

The Choreography of Space:
Merce Cunningham and William Forsythe in Context

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and has not been and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to any other university for the award of any other degree.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Holly Webber.

Abstract

This thesis takes the work of Merce Cunningham and William Forsythe as case studies for a socio-historical analysis of choreographic space and, in so doing, develops a sociology of dance around the qualitative study of spatial aesthetics. By locating the spatial innovations of these artists in the social space of their practice and in the light of spatial models inherited by each, it argues that the choreography of space can express ideals of human relationality produced in and productive of its broader societal landscape. Drawing from Henri Lefebvre's contention that 'the space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space', the thesis takes classical ballet as a primary example of how political ideals come to be embodied in spatial aesthetics and uses the 'classical model' to coordinate a sociologically orientated dance-historical context for these artists.

The thesis is structured around four case studies that together form a context for understanding Cunningham's and Forsythe's spatial practices. These are: firstly, a sociopolitical history of harmony in courtly expressions of classical ballet from fifteenth-century Italy to late Imperial Russia; secondly, an analysis of George Balanchine's and Martha Graham's respective choreographies of the 'American geographical imagination'; thirdly, a comparative study of Rudolf von Laban's and Oskar Schlemmer's theories of space and technology in their pre-war German contexts; finally a contextualisation of John Cage's 1952 event in relation to Marshall McLuhan's 'electronic age' and John Dewey's 'democratic' social space.

The final two chapters weave these spatial models into comparative frames for measuring the socio-historical specificity of Cunningham's and Forsythe's choreographic spaces. Cunningham's 'no fixed points' aesthetic is understood as producing a coexistent space commensurate with McLuhan's electronic paradigm and Dewey's democratic individualism. Forsythe's fluctuating space is understood as producing a 'space of flows' emblematic, for Manuel Castells, of a late twentieth-century 'digital age'.

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	6
Chapter One: The Classical Model	31
1. Fifteenth-century dance treatises and humanist notions of harmony.....	35
2. The <i>ballet de cour</i> and monarchical power	44
3. Eighteenth-century dance manuals and the codification of the classical model	56
4. Choreographing space on the Russian Imperial stage	63
Chapter Two: Classical Reforms in North America	75
1. George Balanchine's 'American' classicism	83
2. Martha Graham's 'American' expressionism	92
Chapter Three: Movement Geometries in Pre-War Germany	103
1. Rudolf von Laban's space harmony	108
2. Oskar Schlemmer's spatial abstraction	122
Chapter Four: John Cage's 1952 event	140
1. The Black Mountain context	143
2. The 1952 event	151
Chapter Five: Merce Cunningham's 'No Fixed Points'	165
1. Collaborative autonomy	172
2. Chance choreography	184
3. Video and film	198
4. The computer	209
Chapter Six: William Forsythe and a 'Space of Flows'	218
1. Moving through classical space	226
2. Choreography and computation	241
3. Choreographic environments	256
Conclusion	265
Notes	271
Images	282
Appendix of Sources for Performance Analysis.....	289
Bibliography	293

Introduction

In his landmark theorisation of space and society, *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre critiques the notion that space might be understood as a “pre-existing void” – an empty receptacle waiting, at any point in time, to contain action – by posing the following question: “Can the body, with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space?” (Lefebvre, 1991: 170). This question, which is subsequently elaborated into a concrete hypothesis, suggests that ‘space’ cannot pre-exist activity. Indeed, space, for Lefebvre, does not contain but is rather constituted by the exercise of bodies. That Lefebvre defines bodies quite broadly as “deployments of energy” and focusses his analysis on the spatial-creative processes of advanced capitalism as a global economic order, does not diminish the import of this statement for a consideration of human bodies dancing (ibid.: 171). His hypothesis that bodies create space is compelling as a provocation for the study of dance for two reasons: firstly because it provides a frame for defining choreography as an aesthetic activity and secondly because, given the broader conceptual treatment of ‘space’ in Lefebvre’s analytical project, it provides a point of departure for discussing the social quality of choreographic practice.

