



# Choreo-reading: between knowledge and life with Efrosini Protopapa and Susanne Foellmer

*(automated transcript)*

## **SPEAKERS**

Efrosini Protopapa, Susanne Foellmer, Heni Hale

*(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 2018 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](http://independentdance.co.uk/library).

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

*(2018 audio file begins)*

## **Heni Hale**

Welcome to this evening's Crossing Borders talk, I'm Heni Hale, co-director of Independent Dance with Gitta and we've curated this season under the umbrella theme of making change happen. So, looking at what's happened in the past, and how we imagine the future but thinking about change in all sorts of ways as a choreographic term, or as a political term or self-motivational term. So, it's quite varied, in where we've gone so far. And tonight, we'll be talking again. So, I'm going to introduce you to Efrosini and Susanne who will be leading us through this evening. Thank you very much.

## **Efrosini Protopapa**

Thank you for the invitation. I'm going to say that what we're doing so that we can understand this spatial format as well. So, Susanne and I will try out an experiment, which is partly game, partly conversation. And we'll be moving around this table. And working with these decks of cards. There's various stuff with the cards, we're going to go through them in random order. So, we don't really know how the sequence of our conversation unfold. We're going to do this for 40 minutes. So, we're going to put on a timer. And when 40 minutes are over, it's over. And you're very welcome to come closer to the table so that you can see what's on the cards you can move around and take a break on the benches come back. And we will sort of do the same while we're doing the conversation. Yeah, just to say this is the first time we're doing this. So, it's also an opportunity for us to test the crazy idea. Yeah, we hope that you will stay with us. And maybe for the purposes of the sound recording, I should say that there is stuff that isn't necessarily about talking. Yeah, so Susanne will just say a bit about where this came from.

## **Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, actually, there was a conference in April at Royal Holloway by Society for Dance Research entitled Dance in the Age of Forgetfulness. And Efrosini was doing a keynote, I would say a lecture performance, with maybe more emphasis on the performance than on the lecture and I was supposed to do the response. And we both figured out if we tried to figure out ways you respond to your own work, and we came up with this notion of choreo-reading, instead of choreography, which is the writing of movement, so choreo-reading, rather as a mode of reflecting work, reflecting doing, reflecting modes of presentation, reflecting the work. So, I won't say more about this, but just to give you an idea about how we came about this and what we are trying to do.

## **Efrosini Protopapa**

Also some of the topics that will be emerging are sort of related to such ideas and remembering and forgetting and reading, writing and partnering in a kind of shared reading.

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Okay, outside the archive waste accumulates, this made up of all the remnants of civilizations that have not been collected and yet found a collection that can be defined as the converse image of the archive. Waste as a negative store, however, does not stand only for disposal or destruction and oblivion. It also stands for latent memory, which lives on from one generation to the next in a no-man's land, between presence and absence. The border between archive and refuse is a very flexible one. This is Aleida Assmann from Cultural Memory in Western Civilization. And I find it always very interesting that waste is meant to be nothing, so a nothingness. Because I think the moment where you interact with waste, that means something, I would say. I had a research project on that, which was more leftovers, which is not so much waste. But I would say that the idea of waste is something that's just waiting there for you to be picked up. And the moment you interact with it, it actually, I would say shuffles back into the realm of the meaning. Well all of a sudden you find science, and there's also this romanticism, about waste, and the leftovers and the ruins and whatever. And so I find it really interesting that waste is not unmarked.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

I'm also thinking, in relation to history or memory, to do stuff that doesn't quite make it into the canon or into our grand narratives and kind of remains latent somewhere on the side yeah, maybe someone picks it up, and then it suddenly becomes part of a canon or it gets really full well, they know stuff that is possible, and then becomes waste because of too much attention to be given to it or it doesn't have anything else to offer.

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, the great thing is that you never know why something becomes interesting all of a sudden, why this chair in this antique store, and why not the other one, or why this like I don't know, Thomas Lehman, a choreographer from Germany, who all of a sudden became super famous with a piece and before he had 15 years when nobody paid attention at all. Why something is becoming viral? (sound of people moving around the table). Already dipping into the field of politics. So, this is a photo I took from a march in August in Rio de Janeiro in commemoration of Marielle Franco, who had been a deputy of the city parliament and was murdered and one assumes it was a political murder. And there was a march during a conference, which was a somatic march in commemoration of Marielle Franco. And it could only happen because usually the authorities wouldn't have allowed this march. And wouldn't do so today at all. But they allowed it because the organisers of the conference actually announced it as a dance performance. And every time the authorities asked, oh it's dance, it's just dance. So that was the only reason why it could happen.

The task of memory, the double remembering is divided among those moving and those watching the movement. And this process thus always becomes a journey of remembering the pantaloons of one's own body history. That's a quote from Gabriele Brandstetter from Choreography as a Cenotaph: the Memory of the Movement. And I find this particularly interesting because of this double idea of the double of remembering - remembering something active, but you also have to re-member certain parts, for example of dance performance you saw, or you try to remember what we were talking about this afternoon, or what we tried to. Yeah, what we what we tried to discuss this afternoon. So, remembering is actually, we could say a very physical task. It's not only about something something like a container or storage also. But remembering is really something you have to go through it and you have to actively do it. And it's pretty much also bound to your own, as she says, you're bound to your own bodily history, but I will also go further and say that we are all also bound to the experience you made. For example, you saw a dance piece, you saw many others before you would remember it differently. And this act of remembering is something which is also prone to forgetting because in the moment you're trying to assemble something - maybe it's a bit with dreams to try to assemble something and to try to grasp something but just it's flown away. So maybe that's the link between remembering and forgetting.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

