



On Falling with Emilyn Claid and Simon Ellis (2012)

(lightly edited automated transcript from otter.ai)

SPEAKERS

Frank Bock, Emilyn Claid, Simon Ellis, Audience

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

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

(2012 audio file begins)

Frank Bock 00:00

Good evening, everyone. Welcome to this evening's Crossing Borders talk. I'm very pleased to have Emilyn and Simon here to talk this evening, they are going to, those of you who don't know, they're also going to introduce themselves and explain. Because I don't know if everyone knows it's gonna be a very interesting conversation. So I'm looking forward to it. Over to you.

Simon Ellis 00:30

So, my name is Simon Ellis and I'm a dancer, and a choreographer. I've been, I'm not from the UK, I'm a New Zealander. But I did a lot of my training and a lot of my professional life was in Australia, particularly in Melbourne. I'm, at the moment really well, for some time now, I've been thinking about and practising kind of dealing with states of improvisation or thinking about the way the body experiences things whilst working in improvising different modes and different ways of improvising. And that certainly has crossed over into how I might go about making work and also the kind of work I ended up making as well. So maybe that's enough for now. I should add that I also, I also work at Roehampton University, so I have a, an alter ego as an academic.

Emilyn Claid 01:28

He doesn't like admitting that bit.

Simon Ellis 01:31

I was telling Emilyn before that I go into the studio every morning as a way of de scaling myself from my academic life.

Emilyn Claid 01:43

Yeah, shall I introduce myself. Hello, I'm Emilyn Claid. And I'm a choreographer, and an academic. That means I make things in practice. And then I reflect on them and write about them. So I live in the here and now and there. And then I try to remember which hat I've got on different times. And I have a I have a title, which is called professor of choreography. I know it's weird isn't it? At University College Falmouth, which used to be Dartington. So that's probably what you need to know.

Simon Ellis 02:32

I'm a little bit envious of the way Emilyn can say those things. So directly, or unapologetically. So tonight, this is a this kind of idea or thinking and reflecting on falling. And it's a project I have, it's okay to say this that's been close to Emilyn for some time, for years. On the other hand, it's not a project that's been close to me for nearly as long. And so Emilyn and I bumped into each other a little bit. And finding a way to spark each other's curiosity and interest in this falling in the way that tonight that we've thought about tonight is to find a way it feels a little bit risky, I have to say is to find a way to generate a dialogue between us as a kind of as a collapse as a fall into some kind of relationship. And we're not we're not quite sure how that's going to happen. And so it's a you might say, it's an experiment for us as well, to deal with what, what what's going on, as we're talking and responding to the talking. We do have some things a little bit planned, but not very much. And also, when we do there are things that particularly Emilyn wants to sort of get to, and then it'll be time for us to open that out with with you with you all towards the end.

Emilyn Claid 04:10

Okay, that sounds right. Yeah, sounds great. And I think what we're just there, yes, it's that kind of tension between actually having an awful lot of wants to talk about. And at the same time trying to keep the sense of uncertainty between us of not knowing exactly, so it's not going to be an interview where Simon interviews me at the same time. I hope you are going to say something. So it's going to allow me to get to this work. But on the other hand, it might not. We might just stay right here. This gap.

Simon Ellis 04:45

We did have we were we met earlier today. And we were having that moment of things happening as we were talking and then wanting to silence them so that we didn't get an end or we don't want to use that up or sort of end up being in places that were really interesting, but the work that we're not with you. So we kept on quieting each other.

Emilyn Claid 05:08

But what I'm noticing already is that we're actually not dialoguing with each other. We're dialoguing with you. So there's another third, we're in three, three ways.

Simon Ellis 05:17

You did complicate it for us. Thanks. So why falling?

Emilyn Claid 05:29

I'm going to feel I want to answer that by being quite personal about my own journey. And it's funny, that term falling because it's like grabbing hold of a word. And suddenly, it makes sense of everything. But actually, I was already dealing with it a long time before with just suddenly, ah, yes, of course, that's what's been happening. It's that term. So Oh, yeah, I'm going to talk to you. Okay, so the first obvious one is the dance story. The falling for me is from being a classical dancer, where falling is only is very apparent, very apparent, but only in its absence. So you're always dealing with it on a daily basis, but never doing it. And that fall from ballet through to what would have been in the 1970s, moving into the whole new dance movement, or somatic movement, moving into improvisation moving into the whole battleship that hold down shift, that's the kind of most straightforward, falling, but in that falling, there was also a lot of other feelings going on, personally, around my family, around class, around education, around the gender, all sorts of issues of moving out of what was expected and what was fixed and what was going upwards. And what was supposed to be to a kind of falling chaos falling, falling, not knowing where it's going to land where it's going to land. So that started it

Simon Ellis 07:13

It's the big falls aren't they?

Emilyn Claid 07:15

They're big falls, where they fall. And then that all came out, I think, in that book in 2006, the yes, no, maybe which now I realised is very much about Yes, no, and then maybe which is this kind of horizontal networking of different queering events and improvisation events. So that was that was that but then five years ago, I started this training, I started what I thought was just going to be a little bit of professional training. And ended up being a five year training in Gestalt psychology psychotherapy, where a whole new idea about falling appeared but I don't think I'd like to come to that a bit later. So that's the sort of basic. Does that land with you?

Simon Ellis 08:13

I sort of alluded to that, it feels large. It feels like how do you how do you manage say as an artist and as a person, things that the we're on which the scale of which are almost too big to handle? And in particularly you know, when you talk about you say I think falling into chaos or collapsing into chaos, is that was the way you wrote it?