‘Choreography’ can be defined, through the prism of Lefebvre’s statement, as an activity that creates space (and time) through the organisation of moving bodies.¹ Indeed, it gives a heightened sense of space *being made* by bodies because, during the process of choreography and the performance of the dance that arises from it (which may happen after or at the same time as the choreographic process), space is plotted, shaped, and felt into existence by the organisation of a set of bodily movements.² These organised movements, furthermore, necessarily produce a space of a particular quality. The kind of space plotted (brought alive) by the performance of a piece of classical-balletic

choreography, for example, exhibits a special kind of harmony – in which constituent parts are arranged into a ‘well-proportioned’ whole – that is specific to this form. The notion that space is not only created by bodies but also done so in a particular, and therefore restricted, way is also noted by Lefebvre, who suggests that

the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of the space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.

(Lefebvre, 1991: 170)

Again transposed for a consideration of dance, this statement suggests a way to characterise choreography as an aesthetic practice. Choreography is not only an activity that creates space through the arrangement of movement, but one that does so according to a set of laws or preferences of organisation, that is to say, according to a set of definable aesthetic principles. The space created in one piece of choreography is, necessarily, not the same as the space created in another, and this is owing to the aesthetic concerns that govern (or guide) the process and content of that choreography. The question of the way in which these aesthetic principles are set, who sets them, when, where, and why, points to the second reason that Lefebvre’s theory of spatial production is compelling for a study of dance.³ The notion that space and its laws of discrimination are created and not found, is adopted here as an instigation to take seriously this art form’s existence as a part of social life.

The central conviction of Lefebvre’s study is that space is produced, broadly, by the activities (conceptual and practical) of human beings who live in social relation to one another and, as such, it is a product of these relations in all their complexity. Put simply, because space is produced (and not simply occupied) by people, space is a social product. This postulation will be unpacked shortly in greater detail. But for now it is suggestive of how the choreographic production of space, and its aesthetic quality as described above, is, at the same time, a social production of space. Because choreography is made by – that

is, designed by, performed by, and performed for – human beings, it should be considered a part of the social world that is fashioned by people at a given time and place. By extension, the laws of discrimination, or aesthetic principles that guide a choreographic production of space should be thought of as belonging to (extending from and feeding into) that same social world. This thesis will explore the idea that the artistic production of space, as it takes place specifically in choreographic practice, is social through and through. It does so by examining the choreography of space in a restricted case study: the parallel practices of Merce Cunningham and William Forsythe, and their respective and shared dance-historical contexts. Both Cunningham (1919–2009) and Forsythe (1949–) are choreographers who take space as their major site of aesthetic innovation. Questions of how to plot space through movement and how to work with existing models of spatial practice provide a major choreographic impetus for both of these artists, and both have developed radical new ways of choreographing space in twentieth-century classical and contemporary dance.⁴ In identifying the aesthetic principles that shape their spatial innovations, and asking how these principles are rooted in a particular social time and place, this thesis situates Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s respective choreographies in the contexts of the choreographic-spatial legacies that they inherit, and in the broader (socio-) historical landscape of their practice.

Defining a methodology: the societal context

A major methodological tenet of this thesis, which allows for an analysis of choreography sensitive to its social quality as an artistic practice, is that a given space does not contain human activity but is produced by that activity. If Lefebvre’s statement that “humanity, which is to say social practice, creates works and produces things” holds true, then *The Production of Space* sets out to prove that ‘space’ is not excluded from such ‘things’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 71). It is in this sense that Lefebvre introduces his project as an attempt

to understand space as neither a purely material or physical thing (“nature, the Cosmos”), nor a mental thing belonging to the ‘absolutes’ of the Platonic tradition (which includes also the science of mathematics and its “logical and formal abstractions”) (ibid.: 11). He argues instead for the importance of a “unitary theory” that moves across different fields of enquiry. Such a theory aims to coordinate “logico-epistemological space [the field of the mental]... [and] the space occupied by sensory phenomena [the field of the physical]” along with a third kind of space, “the space of social practice” (ibid.: 11-12). The ultimate objective of his project is to demonstrate that this third kind of space – that in which ‘social practice’ takes place – can be reduced neither to a collection of material and sensibly perceptible things nor to an absolute and empty ‘container’ that exists before and outside of human agency. This third space is brought into existence only by people as they act together to ‘create works and produce things’ and, as such, it has a “social character” that subsumes the physical and mental characteristics ascribed to it in previous intellectual projects (ibid.: 27).