Would you say we only become, we only become aware of the things that we are forgetting? When we start to actively engage in a process of remembering? I don't know what I'm forgetting unless I start engaging with the process of remembering, that shows me where the gaps in my memory are. Yeah, like, how do I know what I have forgotten? If I don't start trying to remember the things, and memory doesn't fail me

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah you actually can't. Because either somebody's telling you, oh, you've forgotten something and then all of a sudden you know. Or there's trying to grasp something. Yeah, that's interesting. You actually need the, the remembering of the person telling you, yeah.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah, you can't give yourself a task of forgetting to forget, you can't make yourself forget

### **Susanne Foellmer**

If you do want to, then I'm pretty sure that the only thing we do is remember, remember, remember, remember.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

So, I've got an image here, of the kind of story and legend about Simonides, correct me if I'm wrong, who was apparently in a symposium or dinner, and he had to leave the dinner, and when he was away, a big catastrophe happened, and everyone in that room, round the table dinner table died. And so then when he came back, he was the only person who could help identify the dead bodies, like all that remained of the dead bodies. The story goes that he was the only one who could do this. And the way he was doing this was by identifying who was where, according to where they were sitting. I mean, there was no other marker to help him remember other than the spacing, like the placing of the people. It makes me think that I kind of know, looking there, I kind of know what each one of these papers contains, because of where we placed it, where I placed it, but also where you placed things. So that's the image over there from the march, over there is the piece that I haven't seen. So I placed it there for later, there are two quotes over here, there's a task there. That's a task that you did, the task that I did is placed together with the two quotes. I think I wouldn't be able to remember what else we've done, if it wasn't for this spatial configuration. But this also refers back to your comment about physical ways of working through memory.

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Because the idea is that memory, remembering is actually really pretty much fixed to a place, or let's say, a location, like when you write something in a book, or in a notebook, and you maybe don't really remember what it was, but you still know where you put it. It was on page something, somewhere there on the top or on maybe more on the back. And then you go back, that was it. So that's actually interesting that there's a three-dimensionality also of the memory, which makes it interesting. What do we do with digitality, does it still work? I mean, I don't say that the digital world is without space, I don't think so there's a space, it's just a different space. But I wouldn't say that the space thing works differently than when you do something like manually. This is a picture from a performance I saw. And it actually follows again this idea of the question of remembering and forgetting, and the forgetting is especially interesting here.

So, it's a performance from Christina Ciupke, and I think it's called Undo, Redo and Repeat. And the basic idea was that they asked different choreographers to hand down a piece of work of not their own work, but from somebody else. So like, for example, they asked, Irene Sieben, one of the last pupils of Mary Wigman to hand down something. They also asked Reinhild Hoffmann, one of the important I would say protagonists of German Tanztheater, and they asked her because she was a pupil and also danced with Kurt Jooss, in Essen in Germany to hand down some of his work. And she was like, ummm and this came out in an audience talk later. "I'm really sorry, but I can't recall anything I did with Kurt Jooss" and I was really surprised, because I thought, oh, that's always this myth, with the people having been there. And there was a, I mean, there's this whole thing now today going on about reenactment, reconstruction, things from the past. And then you can get a hold of contemporary witness. And you know, he or she knows everything. And it happens actually, often not only with her that they say also really I have no clue. And there was apparently the role of a cat. She danced in the piece of Kurt Jooss, and she said I don't even remember the role of the cat. So, what she did, she broke the rule and handed down something of her own work, which wasn't the task, but she did it. So, this is actually about destroying the myth that dancers and choreographers can remember everything.

### **Efrosini Protopapa (15 minutes)**

Okay, so I've got a photograph from a dictionary entry and etymological dictionary entry. It's from the term grapho, which means to write. That's where choreography, graphic comes from. And, it's a double entry. So it says grapho/graphicos/γράφω - to write and writerly. Maybe, so it's the adjective that comes from the verb. And it says something, so initially, the term grapho had to do with making a mark, but also carving, carving a mark or on stone, maybe such material, and then it was more leaving a trace or designing, leading on to kind of painting or illustrating something, which is zo graphiso/ζω γράφω and then what is really interesting for me, which I couldn't quite grasp the continuity of this evolution of this term, with the adjective writerly graphiso/γράφω, in the beginning, it had to do with the one who is able to write and draw or the one who is able to leave a mark. And then it started to take the meaning of the one who can make something beautiful, or who can create an image that is appealing, and then so in its contemporary use, if you use this word

it has to do with somebody who might be a little bit eccentric, or who exaggerates. So how do we get from the writerly to the kind of leaving a mark, trace, beauty, to the sense of exaggeration or eccentricity is quite a new kind of realisation for me. Now, that brings me back to choreography, and how that could also be a process of going from leaving a mark, failing an image or something aesthetically pleasing to then maybe doing something eccentric or weird, or a bit off - I don't know.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, I find it really interesting that this, that what you said in the almost very beginning that it's actually also about the one who's able to write, or the one where it's actually the power to write and then the question is, who has the power to make a mark, who will leave a mark, to leave marks and to leave traces, which maybe would be more than like the traditional concept of choreography. So, one was doing a script, leaving us his or her mark. And the other one would be maybe more the contemporary idea of choreography, that is also more the idea of a loose maybe sometimes eccentric and exuberant assembly of movement patterns.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

So, I've got two images here. One is from the memorial to my uncle. That's someone mentioned earlier. I can't quite believe what it says and the other image is from the anti-Brexit people's vote march that happened on 20 October. This is a march the two of us went to together. I'm not sure if there was anyone else in this room who went. And we met to talk about this, just before going to the march. And I'm thinking of the marks that Susanne described that was allowed to happen because it was announced as a dance performance. And I'm wondering what is this wasn't allowed to happen unless we had said it was a dance performance? Will there be another one I don't know, will we need it?

