



Shared Material with Nik Haffner

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SPEAKERS

Nik Haffner, Gill Clarke, Audience

(Introduction: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021 over spare guitar chords)

Welcome to Independent Dance. This talk is part of our digital library, which houses an extensive collection of material to read, watch and listen to, drawn from ID's programme over the past decades. This talk is part of the Crossing Borders series, which ran between 2008 and 2019 and featured dance artists in conversation with people from other fields, including philosophers, scientists, geographers, and architects. The entire library is free to access at independentdance.co.uk/library.

This is a field recording of variable quality with a live audience at Siobhan Davies Studios.

(2009 audio file begins)

Nik Haffner 00:42

is always the question how do you start a presentation like this and I always leave it up to other people to start out I'll show to two beginnings of presentations to stop. The last year or so they are hot and I'm going to play guitar three chord effect tomorrow for a long time if you think I'm nervous you're right I am I watched you I show you the second one right away you might know that one

Film playing 03:05

ladies and gentlemen Steve Ballmer. This

Nik Haffner

so cookie backwards. This is a guy who worked so many years already for Microsoft. And so you know this, maybe let's say one possible American style of of a talk towards the employees. In terms of you know the topic tonight in terms of knowledge distribution or sharing knowledge. Archives do a great job in kind of providing us with material like this. I found this through an

archive in Barcelona. It's called the (unintelligible) archive ... and they have one department of their archive that they call Media Archaeology. So they go back in In a television advertisement, films made for health and education in past decades. There's some shocking footage from soldier like army recruitment in America, which is also, you know, a little bit similar shocking, I think like that one that we just saw. And the first one too, is more like, you know, this was something actually I found then also there, at the moment working on a piece where we looked very much at how do you begin when you come on stage. And these are two examples. I was. I was pointed to other another filmmaker, while collaborating with an Armenian video artist. His name is Howard Simonian. And I worked with him in early 2000-something. And during our process of working, he comes actually, he's a sculptor, so he learned making sculptures and only at a certain point, when he was 26, he decided, no more clay, no more stone, I'm going to work with this sculpture with his own body and the video camera. And I guess the video camera is kind of where we met, and the end the physical, using the body. And so I talked, I told him kind of my dilemma of yes, because he said, Oh, isn't there any dance film yet that you could show me? I said, yes, there's plenty. But so I showed him some. And then he said, Ah, okay. He said, I show you something that, I think you could say it's a dance film. And it's, it's an Armenian filmmaker who's been doing work in the 60s 50s already. I think his name Peleshyan, Artavazd Peleshyan, he lives in Paris. I think he's still alive. I met him then in Geneva, maybe five years ago. So I'm showing you one of his films. I show you one section from it. Not too long. But there Yeah, that's the name you find actually other of his films on youtube if you're interested. (Sounds of film playing) This was made in the 60s, I think early 60s. And the interesting thing in the films he made in that decade, or in that period, none of the footage that we saw now he shot himself, he actually spent days probably months in an in the big National Film Archive in Moscow and looked through the material and found what we just saw, you know, this stuff from hospitals from the street workers, and edited it together, back then with white gloves, scissors and film, which was still a lot of work. And also in terms of like, at that point, you know, this is pre MTV and the fast editing. So this edit him back then was quite advanced for for a viewing and this aspect of using other people's material that'll come back in in other parts of the lecture, because it's something I like very much and I'm never afraid of using other people's material and and love when people take material from me in terms of what happens to it when you pass it on, and change it over. And maybe it comes back at a certain point, I will show a very short section of another film by him again, found footage in the film archive in the film archive in Moscow. And it might remind you of another film actually of the deaths but this is called Inhabitants also from the 60s there's just a minute of the beginning of that film. So I don't know you some of you might know the film. There's a film called I think simply called birds by David Bentley into that's it, if Hinton who I think also used found footage from the BBC or something. Maybe you noticed he also the same footage was used in the mirrored way like the beginning with the wings of the swan. So it's material copy turned around so that it's used inward. Nowadays, no problem, you know, two clicks away back then a lot, a lot of work to do. This is kind of the way you work. So in this collaboration with with her hood, from Armenia, the video artist, that was kind of one of the fields where we met where we could agree like I am maybe this is a dance film, you know, what we just saw. I've worked for many years, with William Forsythe and the ballet of Frankfurt, and that I'm not sure how far people know that this has been probably also for me a big influence in terms of you know, sharing a studio and really exchanging all day. So whatever dance is brought