Emilyn Claid 08:42

I think, so what is the word? What is falling? And actually, can I go here and do that. I've got these various bits up here. Now there's some of them might come up and might make sense. And we'll, if they do they do and, but the term falling, however, we look at it. It's not the fall, it's not fallen. And it's not before you fall, it is the act of falling, which for me, is is a movement of

chaos. Because you just don't you've left somewhere and you don't know where you're going to be and somehow you're going downwards.

Simon Ellis 09:22

So it's always from like, it's always downwards?

Emilyn Claid 09:25

falling is well, we talked a lot it I mean, we talk a lot in dance about falling upwards.

Simon Ellis 09:32

Yeah.

Emilyn Claid 09:38

Which reminds me of of, you know, performers like Russell Maliphant who seem to fall upwards when they go upside down. Anyway, that's another story.

Simon Ellis 09:47

The thing that strikes me. I just want to say this idea of things coming to nought, of things falling through. That something is fallen through I partly I think it's because of being a being that feeling as an artist of being, of juggling a lot of things. And once the the idea that when something is over, that has come to nothing, there's a sort of sense of loss or of failure maybe. And then on the other hand, the, the kind of warmth of not having to worry about it anymore. You know, that sort of sort of juggling those two, the binary of that experience,

Emilyn Claid 10:36

Well failure and falling are very connected. The etymology is coming from the German failing. So they're very, very connected. If you go online or anywhere, there's just a massive amount of what different meanings falling is about.

Simon Ellis 11:22

Falling faces, his face fell

Emilyn Claid 11:44

So there's this whole personal story about falling? Then, of course, my academic hat goes on, and I start to think about, okay, let's let's get into this term falling, what it means and where it's coming from.

Simon Ellis 11:58

Is that quite recent? Like that? That part of it.

Emilyn Claid 12:01

Yes. Yes. So this project in terms of falling is recent. So since the training, existential Gestalt, so let's come to that. We're sort of dealing with a sort of wider field aren't we? At the moment.

Simon Ellis 12:30

I'm really aware, I'm really aware in this by talk to you now, the, the strangeness of the experience, when of being watched, being in dialogue, is my, my desire to turn to you and to speak to you directly is extremely strong. And we sort of to take care of you in that way. And so I'm, I'm I'm definitely this kind of experience of being a little bit caught between that. Yeah, yeah. So I'm paying attention to you Emily.

Emilyn Claid 13:06

And I'm also very aware of a kind of silence at the moment. And that's a falling for me. I'm falling at the moment, there is definitely, and I want to fill it up really quickly and pass on to the next one and tell you more about it. And you probably would like to know more shall we move on to talk about something? Sure. Because I will get when when I started to really look at the falling again, sort of academically or reflecting on it. I was finding all sorts of different perspectives or lenses to look at falling. And I wanted to start tonight with just simply following the risk of falling, the fact that you can die if you fall, the fact that actually you could injure yourself really badly. You can faint, you can hit you and bruise your there's a risk. There's a real physical risk of falling. It's serious business. It's serious. Yeah. Yeah. It's ethically unsound to recommend it. So and that's kind of basis. That is for human bodies. That's pretty serious. And along with that is also other real physical acts, gravitational acts of ageing. Things that actually happen to bodies.

Simon Ellis 14:37

And there's the one that I guess I'd get fascinated by the smallness of things, the rise and fall I do quite a lot of running and the rise and fall of the running which which every sort of impact in the ground as soon as I get older, that seems to become larger or more clear, that sort of feeling of the rigidity of that. Those sort of micro falls or multiple, little numerous fall that happen, but then even in walking that lovely rise and fall of the centre of the body, the centre of the mass

Emilyn Claid 15:13

That lovely Laurie Anderson song, you know?

Simon Ellis 15:16

I don't know it.

Emilyn Claid 15:19

You don't know it? I'll play it later. You know it? Yes. Yeah. That's how you can be walking and falling at the same time. It's a great song. Yeah, so that so it kind of that's the basis isn't falling. And then I then there's another whole sort of lens to look at falling through. And that's what I would call a out of the body, metaphorical lens. So people talk about falling when they refer to the decline of the West, or post colonial I know what they call it, the fall of the empire, economic decline. Sort of a real sort of metaphorical use of it. Again, falling into chaos, but it's outside of our bodies.

Simon Ellis 16:11

Yes. And I'm reminded of the film, with Bruno Ganz playing the role of Adolf Hitler, which was called Downfall, The Ending. Yes, yes, yes. Story performance.

Emilyn Claid 16:23

Yeah. And another one, which another kind of whole category is what I'm calling falling as promise, which is most well described for me through performance artists who construct falling in their performances in order to allow us to face a fear of falling in a sense, but as a way to consider life differently. So we're being asked to, we're being asked to look at the positive possibilities of falling. Because in the falling is the possibility of change. If you can go to the, this is not remember, we're leaving the body here with its risk and its possible death, we're looking at what happens, for instance, for us, when you go to release work, or you go to body mind centering, when you're asked to lie on the floor, when you're asked to fall to the floor and be there, release and let go and be on the floor for a long time. It's not because that's the end. It's because in the being there, there is a possibility of change, change of pattern, change of body change of recovery, change, a new way of living. So there's a lot of performance and we know that from like, the early days of contact in the 1970s when falling was like all this what people did. Go for it. And it what's interesting, I think, is that that was an post war, there was tremendous falling in all sorts of directions of letting go of recognising that actually that's an upward going up towards the power of the individual, the enlightenment all of that was, not going to work, you know, 1000s and 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of people are dying, have died for nothing for no reason. You know, there's a whole rethinking of what that was. So after the war, we get the whole stuff going on with the beginning of contact, and we get this fantastic guy in 1970s performance artist called Bas Jan Ader. Have you heard of him? Bas Jan Ader. So he was a performance artist who in the end I just say did die. He his final performance was to take a very very small boat and crossed the Atlantic in it and he was never found. I'd love to show you just a two or three of these pieces though. So his his piece called Fall 1. [A video is played at this point]

