its lessons have changed my life.

## APPENDIX

DVD CONTENTS: THREE WORKS FROM *ENTERING NOW*

The DVD contains a video recording of a live performance on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007, of *Guarding* (6 minutes), *Unsettling the Score* (1 minute public warm-up, 10 minute scored contact improvisation) and *Guarded* (14 minutes). The dances were performed in a thesis concert called *Entering Now*, shared by Jess Humphrey and Shannon Mockli. The concert took place in Studio 240 at the Marriott Center for Dance, located on the University of Utah campus. *Guarding* was performed by Jess Humphrey, *Unsettling the Score* by Emily Fifer and Jess Humphrey, and *Guarded* by Chris DelPorto and Jess Humphrey. *Guarding* and *Guarded* were both set to music by Sigur Ros. The music in *Unsettling the Score* is by Erik Ian Walker and Marit Brook-Kothlow.

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