**Susanne Foellmer**

I think it's also interesting because of what will be left behind in the future. Will we only remember the nostalgia of 700,000 marching or that they actually changed something?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

And now marches are always about the future, a future.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Getting into the very condition of remembering total recall, after all, complete memory of every single event in the past, would amount to total forgetting, forgetting as necessary for memory to operate.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

So, "forgetfulness is a property of all action, just as not only light but darkness is bound up with the life of every organism. Forgetfulness is a property of all action." This is a quote from Nietzsche, where he sort of encourages, or finds the positive in forgetfulness, and actually makes a claim that action or deeds are only possible with some degree of forgetting. And that memory and sort of overload of historical sense might even inhibit. And this takes me back to a comment earlier about the possibility of forgetting only being there if you are engaged in a process of remembering. Because I think when I initially engaged with this idea, I sort of misunderstood it as forgetting as having no sense of history, or no sense of the past, as the only thing that allows you to move forward. But if I read it, again, now realising it's not about not having ever engaged with the past, or something historical or the previous, but it's about having a gate with it, but to a degree that then when you maybe go back to revisit it, you can also allow yourself to forget or leave, leave stuff out. So it's not about not knowing or ignoring it, it's about knowing and then allowing the forgetting to happen, or some kind of neglect to also take place. It's very difficult nowadays to argue for forgetfulness. But it's still, that's why I find it challenging or even intriguing. In a positive way.

**Susanne Foellmer**

I think it's so scary because forgetfulness nowadays is often linked to this idea of historic amnesia. So we mustn't forget, of course, we mustn't. And apparently there are many people in these times will forget, like in Brazil, also now, some people apparently forgot about military dictatorship, by voting again for them. And then the interesting thing is that, especially there or also in America, or maybe also here there is a certain kind of memory and remembering a populace or whoever, who sort of who tried to get a grip and get a hold, or as Nietzsche would say, unto the monumental tradition, or whatever, oh, it was the way it was, I don't know 100 years ago, so we must, we must sort of reinstall this again. So there is a really weird relation between, on the one hand total forgetfulness, and on the other hand, this idea of oh, let's bring back the good old days, I mean, sorry to break this down. But like with even without knowing what they will, stays where and when, whatever. So, this is a picture of a performance of Efrosini's, which she did in collaboration with Susanna Recchia. So this is very referential, because it actually refers and the way it was made to what we're doing today, but the only way I had access to it was through a Vimeo video and something you did, actually in April, which was referring to the very performance. And when I

tried to recall what happened there, what I saw on the video, which was like 20 minutes performance in Springdance in Utrecht, I can remember a lot of the movement. Like, it was sort of autobiographical where the performer said, oh I want her to do this. And then she did like a split, or she did a position in ballet and so on. Or she went to the room sort of mapping room, picking up cards and saying, Okay, this is like station eight of nine, and so on. So I remember, I remember a lot of the structure when I tried to recall what I saw, but I hardly can tell what she talked about

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

So, this is one of the work I made recently. And it was a one to one between a performer in a gallery context and an audience member. And it was a sort of intimate private conversation. Which sort of means also, I didn't really, I mean, we set the rules, and I work together on what the performer would do. But also I still don't actually know what happened in each one of those conversations. And I didn't really go close to any of the conversations happening because I wanted to let it be what it was meant to be. So, I don't really know what's happening here. And what they're doing. I know the score, but I don't know what they're actually talking about. But I know this guy, the other guy, so maybe I can tell you a little bit about the other guy. And I'm also quite the fan of gossip and background information and anecdotes, which is the stuff that Susanna was speaking about in that solo. And I know that this person is sort of probably younger than 20 years old. And both his parents are academics. And one is a theatre scholar and the other is a feminist theorist who actually, I would say, put two men on the spot quite a bit in a book launch they were doing. One of them academic, the other is an artist. And I think he wanted to study film, I'm not sure about that. I don't think I know anything else

### **Susanne Foellmer**

it was a performance that took place in Tate Modern in the Turbine Hall. And it was by Tino Sehgal, and a lot of people walking around and sort of filling the whole space. And in some moments, you couldn't actually tell who's the audience or the spectators and who are the performers. And then I've also often a person was approaching you and whispering something in your ear like a story and the moment you engaged with it they went away and then maybe another person would show up. This is what I remember.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah, I remember warming up and down the ramp, and my hips feeling quite painful. I remember getting a couple of free physio sessions and I also remember to think sometimes and when the fast running began, I would sometimes kind of exit at the doors where the shop is and hide in the shop for a bit and when they returned to walking slower I would come back and join. No one ever discovered me although they were supposedly middle managers who would sort of keep an eye on us and (beep, beep) that's 40 minutes.

### **Susanne Foellmer**

So, and we will just invite everyone to join us maybe at the table if you want to shuffle (the cards) but we don't have so many spaces, but we can squeeze on the benches and we can sit down and talk or stand if you like.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

I mean if people have any thoughts, observations, questions, reflections, we can start talking right now.

### **Audience (30 minutes)**

Can you speak again about piano and choreography and the kind of process behind that?