According to Lefebvre’s unitary theory, when a choreographer is given a performance space with which to work – a proscenium stage in an opera house, for instance – they do not work simply within an inert and neutral material structure but also with the traces of human activity that have produced (and continued to produce) this space. That is, they do not create dance inside a kind of empty shell, but they choreograph with a piece of architecture that was conceived, constructed, and used by human beings – a history of use into which they now intervene. Indeed, by their intervention, they continue to produce this space anew, shaping it with the new configurations of their practice. It is important to note that any space – and not just those spaces constructed *materially* by human beings – can be included in this framework because, according to Lefebvre’s rubric, any space that is traversed or even perceived by people (the space of the ‘natural’ world, for example) is,

in a sense, constructed by them.⁵ This understanding of space as a product of a human organising-activity is what allows for the contention, central to this thesis, that the shaping of formal space is related to broader societal forces, structures, and ideals. A space created choreographically is formal, but is at the same time social because it is shaped by human beings as they exist and act in the context of their broader societal landscape. Lefebvre's notion of 'social space' is useful here to describe this landscape and designates the first way in which 'context' is brought to the fore of this analysis.

Lefebvre uses the term social space to describe the local environment that both is produced by and that envelopes the interaction of a set of social practices (incorporating all activities engaged by a particular social group, be they of a primarily cultural, economic, or political nature) at a given period in time. "Social space" maintains Lefebvre, both is "the outcome of a sequence and set of operations" and also "subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships" (Lefebvre, 1991: 73). It is "not a thing but rather a set of relationships between things" – both the product of these relationships, and, reciprocally, the environment that delimits, affects, and ultimately governs them (ibid.: 83). The concept of a social space, therefore, also facilitates a further 'unity' in Lefebvre's unitary theory of space and social life more broadly. By this logic, human organising-activities can no longer be segregated for analysis into isolated fields ('economic' as opposed to 'artistic', for example), but are unified in the locus of their shared social space: an environment "traversed by myriad currents" of activity, which together make up and operate within one, wider field of interconnecting social action (ibid.: 88).

All of this indicates that a production of *space* through the (primarily) artistic activity of choreography is a process in which all sorts of activities operating within the social space are implicated. This idea, in turn, can be refined for an analysis of art works more

precisely by considering Pierre Bourdieu's more specified but compatible concept of *champ* or 'field'. Bourdieu's sociology of artistic practice, and of culture more broadly, aims to guard against the analytical tendency (emblematised in the formulation 'art for art's sake') to understand art works – their production, distribution, and consumption – through a consideration of aesthetics alone.⁶ According to Bourdieu, it is essential to understand “works of art as a manifestation of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated” (Bourdieu, 1993: 37). Artistic practice, for Bourdieu, should be understood as taking place within a 'field of production' – a specified arena for a given practice that both sits within the “social field” more broadly and, like Lefebvre's 'hyper complex' social space, is traversed by a number of social operations that do not stop at entry to this field just because its primary activity is an aesthetic one (Bourdieu, 1985: 196).

Appropriating Bourdieu's matrix of concepts for a study of theatrical productions, Maria Shevtsova lists such operations as they exist in the field of theatre as “creative-artistic and technical... as well as... societal and infrastructural ones”, expanding 'infrastructural' to include “spectatorial, administrative, managerial, publicist” activities, each of which contribute to setting the particular possibilities that delimit the aesthetic activity of that field (Shevtsova, 2002: 35).

Taken together, then, Lefebvre's 'social space' and Bourdieu's 'field' are conceptual tools for identifying the ways in which human productions (including artistic productions) are embedded within, shaped by, and generate multi-dimensional societal contexts.

Rephrased to address the central question of this thesis, any aspect of a particular choreography of space – for example, the decision made by a classical choreographer to abandon the proscenium arch as a playing space – should be understood as the result not of a 'purely' aesthetic decision, but of a complex context made up of a variety of material

conditions and forces.⁷ It is important to note, however, that the ‘aesthetic decision’, as made by an individual or a group of artists, is not side-lined in this study. While Bourdieu’s ‘field’ is taken as an instigation to consider the objective-material conditions of artistic production, its associated concept of ‘habitus’, and the individual person to whom it refers, is not forgotten.