Simon Ellis 19:01

I'm really reminded of one thing that strikes me is our sort of preoccupation with seeing those kinds of activities slowed down to see more detail. But also, I mentioned it was a performance artists operating around the same time a little bit later in the 70s called Tehching Hsieh who famously, did a series of year long performances. But his first acts as a performance artist was to jump out of a building, to fall out of a building and he broke his legs, but we might talk about it later. But I think there's something about the point of the kind of commitment I don't mean I mean, that's very obvious example of commitment. But I think there's something about the point at which things might change and the kind of total commitment that might be that you might apply to in order to make things different to make things change from the way they are.

Emilyn Claid 21:23

[A video is played at this point]

Simon Ellis 21:48

The inevitability, it's the inevitability to you.

Emilyn Claid 21:51

But there is something about this fall's being you're both affected and affected by seeing the ball but I also can see how constructed they are. They're constructed to allow me to feel that he's safe he knows what he's doing this one is show this one first. [A video is played at this point] I mean, there's so many contemporary ones. Just obviously, meltdown. This is another familiar, wonderful piece that Rosemary Lee's been doing with her company of men, which again promises something in that fall promises us a new way of looking at for me, your way of living. And also, I find it very poignant that it's all men doing that there's something also about the promise there for me what we're saying about You smile?

Simon Ellis 25:10

I was wondering what kind of promises

Audience 25:14

What do you think?

Simon Ellis 25:20

No when I saw it, I was hard not to think of people dying. And in terms of men, this seems like it's wondering about vulnerability or fragility or being placed in, and yet at the same time, but that's the paradox is also that the meltdown itself requires an extraordinary amount of strength and, and patience. And so there's, you know, there's that paradox of such a cliché, kind of strength and fragility, or like the picture is fragile that the goings on inside or not or something like that so you're just asking So Rosemary Lee works with a group of men. In this case, this was the last Dance Umbrella 2011 And it's a sustained fall. They kind of operate quite sort of, quite kind of looks slightly religious. In fact, the way they're sort of

Emilyn Claid 26:39

There's 30 men and they will walk into a space together and lift their arms up and then over the next 15 minutes, they very slowly fall

Simon Ellis 26:47

and a bell marks the time, that's it.

Emilyn Claid 26:52

And then they get up and they walk out.

Simon Ellis 26:57

So, I think it's once a minute. So, Rosie got permission to use it from an artist who was making this, doing this thing in the 80s, early 80s. Yeah. And so it has this other history as well.

Emilyn Claid 28:13

I just wanted to add, also this fabulous architect called Daniel Libeskind, you've probably heard of him and his amazing falling buildings also offer the possibility of things not having to be

always upright and fixed and direct, and they have it as a sort of fluidity about it while also being safe. There's another whole set of lenses, another lens to look look at falling through, and that's what I would call this sort of aesthetic or philosophical falling, which is for me all around the idea of beauty, you know, conventionally was always the upward line, and everything went up. And that's how beauty was, was expressed. So when we fall out of that, and also, you know, the whole idea of God, and all of that is always upward, it's all up there. So once you start to let go of that, you know, what happens we're refiguring and rethinking around what what is beauty? And what happened to God? And if a lot of falling actually for me a lot of that falling says there isn't, there isn't a god but God exists because of that. I mean, it's not doesn't exist, but it's in reaction to that, that a lot of a falling happens. So again, it's like the ballet the falling is there because it's in its absence. Yes, God is there in its absence in his, his absence. Anyway, I'm getting confused. Now. I don't want to go into this too deeply. Am I making any sense? But then the opposite. There's the whole thing of existential, there's nothingness that comes at the bottom of life.

Simon Ellis 30:05

That comes at the bottom of falling, right? After falling, you fall, you're left with nothing left with nothing.

Emilyn Claid 30:16

And how are you doing?

Simon Ellis 30:20

This is difficult.

Emilyn Claid 30:21

Is it difficult? What's difficult.

Simon Ellis 30:23

It's difficult because I want to intervene. I want to make sure things are okay. Want to take care of the room, I want to take care of you, to a certain extent. And so I'm resisting or fighting, I have a little kind of internal fight to going on in terms of wanting to do that and wanting to add and wanting to, and trying to make sure that things are okay. And I don't know if that has anything to do with falling at all. But it's difficult.

Emilyn Claid 31:01

And what would happen if you just stopped doing that?

Simon Ellis 31:05

I think things would be all right. I'd like to tell a story. Maybe this is a good time to tell a story? Once a week, I cross Waterloo Bridge. And it's at night, but early at night, it's quite busy, a lot of traffic going one way. And whenever I get to the particular point in the bridge, so before I've met the river, but the river is very much coming to my focus, my my desire to jump into the river, into the River Thames, which all makes me just think of, doesn't matter. Coming from New Zealand,

the idea of the Thames is something very it's, it's bigger, larger than life. My sense of it is, you know, it's a foreign thing. But I'm confronted by this, the reality of it each Monday, and this desire to test to find out what it would be like to question whether I should take my bag off, before I do this, should I take my shoes off? Would that increase my chances of survival, and to wonder what it's like and to recognise where the shallow parts in the river are, and where the where the deeper waters are. And there's something it's predictable each week. This, for me, this desire to want to find out.