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah. So, as we mentioned in the beginning, I think it was something that Susanna proposed when responding to my presentation of the conference. And partly, I thought it had something to do with I was engaged in a parallel lack of moving. So, I had a movement task for navigating the papers - the papers were on the floor at the time. Then kind of reading the materials live a little bit like what we did here. So, my kind of choreographic journey to use that word was very much dictated by the reading I was engaged in. So, I was kind of choreographing through reading, as in engaging with existing materials

### **Audience**

Do you refer to the reading part, as well as kind of making associations about the kinds of things that we're interpreting as well, what you're doing is a kind of reading as well, in terms of what you're communicating to us?

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, maybe? I mean, it's still quite fresh for us, actually. Yes. So initially, the idea was that choreography, no matter how it's done in the traditional way, yeah, like you get the steps, people are doing it, or in a more like collaborative sense also.

But often, this is what Woody Lemon (spelling?) says, in a text, it's often it often has this sense, to some extent of governance. It's a governing principle, it's an ordering structure, it gets all into something, It's choreography, it assigns, that artists movement, and so on. And this idea of choreo-reading them came up, because it's more like taking a step back, letting go, let sort of the material react with you and us, as a reader are more, let's say, in a reflective mode. So, it's more this idea. And, and then we thought about, Okay, what about if there would be like a dielectric relationship, so the reading would maybe rather not be so much invasive, or more a mode, where you could really try to connect the materials not putting you because the choreography is always about you the subject. And reading is more something where you have to react - sort of material does something with you. And then we were thinking about how could we implement this also into a practice, which is not about we're doing the paper, or doing a lecture, and I mean, I'm being an academic, and having worked as a dramaturg, at least, but this sort of that's it with my artistic experience, also trying to get out of this powerfulness of the words and trying to get rid of these distinctions that there are people doing ,creating, and other people talking about it and sort of leading the discourse, and then writing about it, and then inscribing these discourses again. So this is what we've tried to sort of engage in with it but of course, the perspective of the spectator then again, it's super interesting, for with, like, Roland Barthes, has this idea, the pleasure of text, that no matter what the author does, you as a reader are the cocreator. And then of course, there's this other layer of you reading what we did.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

I think also for me, what was appealing to me when this was on a broad kind of choreo-reading is, because I worked quite often with scores, written instructions, not, you know, not just in order to make a piece or it's not only as underlying principles of a piece, but also the materiality of scores on stage and a little bit like this having papers and the spectator seeing somebody doing reading, and then responding to the reading. I think that's what kind of made me go, oh, this notion of choral reading could be a new frame through which to approach this idea of score, other than through discussions about instruction, power and the score as being the middle. The third thing between choreographer and performer. So, yes to that discourse, I mean, it's very valid. But also, what does it mean to be doing practices of choreo-reading, like this is the practice which is to engage with reading as in going through materials, and that's what creates the choreography.

### **Audience**

Is that part of an academic project, is that part of a project - all this performance?

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

You mean this? Yeah, I mean, it's our second encounter. So, it is a form of continuing research.

### **Audience**

So this is a result of this choreo-reading?

### **Susanne Foellmer**

You could say that, it's more like it's a catch word, catchphrase, or a model or the tool we're trying to work with, which is very fresh, but it's not today conceptualised via theory or research questions if you mean this. Rather it's in a state of experimentation at the moment.

### **Audience**

So, are you proposing that choreo-reading is non historical, and employs a sort of selective forgetfulness, in that respect, and becomes a more, a kind of a nowness practice? Is it that where you're going with it? What's the method? In terms of Nietzsche?

### **Susanne Foellmer**

Well, I mean, it's not non historical, I mean, Nietzsche actually in this in The Use and Abuse of History, which is actually tthe proper German translation would be actually The Use and the Disadvantage of History. So that's actually more interesting, because it's what he says is not, he's not totally dismissing history and saying we should all forget and just do things new. But what he actually says is there has to be a balance actually, between a critical awareness of history, and critically engage with it and make something new or change something, but also to, to actually respect that there is already something. We can't just start from point zero, this will be very, yeah, so he's taking into consideration that we're always carrying our baggage with us, also in a corporeal sense, he talks about trauma and pain that leaves traces in the body.

### **Audience**

And you're proposing that rather than writing a narrative about that baggage in choreography, as happens in choreography, which is like a narrative or stereographic act in a way, proposing a reading, choreo-reading, is more selective. And more, is it

an imminent version of the choreographic? I'm not quite sure what the, what the other kind of category is in that respect. Or why it's different?

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, I mean, when I thought about this notion I actually started which are often do from the etymology. And choreography is, as we all know, the writing of movement, the writing of dance. And then it's from Efrosini already said Graphene, which means also in a broader sense, to document something, to document or fix, to record, to put in some order, and then inspired by what Efrosini did I thought, aha, what we say if we would say choreo-reading, and reading in Greece, is na diavaso. And na diavaso means on one hand, going through things to decipher, you could say in a broader sense to analyse, but it also means to rummage around, to browse, to immerse yourself in something and not always with this Cartesian analytical gaze in this analytical eye. So that's actually the idea how could we adopt a mode of reading that, well, we're always as academics, I can say, in the mode of analysing. But how could we sort of take a step back, and try to go with what the material says, to read and not immediately delve into, oh, this is ABCD. This is the order bla bla bla and then I have my package. So maybe there are other modes of maybe there's something I just leave out. So, to not foster this process of discussing, exchanging and thinking.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

I don't know is this adds anything but there is also a third category in Nietzsche, like the historical, the anti or non-historical and then the super historical. And there is something quite nice about that when I think he says something like the person who is operating through the super historical is also recognising the accidental nature of things in history or the inconsistency and the non-linearity or the kind of non-understandable nature of how things went. So, there's also this sense of, I think, he says, what could the next 10 years teach us that the last 10 haven't already taught us. So, this kind of doubt about cause and effect and the kind of learning that you can have about the future by looking into the past? Yeah, I think I connected through that, because I also find the way, sometimes I find myself or other artists working that there is this allowance for the slightly inconsistent or I've learned something from the past, but I'm not completely rooted in that, and I'm a little bit more free in how I move forward. There's this kind of also recognising the accidental nature of process or progress I took from that super historical term of the accidental, sort of tangential to your question.