The concept of habitus is that which carves a place for the personal in Bourdieu’s theory of the social. It is defined by Derek Robbins as each person’s set of inherited “dispositions to act in a circumscribed way, [which is tied with] an inherited concept of society which they then modify, generating a new concept which is apt for their conditions and experiences” (Robbins, 2000: 26-7). With the notion of habitus, which Bourdieu qualifies as a “socialized subjectivity”, an artist’s decision to abandon the proscenium arch can be understood as neither a ‘purely’ aesthetic one, nor as a mechanistic response to a set of objective conditions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 126). It can be understood, instead, as a subjective interpretation of the restricted possibilities offered by those conditions, as filtered through the personal (but not asocial) creative capacities of the individual. This is the first sense in which the ‘laws of discrimination’ of a particular choreographed space, discussed above as the aesthetic principles of that space, can be understood as being socially situated. Each choreographic project considered in this thesis is performed by an individual artist (or artists) within a field of production and a broader social space. All of these contributing factors should be thought of together (they are, after all, not separate) as the very real energies and circumstances that shape the aesthetic content of any choreographic work.

The ‘laws of discrimination’ that ‘govern’ a choreographic space can be thought of as having an essentially social quality in another, related, and more pointedly ideological

sense. As part of his exposition of the theory that “(social) space is a (social) product”, Lefebvre introduces a necessary historicising dimension to his argument by suggesting that “every society produces... its own space” (Lefebvre, 1991: 30-31). It is this simple recognition of the specificity of each social space that enables Lefebvre to propose that every production of space is run through with ideological forces, an idea he expresses aphoristically by claiming: “*The space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space*” (ibid.: 289). For this thinker, the way in which space is organised in a given socio-historical context exists as part of a broader politics of organisation – political in the sense that it gives practical presence to a given ideology as it strives towards a particular social order. Lefebvre formulates the relationship of ideology to space in the following way:

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? [...] What we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and thus by taking on body therein. Ideology *per se* might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space.

(ibid.: 44)

As a socialist sociologist of space, Lefebvre locates a primary example of such a ‘discourse’ in the social space produced under “capitalism and neocapitalism”, which he discusses as a mode of production that configures a particular (economically articulated) social order (ibid.: 53). The space of capitalism, according to Lefebvre, is characterised by its abstraction of people, objects, and practices into formal units for exchange, and its organisation into “a vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities”, which gives shape to, embodies, and sustains this very ideology (ibid.).

Taken to speak more directly to a study of choreographic space, the notion that an ideology consists in and exerts its pressures through ‘a discourse upon social space’ is helpful for highlighting the sociopolitical import of the ‘laws of discrimination’ that exist in spatial productions. If an ideology comes into existence as a discourse upon social

space, then the aesthetic configurations of space that feed across that environment can be expected to act as sites for the embodiment of that ideology. Put another way, if ‘the space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space’, then it is hidden in formal spaces as they are organised by all varieties of social practice, including artistic practices such as choreography. In this sense, the ‘laws of discrimination’, or, the spatial aesthetic, that characterises a choreographic production of space can be understood (to differing extents in differing cases) as expressing a particular ideology. A basic example might be located in classical ballet as it was practised in nineteenth-century Russia. In this context, the strict and intricate social hierarchy that formed the ideological heart of Imperial court culture was expressed in the spatial hierarchy that pervaded the choreographies staged by the Imperial Ballet, the institution that was founded by, sponsored by, and that performed for the rulers of the Russian Empire (Chapman 2001: 3).

In borrowing Lefebvre’s consideration of space and ideology for a study of dance, it is especially important to acknowledge the differing ways and extents to which artistic practices participate in the expression of social ideals. Depending on the proximity of an artistic practice to the social institutions that produce and deal in the dominant ideology of a given social space, aesthetic form may or may not ‘give body’ to the relational model that describes the ‘ideal’ social order in this context. As is suggested above, for example, classical ballet’s formative basis in the monarchical courts of Europe gave rise to a spatial aesthetic that embodied the principles of social relation (hierarchy, for example), valued in these circumscribed contexts. Because of its very direct (and, in some cases, instrumental) relationship to the beneficiaries of the dominant ideology that was determined within and exerted across these social spaces, ballet’s ‘order of space’ clearly idealises a social order. However, in the case of a choreographer such as Cunningham, for example, the ideological character of choreographic space is more nuanced. Because

Cunningham's practice does not serve as a representational organ of an established political institution (such as the Russian Imperial court), his choreography is not designed or institutionalised as the expression of a political culture, and, as such, its 'order of space' is not expressive of a social order in the same way as the space of classical ballet. Nevertheless, Cunningham did work within the configurations of particular social spaces and, as shall be explored in this thesis, the principles of organisation that shaped his spatial aesthetic – especially when viewed in their contradistinction to the hierarchical model enshrined in ballet – can be contextualised against a set of social ideals that pervaded one of his earliest, professional-fostering environments.