Emilyn Claid 32:42

And when we talked about this earlier today, in my mind is oh, he wants to kill himself. In Simon's mind, it's no, it's how is he going to challenge himself to survive? So, for me, if I was going to jump in, I wouldn't know I was not going to survive, I would know that I would die. I might not be committing suicide. But for you, you have a completely different sense of hope actually, that's what's happening in here, isn't it? You're holding on to, it's all going to be okay, if you can hold it on and make it work in a certain kind of way. And for me, I'm floundering around, can I go, Whoa, I'm not sure I'm going to survive this. So it's a very different kind of,

Simon Ellis 33:25

and the presence in your presence is particularly important in, in my mind, in that terrible space between us. And the difference between us. And maybe this is something we can talk about when we get to this project or a little more. And maybe we should keep

Emilyn Claid 33:45

and maybe we're getting there keep getting there. Very quickly falling in dance. Okay, I know a few of them. You can probably help me here. But I've got to say, okay, ballet falling exists in its absence. Graham techniques, anybody done Graham technique? I remember learning how to fall they were incredibly stylised, structured falls, we didn't actually fall but you were going to the ground but you kind of held yourself firmly off the ground at the same time.

Simon Ellis 34:15

It's like a marker of falling or sort of paying sort of ever so slightly just sort of glancing at a fall but not really.

Emilyn Claid 34:23

Then there's a Humphrey, Doris Humphrey falling, which was again, you fell but you fell to recover. You went down to come up so again, you never really fell because that would have been too dangerous. I don't know enough about I'm just sketching here sketching you will probably know a lot more than I do. Then we get contacted improvisation you know, like we really did fall. But they're obviously in in partnership as well. So, so there's lots, I guess what I want to say is that all of these different dance forms, styles, choreographies, techniques all have a different way of looking at falling lots of physical you know physical theatre falling, which is all about deep meaning even if the meaning was nothing and it was about nothingness. This is about lack of hope no god here we go slammed down let's go. still deeply meaningful, like however you then there's flying low and improviser things that are going on right now with David

Zambrano's work and flying low which is definitely about constantly falling and I imagine there's a lot of other different embodied tools, skills, there's all the body mind centering somatic work, which is all again about finding ways for Alexander technique again, finding ways to fall so I just wanted to bring that in. That's another whole area

Simon Ellis 35:48

It's really present within dance. Like you don't have to look very far to go, Oh, yeah, it's pretty heavy with us.

Emilyn Claid 35:56

A lot of falling right there. Yeah. But the big shift now from like, when I was a dancer was actually it's built into the training now. I think that dancers learn to fall when you learn the skills of falling. That's pretty amazing, isn't it? So it's very much part of that

Simon Ellis 36:24

Do you want to talk about this project?

Emilyn Claid 36:34

I do yeah.

Simon Ellis 36:53

So do we really learn how to fall? Or are we learning how to land?

Emilyn Claid 36:57

Oh, interesting. What do you think? Yes it's that the aesthetic of silence? Isn't it of beauty? Again, we're back in this, how can we fall quietly silkily and smoothly?

Emilyn Claid 37:28

I think it's more about learning to follow more than once or three times you find a more efficient ways of going home. And that, like I was thinking, why do we always think of falling as a negative or not? Falling is something that is my channel goes on behind you. And it's liberating. And while you fall, and then you find ways of empowerment yeah of maybe you stay there for a while, literally, physically, or maybe mentally or emotionally. But I think I was saying before that this idea about falling is falling, thinking too much in terms of emotionally, it could fall apart. The big sort of falls that we have in life, and then those things, force us to change something and I think this can be true also in movement, with the fall. I mean, it's like it changes it can change. That can be applied to politically to these types of falls or the economic fall. Well, if you fell, everything fell down. So it's going to go back up, and it's going to go back up. I hear what you're saying. And are you? Are you a dancer? See, I think that we have a very different thinking around, I am completely with you. And I think that's why we have such as we have the potential to change the world with this thinking. I think not everybody thinks like you do. Like people who don't know about the power of falling to the ground and the recovery of that and what how your body can deal with that actually are very afraid of falling. And economic falling is one of the worst people seem to be afraid of for us, you know, I mean, I've spent some time in China last

year before last, and everywhere I went it was 'the West is in decline, oh, the West is in decline, China's rising, China's rising.' And I kind of thought about and I thought thank God You know, thank God, we're in decline, because what's come out of that decline in terms of the artwork, post modernism, the way we is so exciting, you know, the whole networking of performance and the way, just the way, way, of everything that we're doing everything that's happening here is, everything's happening in this building is for me a positive result of falling. But not everybody thinks that.

Emilyn Claid 41:17

So coming out of the training with the Gestalt, one thing that's very powerful for me is understanding how my sense of self that I know my sense of self in relation to you, that I am with you. And that's how I know I exist in the sense that my sense of self, your sense of self, our inner co created, we're in an inter subjective relationship. So there's some. So so I've been doing a lot of reading with sociologists, and philosophers who look at this idea of face to face is where I want to begin with this is that when we're face to face with each other, if I'm really looking at you, I can't separate what is subject from objects. I am totally aware of my looking at you. I didn't know that I'm feeling a lot. And I don't know what you're feeling. And yet I'm imagining what you're feeling. And we're in a completely what I call a co created intersubjective relationship. What happens then, if we're in that intimate, like the two of us here, and we're in kind of an intimate relationship? We are, we've been doing it all evening, for a moment, we just leave them there for a moment. What happens if one of us is no longer there? What happens if one of us falls?

Simon Ellis 42:55

What happens if one of us is no longer there?