**Audience**

In terms of the content of the cards, where does that? Where did that come from? Is that based on some interests that you both share?

**Susanne Foellmer**

Well, it came initially from the lecture performance response we did? What I was interested in this Nietzsche, but then also the whole question of how is the history dealt with what are the problematics? And then we came about Benjamin, in and this idea of, looking towards history being propelled into the future with this idea of the Angelus Novus, and others. And then, of course, because it was about forgetfulness, we thought about remembrance. So, we were delving in different memories, theories, and memory and choreography, which is an issue, like with some German dance scholars, for example, and so on. So, this is actually, you could say it's a patchwork of different references, but not only, of course, academic ones, but then also the pattern that sort of passed through our work, but that also lay behind and that influenced our work, which are performances that we saw, or very important events, that we connected to remembering, or also to something that could be a certain futurity. And this is actually, it's quite contingent. So, we didn't follow a certain order, or we say, let's rule out this, let's rule out that it was more very associated process. To date. Yeah. And then we have tasks as you could imagine.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah the tasks were there to sort of engage us also in processes of remembering, forgetting, relating and thinking, thinking live. Maybe not allowing us to fully own this or to paint that kind of very confident sort of argument or journey through this, which was purposeful. I think I'm trying to see what might come with that. And then there were some things that you know, they came a little bit into our conversation, and then oh, let's look at this article. And then, because it's about scores, and then we went there, and it wasn't really related to this theme, but that might have brought about something else. And a memory of oh, there was another piece on scores that actually deals with memory. Let me bring that back. And working, what you saw us doing here is also the way we worked on collecting materials.

**Audience**

And the placement of the cards on the table. Are they organised randomly? Or do they create groups?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

We decided to put them out in some kind of, at least that there is an internal logic, there's a logic for the person who is placing it about what goes there. And then we just had the other end of the table for things that we don't want to deal with.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Or not at all, but pretending that we don't deal with them. Yeah, I mean, it's actually really awkward this idea of unstructured improvisation, if you go back to certain method, methodologies and dance and actually trying to as you've already said, to get rid of this idea of mastery that like you deliver a paper 20 minutes - you show the mastery of your argument of your academic, how gorgeous you are, whatever your rhetoric, competencies and all these kinds of things which are don't dismiss them. They're really important in order to convey an argument. That's not the question, but then it's always already putting you in a place where you're sort of the master of the thing. And the interesting thing is, what do we do if we try to rewrite it a little bit and start with a process where you actually think about these things. And while you may be not so sure about it, also, you can allow for insecurities. And, maybe this would be because you asked also, maybe the difference but a new swung between this idea of choreography in terms of mastery and reading, which allows for things happening by accident, or that surprise you and then you have to take a step back and think about it, or you have to let go.

**Efrosini Protopapa (45 minutes)**

Here's one of my favourite cards, that didn't come up, which is about a systems theory approach to memory and cultural memory, which would say something like - forgetting is necessary in order for memory to operate because it clears away some of the stuff otherwise, there's overload, and then there's no forgetting to do. So I was thinking about that also in relation to choreography, and that when you set up a choreographic system, it's there to enable you to get on with things and recall and stage and do and present -similarly with an academic paper - but then the system has inherent methods, strategies inside it so that the forgetting can happen or the not knowing or the putting you in the awkward position. So, yeah, I'm sort of interested also in choreographic systems that have embedded in them the rules that will make the thing collapse or put you in an uncomfortable or less settled place, which, yeah, I think these structures sort of do that kind of thing. And it's just a matter of combination of principles or rules over procedures that make you more being that place of unknowing more or less.

**Susanne Foellmer**

And who has the place in the discourse, because I had one task where it said, if the quote is used then rip it apart, and one was like of Walter Benjamin, I mean, this really important quote. And you have to quote him if you talk about certain things and sort of ripping things apart and just throw it away. Actually, you aren't allowed in academia to do so. Well, not allowed, but it wouldn't be, if you deal with a certain topic and you wouldn't mention Benjamin that would be bad science or whatever. And I find it really interesting to okay, what happens when you destroy this, and I really love Benjamin, I mean, I think it's really important, but what happens when you destroy these icons? Usually you wouldn't do that.

**Audience**

Regarding the ones that put the cards together, and also you're reading them. I'm just thinking, I can see this working quite well, with people that are reading them for the first time.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, it's structured.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

That's, yeah, that's a very good point. Yeah, I think for me, this was getting a little bit closer to what I thought I was doing in that keynote that we mentioned, where I was the only one who had made the cards, and I was the only one performing it. And this is very rarely the case, because I never performed in my own work ever or haven't been performing in my work because of that sort of paradox of owning the cards too much or kind of pre planning in your mind what you're going to say. So, it was really, I mean, already here. There's stuff that I don't know, that well or than I didn't research into. So, like, I just take it for face value, like what's the point? What's the image without the prior knowledge? In some cases? But yeah, it's an interesting question. Because it's not a test but you know.