Indeed, in choosing the practices of Cunningham and Forsythe as primary case studies for an exploration of the 'social character' of dance, this thesis turns its attention to the ideological character of choreographic space. This is primarily because of the very explicit use that both choreographers make of the spatial structures of classical ballet and the ideological content codified therein. Cunningham's and Forsythe's choreographies draw, in large part, from a pool of vocabulary and technical prescriptions belonging to ballet. While Cunningham's formal background lies in his early training in tap and vaudeville, and, later, the technique developed by his teacher, Martha Graham, his technical parentage also extends from classical ballet, in which he was trained at the School of American Ballet in New York City during the late 1930s and early 1940s (Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 38). His borrowings from ballet are shown clearly and broadly in the dance technique he developed after parting from Graham to work as an independent dance maker, with John Cage, in 1945. Forsythe's dance background, meanwhile, is rooted substantially in classical ballet. After training, from the late 1960s, in Florida with a former member of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet and later in New York at the Joffrey Ballet School, Forsythe performed as a dancer with Stuttgart

Ballet before focusing his energies, from the mid-1970s, on choreography. His choreographic work has evolved through his use and interrogation of the classical idiom, and ballet has been retained as an aesthetic impetus and technical resource throughout his oeuvre.

While Cunningham and Forsythe owe a debt to classical ballet, both make fundamental modifications to the classical model for organising space. Where ballet, for example, inscribes space through the principles of hierarchy, centrality, and stability, Cunningham removes a central point of organisation from his performance environment and Forsythe creates a space fundamentally in flux. Indeed, the major innovations that both have made to choreographic space, refer – by appropriation or repudiation – to the essential principles of classical-balletic spatiality. This point is taken as an invitation to pay special analytical attention to the socio-historical specificity of Cunningham's and Forsythe's spatial practice. In engaging with the principles of space embedded in classical ballet, they not only work with the formal precepts of classical space but also reformulate the political ideals on which these precepts were originally built. Both artists are actively concerned with the historical, and, for Forsythe, the ideological specificity of classical ballet. Cunningham, for instance, has spoken of ballet as “maintaining the image of Renaissance perspective in stage thought [and keeping] a linear form of space”, and Forsythe has revealed that he sees “the aesthetics of ballet... as the result of politics, which is very interesting indeed. The why, not just the what” (Cunningham, 1998c: 37; I. Brown et al., 2009). By starting with a focussed assessment of the historical and ideological specificity of the spatial aesthetics of classical ballet, this thesis sets out an analytical basis for assessing, in turn, the chronotopic specificity of Cunningham's and Forsythe's respective engagements with classical space. ‘Chronotope’ is used here, through Shevtsova's reading of Mikhail Bakhtin, to designate an historical time

(‘chronos’) and a geographical place (‘topos’), which together delineate a specific social space for any spatial production.⁸ It is this methodological orientation that allows the prefix ‘socio’ to accompany the historicising thread of this thesis. In observing the particular location of Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s choreographies in their respective fields and social spaces, the ideological significance of their amendments to the ‘laws of discrimination’ that shape the space of classical ballet can be brought into focus.

Thesis structure: the dance-historical context

The foregoing outline of the theory guiding this study is concerned primarily with the ‘context’ that is to be found in the social space that fosters any choreographic project. However, Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s choreography of space is placed in ‘context’ here in one other, related, sense. To assess their respective spatial practices in the light of their working environments and of the modifications they make to the space of classical ballet alone, would be to draw a very partial picture of their dance-historical context. By extension, this would be to make an incomplete handling of the fields of production and, indeed, of the broader social spaces within which each works. This is because none of these contextual environments can be thought of as static and synchronic, but as arenas for action that are alive to, constituted, and transformed over time. Shevtsova formulates the issue incisively when she states that “a given field is cumulative because it is transmitted historically, and... in the act of its transformation, its various parts accrue multiple roles and meanings” (Shevtsova, 2002: 41). To return to a recurring example, the choice to stage classical-balletic choreography within the proscenium arch – the selection of ‘venue’ holding, as Bourdieu shows, considerable significance in the field of theatrical production – means something quite different in 1653 to what it does in 1890, or even 1984.⁹ This is partly because this decision, as it is made in 1984 for instance, is shaded by the multiple ‘meanings’ that have accrued around the use of the proscenium in classical