Emilyn Claid 42:58

What happens if one of us falls? If as I believe, I am completely connected to Simon here. And we're going to, I'm going to like to just, we're just try something? Okay. So what happens for you, Simon? If I'm here and I'm absolutely with you, and yeah, this is our life, this is how we, what happens for you if I do this?

Simon Ellis 43:48

So, do you want me to answer? Well, I want to reach out and stop you falling.

Emilyn Claid 43:59

What makes you want to do that? What happens for you?

Simon Ellis 44:05

I, it's a little bit overwhelming. I find that kind of bizarre, I have to say. It's like you well, it's certainly when you when you start to drop. It's a little bit like you just you start to disappear. And so I become aware of this, that feeling of wanting to prop you up. But I don't know what that has to do with me. In the sense I don't know how that might relate to how I understand myself. But it's quite, it's quite intense. Surprisingly intense.

Emilyn Claid 44:48

And for me, what's happening is that I'm focusing on dropping my jaw, releasing my neck, letting my eyes go, going into my 62 year old body. I'm just doing that you, the task

Simon Ellis 45:00

Yeah, yeah.

Emilyn Claid 45:03

So, but this is really this is really interesting, because, for me, this is really interesting. So then what happens if I go a bit further, you know, when I done this the other way when I've asked like a colleague to do this slow falling for me, I can move from feeling completely isolated. If this person is going from wanting to bring this person back up to feeling terrible shame, as this person loss of dignity, it's this person's kind of in this place, when on his knees, I can have I'm, it's quite shocking what I can feel. And I can have images as well I can be with the prisoners in Afghanistan and Iraq, I can be with Yeah, I can be in a religious place where the washing of the feet hasn't been brought up as a, you know, Protestant church being and all sorts of things will come to me. And that's just my role, you know, so that the person who's doing the falling can also be either physically involved with just the task of it, or can also be in that relationship of what does it feel like to be at someone's knees? So what interests me in this whole sense of falling in my own work, my own writing, is that intimate face to face? Where we all want to be where we want, because it saves me I need you up here. Because it makes me feel better. I don't want to see you fall.

Simon Ellis 46:34

As you're talking, I'm thinking that because in this small situation, I felt like I became your audience that in a very private performance, if you like, and yet there was this larger audience here. And but I it was a very, so this, I don't know what I'm asking you but I wonder how excluded you might feel from the particular intimacy of this small performance. But the kind of the performance within this other thing that's going on at the moment, is in how to again, it's this looking after? Yeah, that's terribly embarrassing.

Emilyn Claid 47:18

There's a couple of very funny very powerful philosophers, one is Martin Buber and the other is Emmanuel Levinas. For both talk about face to face, and also Ben, what it is to be in relationship with each other sense of self and relation.

Simon Ellis 47:43

So this is Martin Buber. And it's from a work called elements of the inter human Buber's philosophy, talked about I thou a lot I you. Anyway, he says this. Let us now imagine two men whose life was dominated by appearance, sitting and talking together. Call them Peter and Paul. Two little Dicky birds. Let us let us list the different configurations which are involved. First, there is Peter as he wishes to appear to Paul and Paul as he wishes to appear to Peter. Then there is Peter as he really appears to Paul, that is Paul's image of Peter, which in general does not in the least coincide with what Peter wished Paul to see. And similarly, there is the reverse

situation. Further, there is Peter as he appears to himself and Paul as he appears to himself. Lastly, there are the bodily Peter and the bodily Paul to living beings and six ghostly appearances which mingle in many ways in the conversation between the two. And then he asks, where is there room for any genuine interhuman life?

Emilyn Claid 49:07

I'd said in the crossover for me between as a psychotherapist and a choreographer because I'm coming from a dance place where I believe that falling into the void and falling is an important place with because this is what I experienced of falling in order to change my life change. I also know as a psychotherapist, the importance of making a safe enough place for clients to be able to fall and to face that space in themselves. So the choreography and the psychotherapy come together, for me, and through this whole process of falling and I'm finding that very, very interesting, fruitful, very fruitful to really be with someone while they're falling, to experience that myself through someone falling and yet towards that be there for them

Simon Ellis 50:22

And do the lines, do the lines, when you're you talked about them as if they're somehow imbricated, or somehow sort of folded in on each other though, the you as choreographer, the you as psychotherapist, and do you feel like the that it goes the other way, in the sense that? Well, how does it reveal itself in the choreography, in the process of making?

Emilyn Claid 50:46

Well I mean, the Gestalt and the existential Gestalt, the whole philosophy of that has totally shifted, how I make work, how I teach how I am with all my colleagues really, very much affected their work.

Simon Ellis 51:07

Can you say how?

Emilyn Claid 51:11

trusting much more to the relation ship with people in the space? Rather than having any kind of fixed idea of what I'm supposed to be doing?

Simon Ellis 51:22

Yes. Like, now.

Emilyn Claid 51:25

Yeah, sort of recognising actually, that actually, we're going to make this thing together. Yeah. That doesn't mean I don't have skills to bring Yes, and history to bring, but so does the other person or the other people. So it's becomes a much more of a shared thing.

Simon Ellis 51:48

It brings to mind things about responsibility. And what we're responsible for, I'm thinking in, in choreography, or in the process of what it is that we do as dancers, and I just wonder about how

you have shifted or how or what has shifted of anything and how it shifted in terms of your how do you feel? What's changed in terms of your understanding of responsibility? And maybe that's got to do with leading processes? Or maybe it's stepping back. But I wonder how you understand the idea of responsibility. Now, given this change, you're talking about?

Emilyn Claid 52:29

I've lost you.