**Audience**

Yeah initially when you started, I was a little bit afraid you were going to ask us to, I guess that would be the next step

**Susanne Foellmer**

but then still, you're the one who chooses the cards. I mean, this is always the question about participation, and I like it, you would have to structure it more around the question, but then still, you can't neglect there's a certain authorship. Because



the idea of real participation would be one topic. Everyone brings 10 cards, put them on the table, sort of mix them up and then yeah

**Efrosini Protopapa**

I mean, I have to say even so there were moments when I thought, mmm great, I wish now that the next thing is this card, because it would make so much sense to move into that, and then went to the pile that had images. But of course, that image didn't come up, you know? So, there is this striving for sense or building an argument or like, yeah, creating something meaningful, rather than going tum tum tum or having to return and recall. And remember that there are all these the things that I always said, I wish I didn't pick it up, like all this stuff is going on while you're trying to also like, serve the materials.

**Heni Hale**

In constructing materials, do you? Did you even at that stage have sort of ideas about what might make a good argument? Or the potential to create meaning at some point?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

I mean, there's a little bit of sense that everything relates to at least one other thing. I mean, there's nothing that's out of nowhere. So, you kind of think there must be some underlying logic. But I don't have to.

**Susanne Foellmer**

but I actually it was more coming from our discussion. I have to say it was not that we pre-planned our arguments, and then then they pick the cards accordingly. It was not really this loose association from discussion. Aah and I found this text or this would fit. Umm so yeah.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

There's this image of this piece, which Susanna Il pica pucu, and it has, because it's quoting other pieces, it has images of pieces that are being quoted in here. So, I saw this and I thought, oh, yeah, I recognise this, this is Xavier Le Roy, Self Unfinished. And then rather than going to Self Unfinished, that reminded me that Xavier Le Roy has done a retrospective. And then I thought, Oh, the idea of retrospective connects to these ideas of remembering and forgetting. So then I got another image, which is from retrospective, but it's still not something, you know. So, it's kind of also on just a visual connection, just the principle of things that are visually connected, but the original thing's missing from the table. So yeah, there were things also like that, I mean, and then very little things like, you know, I was thinking about this reading and choreo-reading, and what is reading as a performative act. And then I remembered that Mette Ingvarsen had done a piece that is about you going in and here being a reader, and somebody has memorised the whole book, and they say, cite the book to you. And I haven't experienced that piece. So, I don't know much about it. But the card is still there. And I still have things to say, I would invite you to say thank you, if we haven't seen. So, there's kind of these associated processes between the cards, or also in connection to one of the things.

**Audience**

But is there a general framework, which is choreography and memory?

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, I mean, especially memory and remembering, and the forgetting, were pretty much in the focus. And then, like the question of choreography, or choreo-reading more like a method is a bit..it's quite a strong word. I wouldn't say method, more practice maybe.

**Audience**

or premise?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

I think also, one of the things that I'm still kind of processing is how this discussion around forgetting and remembering and choreo-reading connects to this Crossing Borders, larger kind of idea around the future and change and producing change, because it's a very future oriented question. And we're all engaged, of course, and worried, anxious, maybe even excited, as well about the future. And at the same time, I think especially in dance, there's been an exhaustion of questions around the archive and reconstruction of preservation and documenting. That has continued in discussions about dancing in the museum and selling the work and collecting the work, so I was curious about how we can still approach questions about the

past and collection and recollecting, but through a different lens, which maybe also has to do more with present and future process something about

**Heni Hale**

Something about the very initial thing about waste feels kind of relevant as well. This kind of, what actually do we do with the stuff that we let go of or the stuff that we've forgotten, and the sort of re bringing meaning to the waste, has a sort of potential.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, maybe there is. Yeah, that's in all of these processes. Ideas were as a potential way into the future looking thing.

**Audience**

So, having experienced this now to do this practice again for the second time, are there questions now that you feel are occurring now that you're having this experience? And in doing it in front of a group of people as well? Are there any questions that you have that you're thinking about just in the immediate response?

**Susanne Foellme**

I think I first have to process, not always come back immediately. I think I really have to digest this. I think what is interesting in terms of triggering is really the very, very, what I felt is the very process of how do you memorise? And do you? Is it important for you to know where which one card is? Or do you just think, no, I've just put it there. And maybe I don't even remember what I put there. When I said, leave it for later or maybe I do. And yeah, to be also confronted with the ability or inability to memorise - but more like as the direct reaction now to the thing?

**Audience**

And why do you think there is a need of structure since you are kind of exploring the idea of breaking the structure?

**Susanne Foellmer**

When we think there is always structure. even if we say there is none, there would be one and I mean, in the very pragmatic sense, I think, I would also say structured improvisation is pretty important. Because I mean, you can improvise and just do what you want and you do just something out of nowhere. So I guess this idea of structure that you have, like, we had tasks, we had like our three years stacks, like central principles, it was clear, we put the card somewhere when we read it or blocked it as a possibility to discard them, or to leave them for later, which is sort of rather a loose structure. But I think it's important because we want to present something. And even if it's a mode of thinking, so I think a certain kind of structure is important. The interesting thing is what do you do with a structure? Is it overwhelming and very dense and sort of engaging you? Or is it more? And that's the question, that would be interesting also to work on allowing, or is it inviting for people to listen to it? Is it not? Yeah, this is what I was thinking.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah, I have this feeling that when you're working with sort of not knowing and uncertainty. Like maybe tricking yourself into forgetting or trying to find where the forgetting lies, structure sort of gives me comfort that there is something holding this thing together. And even if I'm not grasping it, while I'm going through it, I trust that it will be yeah, something will emerge out of this will or become apparent after the event for people and for others and for myself through the structure. So, I mean, if there was no structure, which I don't, I don't know how that would be. And I was practicing forgetting and unknowing uncertainty then I can't imagine how that would work.