ballet over the historical constitution of this field. This suggests that a fully contextualised study of Cunningham and Forsythe would need to take into account how their treatment of space is not only pertinent to their own time and place, but also mediated through existing models of spatial practice that have contributed to the diachronic formation of their artistic field/s. For this reason, this thesis traces its analysis of choreographic space through a series of spatial-aesthetic legacies that form either direct influences or enlightening antecedents to the choreographies of these two artists. Four contextual chapters (including a primary exploration of space in classical ballet) form a historical narrative of choreographic space that is useful for highlighting the innovations, and the chronotopic specificity, of Cunningham's and Forsythe's spatial aesthetics.

The first two chapters deal with, respectively, the historical formulation of the classical-balletic model for organising space, and the modernist artistic projects that reformulated this model to provide dance bases for the later practices of Cunningham and Forsythe. Chapter One, 'The Classical Model', engages in a sociopolitical history of spatial harmony in classical ballet. It traces the formulation of a distinctively 'harmonious' spatial aesthetic over key moments in ballet's historical consolidation: from its nascent practice by the nobility of fifteenth-century Italy, to its courtly performance and academic codification in pre-revolutionary France, to its choreographic crystallisation under Marius Petipa (1818–1910) in late Imperial Russia. Serving to articulate the essentially politicised nature of classical-balletic form, this chapter traces the relationship between the centrally calibrated spatial harmony that defines the classical model and the shifting ideals of 'social harmony' and centralised power that were produced in its fostering social spaces. It offers a necessarily restricted history of space in classical ballet (its exclusions are accounted for in the subsequent analysis), and one that speaks most clearly to the spatial innovations of Cunningham and Forsythe.

Chapter Two, ‘Classical Reforms in North America’, follows by considering the choreographic amendments made to the classical model by Balanchine (1904–1983) and Graham (1894–1991). It takes the former’s *Agon* (1957) and the latter’s *Frontier* (1935) as examples of how each artist modified the existing spatial precepts of classical ballet in their formulations of a deliberately ‘American’ form of dance in mid-century New York. Where Balanchine’s formalist expansion of Petipian classicism paved the way for Forsythe’s later work with ballet and Graham’s expressionist rejection of classical ‘artifice’ offers a context for Cunningham’s technical heritage and his later turn from expressionism, both of these choreographers staged essentialist conceptions of the ‘American-national’ spatial experience.

The third and fourth chapters consider experiments made by practitioners (not all of whom worked primarily as ‘choreographers’ in the strictest sense) whose spatial practices provide additional aesthetic contexts for understanding Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s choreographies of space. Chapter Three, ‘Movement Geometries in Pre-War Germany’, returns to notions of spatial harmony, this time in the German-speaking contexts of Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958) and Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) before the Second World War. Laban is included here because his theoretical study of the body’s behaviour in space (termed *choreutics* or ‘space harmony’) informs Forsythe’s ‘operations’ on the spatial prescriptions of classical ballet. Schlemmer is included, meanwhile, because the form of synthesised abstraction he developed as an aesthetic response to the processes of mechanisation he perceived in his social space, is very useful for bringing Cage’s and Cunningham’s later strands of technology-informed abstraction into relief. While expressing very different understandings of a bodily ‘geometry’ for dance, Laban’s space harmony and Schlemmer’s synthesis were embedded in concurrent programmes of

cultural regeneration in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, which jointly represent two sides of one coin as regards the idealisation of cultural ‘unity’ after the formation and industrialisation of the German nation state.

Returning to the North American, and advancing to the post-war context, Chapter Four represents the final of these contextualising studies. Titled ‘John Cage’s 1952 event’, the chapter focusses on the seminal performance organised by Cage (1912–1992) at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1952. This was an event to which Cunningham contributed at a formative time in his choreographic career and that took place in the same space that housed the inauguration of the Cunningham company the following year. By viewing the spatiotemporal logic of this performance in the light of John Dewey’s concept of a democratic social space (as interpreted in the ideal of ‘community’ that was cultivated at Black Mountain College) and of Marshall McLuhan’s notion of an ‘electronic age’, this chapter identifies Cage’s 1952 event as an aesthetic blueprint for Cunningham’s later choreography of space. It also serves to articulate the transition, in the trajectory of this thesis more broadly, from the form of technological engagement and its related form of spatial abstraction practised by Schlemmer in pre-war Germany to that developed by Cunningham in post-war North America.