Simon Ellis 52:32

It was a pretty shit question actually. I guess, do you feel Do you feel you have different responsibilities now, because of this change? You've talked about this change in terms of the training you've done and Gestalt, and in terms of the responsibilities you have as a practitioner? Has that changed? I

Emilyn Claid 52:51

I don't think it changes responsibility or in terms of responding, response ability. And I know my role. I mean, as a psychotherapist, I'm not the client. I know. I'm the psychotherapist, as a choreographer. I know I'm the choreographer. Yeah. Right. So it doesn't change that. It changes how that whole. It changes the process. So it changes the process. Yeah. Yeah. How we doing? How are you doing? Yeah. So there's an idea for making so this is an ongoing project. And it's already had various forms of seminars and choreographies. I, I'm co editing of additional performance research called on falling. And all the different proposals coming in people are writing now. So that's all going to happen. And that's also falling into three categories, the writing's falling into three categories. One is the physical performance, all about performance, but one that's takes physical risk as a beginning one that takes metaphor as a starting point and one that takes falling as promise as a starting point. Okay, so that's going on. hoping we're hoping to work with win lab next year to look at some curated event, which might be two or three days of all kinds of different physical workshops that look at all kinds of different kinds of falling. So historically, as well, historically, as well be really great to have some sessions on on Martha Graham on falling. Just to kind of get physical sense of what all those different kinds of feelings are about. Then, where, where what I'm hoping where I'm hoping to go with this is to find out that a kind of group of core researchers probably working in Oh, yeah, very absolutely basic to this is there's a core sort of philosophy or aim to the whole project that actually is that it's about facing the fear of falling, facing looking at falling as the core for change. So that underlies the whole project. So what I was hoping in the end to get to, or the beginning of would be is the five core researchers who hold that belief themselves. So most likely to be people coming from the dance world, to work within very different communities in the world, to introduce that possibility, that, that there is a source of change, and in falling, and to create something, to make something and then after that, we'll be bringing all of those events back somewhere, to be shown in some way. And then a book out of that. So you know, we're the kind of holding that core philosophy, which I hope when we get to believing that it's really essential to life is going through that void coming out. And then creating work out of that. And this is where we met this is and this when I met Simon, the beginning of this talking about the projects last summer, in the summer. And now I have to say this. But when I talked to Simon and talked to Carol brown

about this project, I was in the middle of writing this piece of writing around the slow falling and my reaction to it. And at that moment, that day, I was given the diagnosis that Nigel was going to die. And everything shifted in this project I was no longer able to write, it was happening. And it was seriously, I was exposed. And every stage of that seven weeks after that, it was real life happening, of watching this slow fall seems really slow. Was it fast? Was it slow? I don't know, time just stopped completely really. So and it's only knowing that this talk was happening that I began to be able to re approach this project. Sorry, Simon, I interrupted you.

Simon Ellis 57:49

I just don't know if this is a good time I read things that I am sceptical about. And maybe sceptical about this project as well is the way in which the sort of the discipline of performance studies has the ability to I'm sceptical and also a little bit seduced by it as well. But it has the capacity to take words and to reconfigure them or reframe them in particular ways. And certainly the one that comes to mind very simply as the Institute of failure. It's a website, you if you just look up the Institute of failure, if you're desperate, it's really fascinating. And it's it's really kind of liberating as well to think of these words, to think of words that have particular contexts or that have particular histories and then to have them if you like stolen or reframed as something else. And I remember writing a talk to Emilyn about the idea of stealing a word from its historical context, in terms of this word falling. And the thing that I guess I worry about is the kind of the game of it, the way in which we can, in sort of academic terms, just play, just play with words. And as I say, I'm as I want to say it again, I'm also a little bit seduced by that as well. I kind of liked that game, but I guess I worry about why we might do that. I guess there's a question and the question is, so what? Like why would you do this and who do you think it's for? This project that you're talking about?

Emilyn Claid 1:00:01

Well, I thought I'd kind of just sort of said that is that actually there's as there for me, there's a possibility of life change under this accepting of falling. And if that can reach people, there is the possibility of, of a whole power new shifts happening. So this is not about an academic exercise for me, anything but. And in fact, it drives me mad that I have to write papers about this. Maybe that's not enough, maybe it's not. But it seems to me there is the potential of this not just being something academic. I was wonder about falling as an ongoing process, we fall asleep every day, before maybe into sort of situations, which takes longer time, or the period that we fall during our whole life. So it's about learning how to deal with that maybe? and not rejecting it t's not about meddling in the way that we experience it, and maybe changing it over time. That's right. But again, come back to I think this is a knowledge that we have, I think dancers have this knowledge. It's not the world doesn't have this knowledge about back what you're just saying, people don't recognise that they're falling. All the time, they're fighting falling, most people are fighting falling it's okay to fall, it's part of who we are, it's in our nature. Something that you cannot avoid. It's just interesting that a lot of people like to do it. And it's okay to fall. However, when you're born there's things you do, your mother does, like holding you and making sure you're not falling or damaging anything. When the child is falling the mother is like oh no. So first reaction, yes, is explicit, very natural. They just cry, you know, parents and society, it's very

interesting that we are taught from the very beginning not to fall. So it is very easy to just explore and go against them and to slap yourself.

Simon Ellis 1:02:40

It's naughty. Did you say?