into the company, whether this was a bad Background In film, in sewing clothes, in music and singing in, you name it, it would be kind of welcomed in terms of like, maybe you know, we could all learn from that person and what that person brings into the studio. To be not all glorious, because probably, you know, there's little doubt about the work of Forsythe, there was a, there was, for me a little bit of disappointment, but it shows kind of also the market that you work in as a dancer, or as a choreographer, there was a piece made in 1994, called Eidos: Telos. And it was really made by the entire company, they were, I think, three or four people kind of credited as sound artists, so not only one composer. So the poster in 94 was lovely, because it was actually just a blurry image of hardly anything. It said, Eidos: Telos a piece by - and then there was a list of probably, almost 40 names. Somewhere in the middle in alphabetical order, William Forsythe. And it was I thought, a really strong statement to say, yes, we make this together. And we show this together. The sad side, I found that about a year later, we took this piece to Paris. And there was, again, a poster out there. And it said, I just tell us a piece by William Forsythe. And, you know, we were told that, yeah, in Paris, in terms of marketing, it would be tricky to have a poster that would have a list of 40 names. Which, you know, fair enough. But my question may be till then state, you know, but there must be a way that if a piece is made by forty people that it can also say so, and be credited like this, and make a big jump, because probably you you know quite a bit about Forsythe's work, there is something out quite new, I was involved in making the CD ROM improvisation technologies. But there's now a new tool out that you can go online synchronous objects, I just showed two little things that might be interest of interest. And so this is kind of just, you know, we don't have internet here. So I'm, I'm improvising without, this is the starting page. And you have all these chapters to look at. And we'll just look today at what's called movement density. That was done by people working at the University of Ohio, in geography. And then one of the tools, there's four tools on there where you can actually use them the CounterPoint. Interesting, I think, in this project, in terms of collaboration, that in this project, people from many, many disciplines came together. This was partly because this was the structure of the University in Ohio, where the project was a shared project between the media department and the dance department. But they invited many other departments in like the architecture department, or the geography department. And there's discussion, you know, and how far this is really useful, for example, for the geographers who took some of this material back into their field. But for me almost more interesting and how far the the material that are the strategy that geographers use, and just apply on a piece of choreography, how we can rethink in terms of, of choreography, this is online available. So if you note down just the site, you can go and actually play and use quite some time on it. So this is one of the tools. And if improvisation technologies looked more at the movement organisation within one body, and the improvisation tasks you can use within how they were developed within the company. This looks both at movement within the body. So you see these fingers, but also in terms of bodies in space, or objects in space. I'll just play a little bit, kind of inviting you to play maybe at home if you are interested. So you can add a few more of these objects. And yeah, this is the address if you want to have a look. There's plenty of examples and also the GL If you want, which we can look at now. Thank you. Quick jump again. So I worked with the Frankfurt Ballet until 2000. And already during the time was starting with other projects, and a lot of them also film or media related. And I show you a very short example of, of a collaboration that was done by a group. He was five artists, the name of our group was commerce, and maybe

interesting commerce, I didn't know that the word is older than money, the invention of money. So the very, so before there was money, it was actually the idea of exchanging goods. But even before that, it was, first of all, the idea of changing thoughts, changing ideas, exchanging and being an exchange. So we thought that's maybe a good name for us in terms of, yes, we're part of a market as a as a company or as a group. But also we wanted we wanted to think of our group is really a platform to exchange. You might know some people there's actually two British dance artists in the group, Deborah Jones, who worked with Jonathan Burrows and Rosemary Butcher and Joanna O'Keeffe worked with Arc Dance Company and Michel Animateurs in Brussels for a long time this was basically the beginning of our group because we met to make a production at the Stuck club Stuck festival in Belgium and because we liked working together we decided to continue so this is from 99. Let's Deborah Jones on the left this is Thomas McManus he's another dancer or ex-dancer from Ballet Frankfurt and Joanna O'Keeffe (sounds of video playing) think starting to get started see me basically the piece was shown in two parts. So, what you see now was the stage live show and afterwards in the foyer you would see this black and white footage it's exactly the same night the same piece but of course gives you a completely different angle and different atmosphere with the news (unintelligible audience question) yes Yeah, but actually, it wasn't edited like, you know, now it's kind of a mix between the two. But in the in the foyer, when you went out, we just rewound the tape, played it, put the BeeGees with it. And all the BeeGees songs talk about, I see you, I can't see you I love you what's up? Second? No good that you asked because there's later a moment in the piece where it becomes completely dark. And only the TV's on. And you see, you're kind of what seems like a pre recorded scene. But actually, the scene also is, tape is kind of life filled with, you know how each camera has, has a night shot function, but it's very weak. But we had a very good technician there in Belgium, he said, if you take as a cell that you put in front of your theodolites, the primal green and red on top of each other, it almost creates black. So the only light that gets through is exactly that light that the video camera. Exactly the night shots, little, little purple. So we had the full stage lit brightly for the camera. But for the people, it was completely dark. And actually the there was a track installed. So the best scene, intimate corridor there and could be filmed. So this little scene was only for that the television was on stage just for this interval, the piece was called pause. And that was kind of the pause in the piece, which was this kind of film break. And then you would go out into a completely different setting, there's a wooden floor, there was a piano there in Leuven. And, and there was a kind of little cinema installed that we then played the we played the film of the evening. In collaborations, probably you know what comes up? There's were five people there. And there's sometimes moments where you need to make a decision. And the question is, so how do you do it? Do you go five people great if to say yes, and to say no, it's decided. And we decided to not do that. But to kind of convince each other until we're convinced of one of the solutions. So this means that collaborating takes time. And it's probably not something that you know you're born for, it's really something that I believe you can also train yourself in terms of like, trying out different ways of how to collaborate. But in ways of taking almost the luxury of taking the time to really take everyone's opinion, and still not clear to go back and try it again, for us was quite enjoyable. So kind of, you know, after this first project, also, in a way, as a circle of friends, we decided to stay together and continue work. We're working super irregular. So in the last 10 years, we've done three and a half projects only. So we're way not full time. But we all have other projects, or by now other families. So this is

