

## BETTINA NEUHAUS

### Instant Composition

Composition is the process of selecting discrete elements and then composing them to create a unity, a unity that lives its own life. Improvisation is the art of composing in the moment. By making clear choices in the moment, a dancer can instantly compose through dance.

The improvising dancer has to coordinate two fundamental dynamics in her dance: her own body in motion and the dynamic environment in which she is dancing.

#### a dynamic body

As a living universe, the body is a hierarchy of many systems in motion. Physical movements, perception, imagination, thoughts, dreams, and fantasy are all activities of motion. The possible interrelationships and combinations of these systems are infinite. Therefore, the dancer is at all times in motion and dynamic. In composing, the questions are how to direct that multiplicity of motion, what to combine with what, and what, indeed, to create.

#### a dynamic universe

In each moment, we are also inseparably connected to time, space, and physical forces like gravity. These elements define our situation, and therefore our dance always includes a relationship to our environment. While we cannot change these elements themselves, we can decide how we relate to them. This is a critical compositional choice. These external elements are also in constant flux: time passes, the sound varies, the light changes, the space is shifted by other dancers... The external situation, as well as the dancer, is always dynamic.

#### instant composition

While improvising, a dancer has to listen to and read the concrete situation as well as her own body sensation. Here lies the challenge: to coordinate sensing and making sense with actively composing. Instant composition demands that you perceive, choose, and act, almost simultaneously; that you sense what you are creating, send it out, let it go, and stand by it. It means trusting your inspiration and following it—entering each movement, each image, with a wholehearted interest and full commitment, with all your history, knowledge, and understanding.

#### predetermined compositional choices

The process of composing, however, begins before the moment of performance. Even in the case of “completely open” improvisations, we enter the stage with compositional choices already made. These may be conscious or unconscious; our own, or those that are given by the situation. These predetermined compositional choices include: who we will be dancing with, the space we will be dancing in, the state of our body

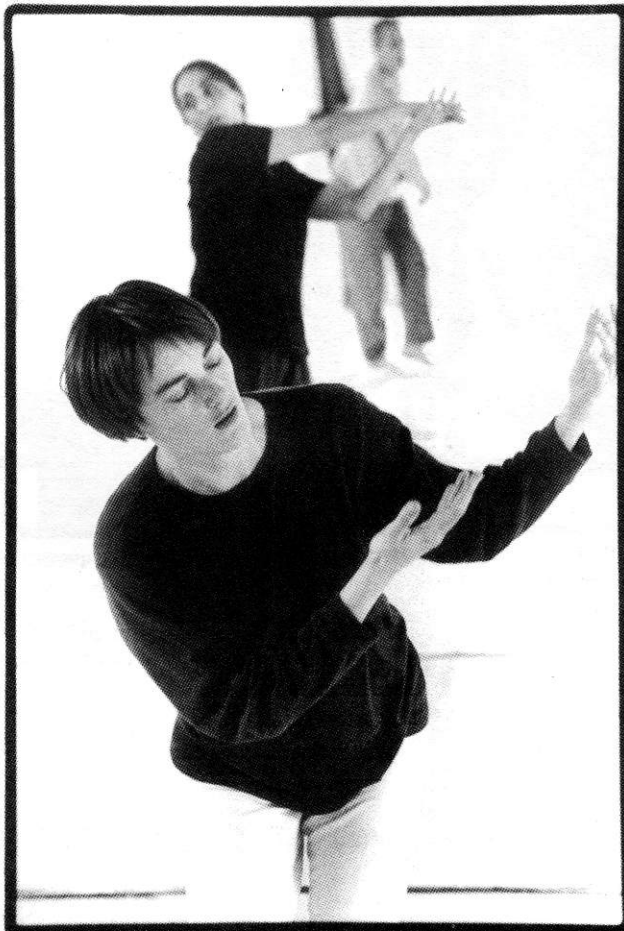
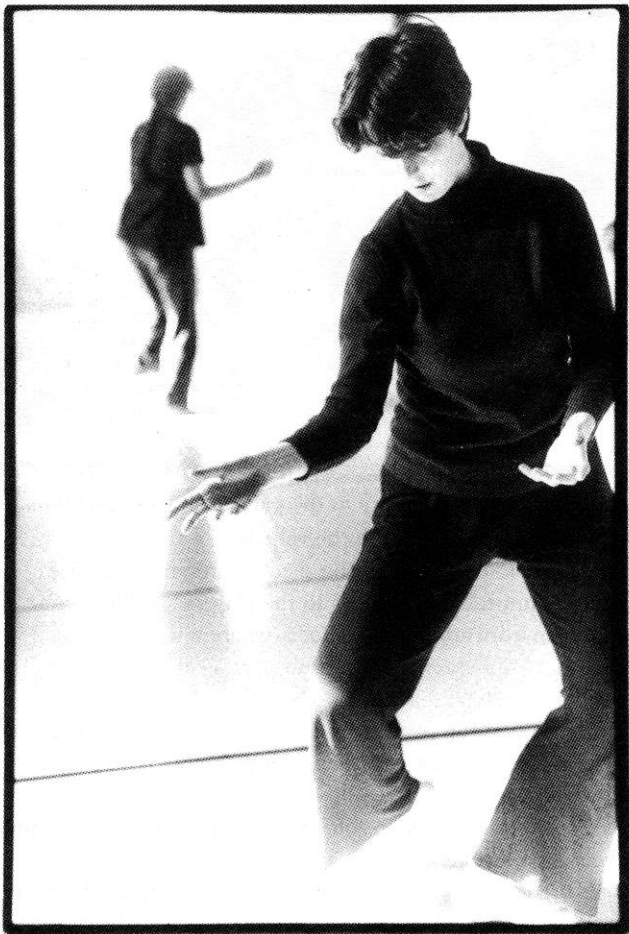