**Heni Hale**

Sounds deeply traumatic.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Well, it kind of is and then it isn't in the sense that you've never promised to do something exceptionally good anyway. So it allows for that lack of expectation. Yeah. What are you going to do with a couple of cards? I'm thinking what I'm going to do with it, if I ever want to do this again, we need to treat that like there's the irreversibility of this.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah. Action. I mean, we have them- they just leave. Of course. Yeah. But this will be

**Audience**

You're going to throw them away? Or store them?

**Susanne Foellmer**

I don't know. I mean, I would have to store them at my last research project was on leftovers. I mean, I already have like some leftovers of performances. What will you do with them other than, yeah, they actually use in this case, they're really useless things, just reminders of something, which is then again, not useless but I don't know.

**Efrosini Protopapa (1 hour)**

Yeah, I am thinking also what would happen if you know, if we were to do it again, I imagine you would add to the pack. So, it's a little bit like the piece with Susanna there that we were working with a pot of memories, and I would select 8 to 10 for each show. And then but as time and the memories were instances of our working together, they were related to our working collaboration. So, the more time passed, the more we have more stuff, the pot was getting bigger. So, I was choosing still 8 to 10, because that's what makes a 20 minute piece but out of the larger pot, so that again, that creates more it's a mathematical situation, like, if we had, I mean, here, we had 50 something, and maybe we used 15? 20? Less than half of those, if we had 100, I imagined the supplies would be a bit bigger so it's also a question of the future of these pieces as you continue and then you put more, but you still select same amount. The relationship, the realised and the potential changes

**Audience**

But then one photo of this event might go into the next?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah, I had that thought, because there are some features from the April thing. But it's, maybe it's too early, it would be too self-referential. Like it was too close to do that.

**Susanne Foellmer**

And there's also the moment of actualisation that is also happening I think to all of us, at some point, what's also happening politically that you can't just sort of separate from what you're doing. So, it was also actual, most recent, things influencing it. Maybe there are some favourites, but maybe it's also about getting just rid of them.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

That's also about, you know, working through to the last minute. Like Susanna just said yesterday. Now we have to include those two images because of what happened in Brazil. So of course, we're like also running after events and what is becoming urgent and what feels a little bit not so important anymore.

**Audience**

Wondering about in a different context, doing this work with people who have lost their memory. Because I was looking after my grandfather for the last two years of his life, and he had dementia and it got worse and worse. And but then we say worse and worse, like forgetting is the worst thing that can happen to you. And I think for some of his children, it did feel like that. But living with him there was a joy in like what he would be exploring in the present. But then also he put a letter or a newspaper article or a piece of music or something in front of him, it would trigger a whole lot of memories. And so it was interesting living with him in terms of what triggers memory, and you know, everything here triggers something for someone or if it's completely blank for you, then why is it, you know. There was a few quotes where I was like I've never heard of that person, maybe I should have heard of them, maybe it doesn't matter. I had, you know, like, yeah, so just thinking could be a really interesting exercise for people with dementia.

**Susanne Foellmer**

Yeah, I mean, of course, it's also how to make the point of reference because if for example, you pick a quote, of a research of an academic because it felt important for your argument, then usually you contextualise and you say why? It's the same? Why is sort of a bit, maybe you could later say why it's a bit retarded. But in the very moment, the task says this, they have to do this. You don't have the possibility. Which also makes it quite interesting because it's sometimes almost like speaking out of context, and you have to invent it. Now how does this relate? Or you just go with? I don't care to relate. Because I know what others may be like our own, so but of course there's always this fear of how about maybe this is too hermetic, sort of not inviting people if you don't sort of put this whole framework of explanation around it. But then maybe sometimes we don't have to always explain – that's the question

**Audience**

A lot of that dynamic happens anyway in the way that you were operating the system, you know, in the columns because you don't read out, this is the task or you know, and sometimes becomes apparent. Afterwards, we can all go and have a look and piece together, but it's definitely from yeah, there's a similar gap, you're leaving a gap. And I can choose to fill the gap, like I choose not to. And, you know, I can't look it up now, but I can later. But you know, this thing of what, what do you let go?

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

I think this is the kind of thing that I am not able to get a sense of, while I'm in the inside. But what this looks like as an experience from the outside, and the gaps being left up there. And it's really difficult to know what the other surface is like. But then I also have the experience of like, I picked one card that I don't know nothing about. I mean, I've never seen the work. I didn't Google it. Nothing. I don't know the artist, it's something Susanne put in, I'm sure she has something to say about it. It's connected. The title doesn't like nothing. So you know, it's also this thing of some things don't trigger anything. Like I don't have any way to relate to this. Yeah, which was also interesting. And then, you know, I had found myself like, what do I do with it? And there was this structure or principle, you can leave it for later. But you know, there is that kind of how far can you disconnect? Yeah, how much?