Emilyn Claid 1:02:41

I think it is a very interesting concept to go against what everyone expects you to do. Not to fall as dancers will just be out there. Knowing on itself, never thought about falling and also fell and broke my foot. Yeah, I learnt how to laugh. Because it's about it's so many different stages of falling, physical, emotional etc Can I come back to what you said right at the beginning about babies and mothers or carers? There's that that relational practice that I'm talking about is beginning way back then way, way, way back way back then, you know, and our fear of falling? Which where does it begin? does it begin from the baby? Or does it begin from? You know, so this is, yes, the baby can be dropped, and that can hurt. We're in a different category. Let's say that doesn't happen. Let's say the baby is just beginning to learn to sit up. It's just sitting back really straight. And it's just just about here. And then it goes on mother's? Oh, no. And he comes rushing over and stuffs little cushions around it to make sure that doesn't happen again. Right. So what's happened then? What is the baby felt from just the sound of the mother's voice being frightened? It that falling is bad. So we're in so the relational is a relational practice right from the beginning. So quite often they fall and they're fine, but they start crying anyway.

Emilyn Claid 1:04:24

Yes, yes.

Audience 1:04:43

Falling can be bad because you can hurt yourself the possibilities of what you're doing. For example, we spoke about and God and what about Satan? Hell is always down there, isn't it? Heaven is always up there. I mean, I think it's the two thing for me. It's that tension. Sorry, Simon, it's that falling, it can hurt. And it's a life change is a source of life change. So it's both those things have to work together I think from Yes and what about gravity? You know we are fighting gravity, to stand is resistance. Yes. Attempt to stand up.

Simon Ellis 1:05:44

Constant resistance, constant resistance.

Audience 1:05:49

Gravitational time, gravity. When you came in, I had Brian Cox up does he does anybody see Wonder of the Universe? You know? I mean, I mean, romantic is he has he makes it all? You know, there is that? It is the fact that the star implodes, it falls into its own gravity, that the universe is created, the stars emerge, we are 99% carbon or something, that carbon is released into the universe when the star collapses. When it implodes. It goes into itself. I love all that. Actually. He says, Everything is in my hand here. It's all it's been it's come from out there. There's that lovely sense that actually, especially when I read some of the stuff around

existential nothingness, and that there is nothing, there is nothing I can say, well hold on a moment. Actually. I'm connected. I'm connected to all of you. And I'm connected out there. And that is something. Sorry, I've gone off. I'm missing. I think one link the network, the falling the ideas about it, because the abilities in it or the metaphors, everything. But how do you translate it? Like if you say it's also choreography? You translate all these fantastic interests? Does it change your physical practice? Do you practice falling? Or what do you do really, physically? it's changed, I have very bad arthritis in one of my ankles. So actually, even bending this ankle is very, very painful. So and I used to really fight it, kind of, because I knew the falling would be so painful, unbelievably pain because I would fall have to fall, I'd have to bend that ankle to fall. I mean, I can't really fall without bending it. So I've changed I now go into it on every step. So I go right into the pain each time each time I walk. So I'm not nearly so frightened now about about falling. So that's on it like on a personal level. Choreography depends on who I mean. There's loads, I've just made two pieces about falling. But I don't want to go into that now. I'd be more interested in how you work. On the system, I think that maybe falling is letting go? Letting go absolutely. Falling is connected to fear. But it's not all one thing. We're not fully different things as human beings. So there's not only this force to see the action falling, but on the other hand, we are so many different things. So somehow this balances out that you can recover. You can find different ways of going from here to there. So there's not only one dimension.

Simon Ellis 1:11:15

Yeah, there's something I guess that maybe I sort of hinted at it when I sort of was thinking about responsibility. But there's something that I'm, you know, that I'm curious about personally, which is about the kind of ways in which we intervene, and the things that are going on in our lives, and that, you know, the, the way you've talked about it, and the know, the knowledge of needing to intervene, in this case, but, and I always kind of, there's a, there's kind of questions for me about autonomy, I guess, and about the way in which I might, the way in which I'm involved in constructing something, or stepping back from that construction as well. And one of the things I, one of the things that I really one of the things that I find that someone like Deborah Hay talks about, which is the idea of not letting your creativity get in the way of what's what's being done, so she, she sort of undermines the idea of willfulness or intervention in terms of terms of choreographic kind of work, some things, you know, bordering on relating to what you're what you're talking about here.

Audience 1:12:32

Earlier, something you're saying? You're saying the unexpected, and how, as an emotional thing that you follow, when something happens to you that you didn't expect to happen to that change.

1:12:52

Someone leaves your life, your focus

Audience 1:12:56

will change or even the spontaneity of the follow up question, you're not expecting him to return earlier. But that is protected calls that place of quality, which is letting go and very safe and kind

of expected to fall. You can only reflect on you've just felt that resume as well. We started Sorry, there was a question there. I missed it. It sounds like you're you're summing up beautifully. Some of the things have been said as well. So I'm curious what you're thinking. I just I'm really intrigued by that idea. The that spontaneity, I know you're talking about folding fluid, and it's good quality as theoretically it is, then that significance all happens. I want to call and I'm saying here against immigration. So it's really interesting. Because I do think that yes, long goes precisely to exhaust yourself against the tension between the two, isn't it as physically dangerous, and potentially life changing?

Simon Ellis 1:14:28

Yeah.

Audience 1:14:31

I'm thinking combat that kind of nonsense. I was surprised before but also that sense of kind of have the ability to maybe practice for which doesn't have so much surprised that there's this sense of maybe the whole engagement with a falling in relation to a four which is kind of something and it brought to my mind a sense of the surprise since this podcast, that you directed me to a falling where this, This idea that parts of your body don't know yet your body but other parts do. And so there might be a sense that, I don't know, something that kind of makes it more threatening. Going down.