kind of ongoing. So we had a little reunion in January here in London, and just met and had a cup of tea. So there's a piece I made last year for a British dancer Anna Williams, maybe you know of her or her she she danced a lot with Ricochet. Thank you. So glad you're here. Yeah. And so I worked with Anna, it was a solo for Anna and she was giving a lecture a little bit like I'm doing now. But she would also get up and demonstrate what I'm not doing. And I also collaborated with a friend from school time, so I went to school with him. And because I moved to Berlin. Recently I met Henry Winkler, he's a he's by now a filmmaker. So I knew that he had become a filmmaker, but we hadn't seen in 15 years. So we met we started talking about film, dance about dancers. And we decided to collaborate on this project, where we were looking at were in movies, or dance scenes that are somehow special. So we didn't look at musical films like Ginger Rogers or anything like that, we watched films where actually the fact that the dancing comes in the middle of the plot is quite a surprise and you know the only scene kind of in the beginning or end or middle i show you tonight some of these scenes that we found and actually used also then in in the piece the second by Michael Powell called Peeping Tom. (Film playing: I said God never did. Great work all the time. Great boy.) Okay, so the interesting thing is that there's a connection of this film with the City of London because it was it was press premiered that was shown in front of the press in 1960, when it was just finished. And it wasn't released because it was considered to be too shocking, impossible to let it out into the cinemas. So the film kind of disappeared. And Michael Powell had been a very known and successful filmmaker, the Red Shoes, Hofmann's Tales, jolly films, probably you could say, In this film, what happens in about two minutes is that the guy behind the camera is killing the woman. And he's filming while he's killing women. And so, you know, the subject matters quite. It's quite serious. The film kind of was not released back then, was kind of rereleased in the 70s. And mostly because in America some film freaks kind of went for it and showed it at festivals, it kind of got a rerelease Europe wide, and by now has quite a cult status. Because also, again, if you look at you know, the the role of a of a victim in this case, the women that get murdered in that film, also the the murderer is kind of portrayed as a victim because he's in this in this has psychological problems and quite advanced for the time for micropiles almost the end of his career for many years. He didn't do any more films. The dancer that you just saw is why she was there to settle as well. I found out to actually Anna Williams, she knew her also I had no idea she which is also in the red shoes. Right? Exactly. He was also in the film directions. The film's place a lot which I liked was perspective of who's looking at who. So you know, that's the camera angle. And we even look through the camera of the guy filming. In our research of looking for scenes in in film and film history, there was often men looking at women dancing, and especially in this era, it wasn't so easy to find. Women looking at men dancing, but we don't want strangely enough in Mexico. So here we go. You so this, this one was actually from 57. Please excuse because actually this this clip, for whatever reason didn't make it into the, into the solo that I talked about before. I don't know the director's name the film's called cn woo churches, and was done by a director who in Mexico appellees quite known, he did between 1950 and 1970 160 films or something, he did a huge amount of films, kind of, you know, two weeks to shoot a film like this, many of them on a kind of light note. Interesting in the scene, I find that you know, the editing, I don't know whether it's due to 1957 or due to Mexico that the reaction of the women being surprised is quite late. Oh, I hope we can do this. Yeah, I think we can do this. We have to be a little quick to not use too much time for this. Do you all have a