The final two chapters deal directly with the spatial models developed by Cunningham, between the foundation of his company in 1953 and his final year of life in 2009, and by Forsythe between 1984 and 2003 – a period that charts his directorship of the Ballett Frankfurt. Using the spatial models outlined in the previous chapters as comparative frames, these two chapters locate the respective choreographic spaces of Cunningham and Forsythe in the social spaces of their practice. Chapter Five, ‘Merce Cunningham’s “No Fixed Points”’, weaves the spatial practices of Petipa, Graham, Schlemmer, and Cage into

a comparative framework for identifying the enduring principles of space that underpin Cunningham's six decades of choreography. His spatial aesthetic, which was orientated through varying methods of composition towards the creation of "no fixed points" is characterised through the principles of 'coexistence' and 'flexibility' (Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 18). These principles combine to describe a space defined by the equality, autonomy, and shifting interpenetration of its constituent parts. These principles are contextualised, in turn, using the chronotopic frames introduced in Chapter Four. They are understood firstly as expressing an ideal of democratic individualism specific to a strand of North American progressive thought and, secondly, as registering the new configurations of space and time perceived by McLuhan as defining the electronic age in the middle of the twentieth century.

The sixth and final chapter, 'William Forsythe and "A Space of Flows"' proceeds in a similar manner to the study of Cunningham, in weaving the spatial practices of Petipa, Balanchine, and Laban into a comparative framework for identifying the principles of space with which Forsythe consistently works. Cunningham's spatial model is also used as an initial point of comparison for highlighting the essentially 'connective' and 'emergent' nature of Forsythe's choreographic spaces, which coordinate points of equal importance into an all-over state of interactivity, and which, later in his oeuvre, become self-organising environments that emerge, in 'realtime', from internal flows of information. Forsythe's movement away from the structural permanence of the proscenium arch (in both professional and aesthetic terms) is taken as a frame for measuring his choreographic pursuit of spatial flux, so the chapter begins with his interrogation of classical space and closes with his creation of public installations, or 'choreographic environments'. The kind of space produced by this choreographer is contextualised in relation to the material-infrastructure working conditions in Frankfurt

am Main that contributed to his movement from opera house to warehouse. However, the spatial connectivity, procedural automation, and informational flows that are found across Forsythe's choreography are also contextualised in relation to the "space of flows" that was ushered in, from the 1980s onwards and according to Manuel Castells, at the commercial ubiquity of digital media (Castells, 2000: 406).

As with any piece of history, the above structure is the result of a series of inclusions and exclusions made on the part of the historian. For this reason, it is not the contention of this thesis that this space chronology is the singular means of outlining a dance-historical, or socio-historical, context for the work of Merce Cunningham and William Forsythe. The collective projects of the Judson Dance Theatre and the Tanztheater of Pina Bausch, for example, would certainly be essential for contextualising Cunningham's collaborative and Forsythe's textual-theatrical practices respectively. However, the logic of selection employed here is one that focusses on the very particular treatments of *space* made by the two artists in question. Accordingly, it works backwards, in a sense, through the particular spatial practices that either inform or bring into focus their choreographies of space. In the light of this logic, it is especially important to note that, of all the practitioners introduced above, Schlemmer is the only one whose work is not acknowledged as an explicit artistic influence by either Cunningham or Forsythe. His inclusion here, however, serves a distinct analytical purpose. Schlemmer's is a choreography of a space that is responsive to the 'industrial age' and its dominant mode of technological production (mechanisation). As such, it provides a concrete starting point for an important periodising thread of this thesis. Where Schlemmer made work in pre-war Germany that embodied his apprehension of the spatial logic of mechanical technologies, Cunningham made work in post-war America that embodied his understanding of the spatiotemporal experience

affected by electronic media, and Forsythe made work from the late twentieth century that embodies his modelling of computational procedure and the spatial processes of the 'digital age'.