Simon Ellis 1:15:16

Maybe, maybe I could just briefly tell you this, because I think it's, it's a sort of lovely story, but it's in physics. And it's a podcast called Radio lab. And it's, as an aside, the way they deal with sound, and the way in which they sort of manipulate sound and the construction of these silly little scientific kind of discussions is really, it's really beautifully done that that's an aside, but they, they talk about there's a particular one was called What a Slinky Knows, and there are no the slink the Slinky, slinky devices. And the story is that if you hold a slinky up and let it go, so it's fully stretched, and then you let it go, the bottom of the slinky, doesn't start moving until the top collides with, if you like, and they talk about I did write that. This is what they say the reason the bottom just floats there is that it hasn't gotten the memo yet. And or, in other words, the bottom doesn't know that the top is free, the way and then he says that word 'know' is throwing me off, they talk about the idea that an object might know something, and that when you this, this kind of passage of information is coiling down. And it sort of seems to defy how we understand how we understand falling in the sense of physics, but they talk about it in lots of different circumstances. But the thing that's really the poetics of it, I really like and physicists talk about the idea of locality that is that where we're only aware of information immediately around us. And the example they give us if the sun were to suddenly implode and disappear, we would have eight minutes and 20 seconds before this event affected us and there's so there's this gap between the thing happening and our reception of it, and they they talk about this really, it's really a very simple way of time delay between information around us and our capacity to receive it and normally that time delay is tiny, tiny, tiny, but there's something I really love about the gap. And certainly as an improviser, you know, we we talk about gaps quite a lot. And the

idea that we have this sense of not knowing and how we might prolong that sense of not knowing something that Emily and I tried this evening

Emily Claid 1:17:58

which might has anybody been to see the Art of Change exhibition at the Hayward about the Chinese oh you have to go - I'm not going to tell you then there's an amazing piece on falling which is about about that gap just held in that gap it's really worth going to see I mean what happens to fall in the body when it's the kind of expectation that we managed to stop whether physically or emotionally especially when can you

Simon Ellis 1:18:53

go here and what happens when Yeah, when when a fall is withheld in the body so there's a sort of there's a tension between what's what's happening and then the kind of the the holding back from Yeah, so yeah, so that there's the falling is kind of feel like I'm translating the falling is somehow even though you've withheld the fall, there's some kind of sense of the full being still remaining in the body, even though you know, you don't fall Yes.

Emily Claid 1:19:28

Like a sense of vertigo. No.

Emily Claid 1:19:34

kind of idea or some sort of making space for things I mean, it sets up the rest of your business says attention.

Simon Ellis 1:19:55

Yeah, so I mean, I don't know how else to say it, but sort of arrested movement and the kind of 10 issue that arises in the body

Emily Claid 1:20:01

reminds me of breathing, actually, and how most of the time we never breathe out, I never breathe out. Because, yeah, I stay in this case, I rest, I rest the slowing down and stopping and the breath out. Because that will take me to a place of still. And then you might get really bored and everything will go wrong. So I need to keep going, keep up fun, I gotta keep going. It's up here. And I often I often think that illness, a lot of illness is based on the fact that people live separate. There's nothing wrong with stress. I don't think there's anything wrong with stress at all. I think the problem is with stress, it's quite often you stop breathing out. And it's the not breathing out that causes illness.

Simon Ellis 1:20:46

Maybe we have time,

Emily Claid 1:20:47

for one, and breathing out as a for a small fall is a scary one.

Simon Ellis 1:20:53

So one more, maybe something is quite interesting

1:20:58

that we're speaking about falling and falling and falling as a noun. I wasn't thinking those thoughts were expanding, I think. So there's a different quality of farming that knows where it's going to end. And in farming that is inexhaustible, or you don't see.

Emilyn Claid 1:21:21

Too often it's bottomless.

1:21:24

And I keep thinking of recent the economic for people speaking about austerity measures.

Emilyn Claid 1:21:38

On steps willing to

1:21:42

accept this state of falling as, as a bottom, that's it that that is the landing,

Emilyn Claid 1:21:49

stage performing except

1:21:50

without, and then tweak. And I just think it's quite interesting that the normal thing about falling as an adult, I'm thinking also of it starting in an empty place, and how that gives a particular flavour to it, it's speaking about this, towards the floor, to find ways of thinking it's just before

Simon Ellis 1:22:20

and I think there's something about the kind of when you talk about use the language of fear as well, because what you're talking about is kind of unknown stuff, that we're there's a there's the idea of freefall that we don't know where it might end, and yet, we're still using the language of trying to prevent or trying to resist or trying to somehow curb or slow down or retard that kind of fall into into an endlessness, which is I mean, I mean, the poetics the poetics of fun, I understand that but also the reality is, you know, incredibly important in terms of what's going on in Europe for sure.

Emilyn Claid 1:23:03

scan it was this kind of how it will enhance the trick versus the intended deliberate form. And that's what I figured out about this kind of why artists work is is it's he's actually going to deliver he knows he's kind of formatting folds in a way that is completely I think, beyond his control, you know, so he's allowed on the accident to happen to risk the danger. Yeah. And he's allowing us to see that so and he's allowing us to see that so that we are actually being able to

experience because it's relational well being able to experience that with him which changes our potential our our way of looking at falling which I think is what comes back to what this is about.

Simon Ellis 1:23:47

Should we go with Laurie

Emilyn Claid 1:23:48

should we finish with this

Video Playing 1:23:49

yes I want to do was looking for you and I couldn't find you I wanted you and I was looking for you but I couldn't find you and I'm thanking. You're walking and you don't always realise it But your own spine with each step, you fall forward slightly and then catch yourself from falling, over and over you're falling and then catching yourself from falling and this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time.

Simon Ellis 1:26:08

and thanks for also for sitting through experiment as well. And also hopefully there's some things there that are provocative too or somehow a value to you in the work you're doing. So thank you so much.

[Applause]

(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)

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