photo: Raymond Mollenjer

Marisa Grande's score. [front to back] Pascale Gille, Marisa Grande, Pablo Troccoli



Bettina Neuhaus's score. [front to back] Bettina Neuhaus, Marisa Grande

and mind. All these combine to give a specific direction and energy to a piece. They are the contextual, environmental, structural "score" of the piece.

### score

Acknowledging this, there may then be the desire to focus the performance toward a specific question, theme, or atmosphere. From that moment on, we are actively creating a score. Now, even more choices are conceptualized, defining the way in which all the elements work toward a whole. A score is a skeleton, a map, a container for a piece. The spectrum of possible scores is infinite and ranges from the entirely open improvised piece to choreography. The more detailed the score, the more it moves toward choreography, defining the character of the piece and reducing the dancer's interpretation of it.

### a living score

We limit the artistic potential of a piece if we think of a score as rigid, static, and restrictive. Even in precisely defined choreography, a score needs to be read and absorbed by the dancers in order to bring it to life. Each dancer will imagine and express a score uniquely. And as a score is transformed by different body-minds on stage, the individual interpretations of it combine to create the piece. A score is a shared starting point, a common base from which individual imaginations can reveal their diversity.

Working with a score provokes the following questions:

- How can we enter into the specificity of a score?
- How can we translate the score into our own imagination and body?
- How can we, while dancing, learn from the score and assimilate its essence?

By resolving these questions, we can travel through the score into new territory, as each time we perform it, we can make fresh choices with clarity of perception and harmony of action.

### the creative body-mind

Instant composition requires us to let go of conclusions and fixed ideas and be led by curiosity. With a creative mind, we can allow each movement its individual expression. We can allow the moment to live irrespective of, yet linked to, our feelings of excitement, insecurity, comfort, and discomfort. Then perhaps we can enter the unknown and unfamiliar—working at all times to serve the spirit of the growing piece, supported by a creative mind, an available body, and the score.