### **Susanne Foellmer**

But then also, sometimes the system tricks you because I really don't like this Nietzsche. And then I pick one Nietzsche quote, and I thought hmm I can leave it for later yeah. And then I thought, I'm smart, and picked a task. And then the task actually said, pick a quote and memorise it and whisper it into someone's ear. And what was the next quote? It was again, Nietzsche. So I had to do it, memorising it, although I don't even like Nietzsche. So, this also like aha, putting yourself out of your comfort zone. Because this is also about what kind of things do you take also for your argument? Of course, for the academic argument, things that are important. Yeah. But apparently, there's also some kind of - this really appeals to me - like for example, analytical philosophy, philosophy doesn't appeal to me at all, I would always more go for continental post-structuralist philosophy, but maybe you could put the argument otherwise. So, there is already also something about my taste, what is sort of new to you, and so on, and so on, apart from of course, you're doing rigorous academic work. But then yeah, I mean, you have this task. Okay, you have to go with it. And what does this do to you?

### **Audience**

I just think it would be interesting to see because even though you say that you are not familiar with some of the cards, if we think about it is still within kind of your area of you know, you are kind familiar in a way because it's choreography or its philosophy or, and also the audience, which is here, because of how we hear probably, I don't know, through social media, whatever we kind of somehow related to the subjects, it will be interesting to see how that will work if you take it to a completely different place that people had never heard of dance or you know philosophy or that there is not really there is no relationship, or maybe even presented by people who also come from similar backgrounds, so they know absolutely nothing. Because even in the past, we don't know anything about this specific dance performance. We are related to it because it reminds of another dance performance or you go that's dance, that's contemporary dance so in a way you know what it is, but I guess they're accepting all this. They don't even have a clue what this is.

### **Susanne Foellmer**

But at least you want to connect to the people you're talking to.

### **Efrosini Protopapa**

We did have this conversation about that. Do we read a whole quote, say where it's coming from, give the source, give the background and I mean, that would be a little bit we decided too didactic or like say everything you know about each performance that's in there but then it's a matter of practicing the amount of information that's necessary or intriguing to give out so that somebody can follow. So, we're doing the selecting maybe as we're making with the materials, which is a responsibility, but also, it's a playful one.

### **Audience**

Do you find the content of the materials as important as just the method or the practice of like doing the choreo-reading? Like, does the content of this, of the cards, matter to you? Or is it more the practice that you're using the content of these cards to engage in this way of choreo-reading?

### **Efrosini Protopap**

I think that I feel quite guilty that the structure matters to me more than the content. The content could be anything, you know.

**Audience**

Yeah. That's what I was wondering. Yeah was the quote directly related to the practice, or is it?

**Efrosini Protopapa**

It's related to the specific practice.

**Susanne Foellmer**

I have to say that content actually matters more to me. Which maybe is quite natural as an academic. But then again, I'm interested. So how to get rid of this. Yeah, as I already said, like you have a certain structure, this is the way you convey knowledge. And so this is what I like about this structure, but it's not that I'm using the structure in order to just differently convey my content. But it's not balanced, I mean, the structure is pretty important, but maybe the content is also.

**Efrosini Protopapa**

Yeah. Which is why I think if this were to become a practice this, or if, if I were to think of how can we become better at this? Or how do we work on rehearsing it, work on it. Then I would start to think actively about bettering both the structure and the content and our engagement with the content, like giving it equal attention. So at the moment, I mean, I kind of give, of course, I care about the stuff that's in there, but maybe I'm tipping a little bit more towards the container of how it works for me, because I'm kind of interested also, in the live event that is produced and actualised maybe a little bit more at this moment it feels and how this works, rather than what's inside, which could be this or could be another set of cards. And then actually, we don't pick up all of them anyway, you know, if the content really mattered, then there would be some desire to unfold everything or to have an equal balance of this or that or to not turn this. So there will be a different commitment to the work.

**Audience**

I think it's interesting also to consider other contexts in which practice committed to making space for unknowing and not knowing uncertainty might be interesting to encounter and thinking about, you know, a practice like this sitting in relation somehow to an event, choreography, just for argument's sake. So we may have choreography and we may have what we call choreo-reading. And one reason that's coming to mind is listening to you both talk and think about how actually this explanatory moment, this demonstration of masteries is present, not just in academia, but in many contexts, but what's coming to mind is the, the many adornments to events of performance if we like. So, you know, rehearsal blogs, post show discussions, when even if we have a work that is at the centre that may have invited some kind of unsettling in our thinking, opened up some mode of questioning that so often seems completely shut down by a post-show discussion, where it's about giving a clear narrative, if this was the process, you know, ABC led to D, led to what you encountered on stage and, you know, we're back into this really constricting sort of explanatory mode. Not in not in every circumstance, but this came to mind for me and then so thinking, you know, we're offering a sort of companion practice. If there is a desire for a space in which to continue modes of thought that may have been established in an earlier encounter, it may not just be in the realm of art.

**Efrosini Protopapa (1 hour 15 minutes)**

I mean, yeah, I've very often questioned discussions that unfold naturally, or they just follow the organic flow. And so I'm kind of intrigued by how some choreographic strategies or approaching discussion choreographically might throw up new things. I mean, not just uncertainty as you say but also yeah, more insight into process or whatever each thing could be. Again, I very often think about artists who work with choreography. And so it's all about artificial structures, rules, very careful structuring and planning and spatializing and then when we talk about things, we kind of easily fall into the nature of allowing just thoughts to flow in a way that we don't necessarily do with our bodies or actions in a choreographed situation. So, I'm kind of interested in how we might take these choreographic skills into developing thoughts, so choreographing thinking processes as well to allow different kinds of thinking maybe to emerge sometimes, because it seems like organic discussion sometimes has this sense of closure or certainty or agreement, politeness, yeah, all these kinds of things. So, some of that can disrupt, not as a complement, as another layer.

*(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)*

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