pen? Yeah. Then take a paper. Just share them around. If you don't have a pandas pencil, see, you can grab one. Everyone has a paper? Yeah. Okay, let's go row by row. So there's I explained the system, you take Do you have a paper, the paper, we share and just write it sent a short sentence or any kind of word, something that comes to your mind spontaneously, just write that sentence should be short, a short sentence, maybe five, six words, or maybe only one single word, just anything that comes to your mind could just pass the paper to anybody tried to get one from somewhere else. But you haven't paid for that whatever you read, then now you can react react to it in the most spontaneous way. It can be in a kind of an extension so that you continue it or just an association, what comes to mind, maybe some kind of anything, no censorship, just now comes the little origami part can you follow so that the first line is not difficult anymore, but only your last one that you added? Keep going in your own time so that they do not last one last right on this last one. So this is your last sentence for you change and open the paper just what I suggest is everyone has one but maybe we can put out a little gallery. So on the way out you can read others. But basically what we just did you know, this is a little story or little poem or little nonsense, whatever you want to call it. But it was made kind of not by one person. And probably if if we would have said everyone right 123 foot like seven eight lines by yourself would have been different probably to do it but also what comes out of it. So this as an example as a very simplified example of you know, how you how you can use kind of passing on material and using it and passing on passing it on again. And I'm working here at the lab and centre at the moment and brought actually one student from Berlin and then to my clincher hello to me. And pretty much with this system there is there's two German artists, dance artists, Tom Plissken and Katelyn diverge. They organise her workshops that kind of based on the system, but in a bit more complex and timewise also longer frame and to me I just did a workshop with them recently in the spring, and maybe you can quickly to my sum up kind of how you use material and how you pass it on.

Nik Haffner 40:00

and spring, and it was a blend of two kinds of three days. And it was quite complex the structure was sharing material. And it started with you know, one story, it was a story. It's the methodology that is becoming a spider. It's not so important to keep Encino and Katelyn from us, they gave us the first one was to rewrite the stone, we did it, and then we have to our neighbour so Bucha. And they gave us a second task, which was to write the missing points of the witness. And we did it and it was good to see again, it was going on like this with different tasks, for example, draw something, right, next or medical assignment. And then at the end all the empty notebooks, you can fill up the interior of each of us. And it was not the materials of one person, because these are cars. And so starting with you change that. So that our day was like the task writing. And then we had to do also as the years cards and insurance. Let's work on what was good. But I can't remember anymore. So we could use a studio. So at the end, there was a mat kind of, and so we could arrange ourselves in this space. And at the end in the second floor, because we tried to move it out and move it and assimilation should take the book. Ideas, make some flight. So as the sun moves into place, one gave a lecture on pictures.

Nik Haffner

Good, no, because this is really I think, and I because I know Katelyn Thomas for a long time. And they've done and kind of refined the structure in in their workshop, that it can be quite interesting for any artists, to all of a sudden be confronted with a notebook. It's not yours, it's not your neighbours. It's something that that came up in a week's work maybe of sharing a book. But this whatever book you have, you end up this one for today. I'll try the next step, which would be transferring it into, into an act of moving or act of speaking. And again, even that would then be passed on in later stage. I quickly say their website address, and also for anyone who is not when I was writing, if you want me to send you all of the links of the films and the companies, you just need to leave your email address, and I can send you the whole things that no misspelling on the website, or we could have on the website very good. So this cuttin and Thomas website, and that's how they called us because they're performing artists, called artist twin, one word, artist, twin dot d. And there is they have actually there was a group called islands performance group from from America, who just kind of decided last year to not continue, they kind of took this idea even a step further. And I'm sure other groups have done this in their last performance. And there is a very nice documentation website of that last project also. They they had a system of inviting audience worldwide through the internet, to kind of post comments and post little things like this. And they would try. I'm not quite sure how exactly they put it in. But apparently every night, or each show, they kind of tried to include whatever had arrived until that day, six o'clock or something. So again, they opened up this not only amongst the circle of friends or artists, but really ask the community. There is an old piece by Forced Entertainment called Paradise. It was an empty city, on the web. And you could go into any street and write a text into a house. And later, of course, you could also take a stroll through the city and just read what people had written into each house. It's still on their website if you want to check that.

(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)

This has been a talk from Independent Dance's Digital Library. Find more from the archives at independentdance.co.uk/library