It is also important to note that this thesis focusses its analysis, largely, on the production of choreographic and of broader social ideals, without always evaluating the imperfect extents to which these ideals are employed in practice. Chapter Five, for instance, takes Cunningham's principles of space as its subject but does not seek to make a thoroughgoing assessment of their practical realisation as perfectly consistent aspects of his studio and performance work. (For example, the inconsistency with which his principle of 'autonomy' is employed vis-à-vis the participation of his dancers.) Nor does it seek to interrogate fully the varying degrees of essentialism with which Cunningham himself discusses, in relation to these principles, broader paradigms of organisation identified in his social space. (For example, the rather deterministic sense in which both Cunningham and Cage, borrowing from McLuhan, understand the societal impact of electronic technologies.) Further still, the analysis does not engage in a comprehensive assessment of the ways that ideals of societal organisation, produced in particular social spaces, fall short of their rhetorical promise. (For example, the inconsistencies and contradictions with which Black Mountain College attempted to formulate itself as a 'democratic' community). Problems in all of these respects do occur and will be acknowledged, where appropriate, through the course of the analysis. However, any evaluative discourse further than this that seeks to account for practical inconsistency or conceptual reductionism within a coherent critical framework is beyond the scope of this thesis, which identifies spatially expressed aesthetic principles as being indicative, in themselves, of social ideals produced by and productive of particular social spaces.

As would befit a study focussed on space, these choreographic projects and their contexts are examined within the framework of five integrated ‘environments’ of different scale. When the word ‘space’ is used in this thesis, it is used to refer to any one or any combination of these environments. Moving from the largest sphere to the smallest, the first environment examined is the social space in which a choreographic project takes place, as defined above through Lefebvre. Over the course of this thesis, ‘social space’ might be used to refer to a nationally delimited society under the aegis of a dominant political programme (the social space of Imperial Russia, for example), or a local sub-culture aspiring towards a particular communal lifestyle (the social space of Black Mountain College, for example). The second environment examined is the ‘field of production’ in which artistic practice takes place, as defined above through Bourdieu. Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s practices cross over different artistic fields and so the fields of classical ballet and American modern dance are joined (for example) by the field of mixed-means theatre, a subset of the post-war, New York avant-garde. ‘Field’ is also taken to be suggestive here, as is consistent with Bourdieu’s use of the term, of a particular socioeconomic situation in which artistic productions are made, for example, the field of state-subsidised theatre in Frankfurt during the 1980s.

The third scale of environment is the material performance environment within which dance takes place. The performance environments considered in this thesis range from the proscenium stage of the Mariinsky Theatre of St Petersburg (for Petipa), to the hills surrounding Lago Maggiore in Southern Switzerland (for Laban), to the dining hall of Black Mountain’s Lake Eden campus (for Cage and Cunningham), to a disused tram depot in Frankfurt (for Forsythe). Each of these material spaces is examined for its societal as well as its formal configurations, and the way in which these configurations participate in choreographic processes. The final two environments considered are those

created primarily by the dancing body. The penultimate one is what Laban has termed “general space”, which describes the space into which bodies move when they travel from place to place (Laban, 1966: 10). This is a space that may be choreographed by setting the pathways made by a dancer, or dancers, as they travel around a given performance environment. The final environment that provides a major site for the analysis of choreographic ‘space’ in this thesis is what Laban has termed the “kinesphere” (ibid.). This term describes “the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extended limb”, and which is transported ‘with’ a dancer as they travel through general space (ibid.). The organisation of the kinesphere may take place through movements performed by the limbs, head, torso, and so on, or it may reside in the postural code of a given dance technique.

The way in which each of these five spheres (social space, field of production, performance environment, general space, kinesphere) is organised in the case of the choreographic projects analysed here indicates a particular production of space for each, which is characterised, in turn, by certain principles of organisation. In the case of the classical model, for example, certain spatial principles are transported directly from the broader social spaces of its formulation across the material environments of its performance, coming to permeate even the kinespheric arrangement of the balletic body. All of this suggests why the study of space is especially important for a sociologically orientated study of dance, because it facilitates an analytical movement between the ‘formal’ and the ‘social’ and an understanding of how these two categories are, in fact, mutually embedded.

Taken as a whole, this thesis makes its contribution to the field of dance scholarship in three, intertwined areas. The first, and primary, contribution is the development of a

methodological approach to studying dance that is sensitive to the social quality of choreographic aesthetics. In this respect, the thesis seeks to reconcile existing work in the field of British dance scholarship that stakes out methodological expertise in, respectively, the formalist and the sociological analysis of dance. Observing a tendency in dance studies more broadly towards a disciplinary separation of ‘formalism’ and ‘contextualism’ in the analytical method, Mark Franko has called for a “better integrat[ion]” of these two approaches (Franko, 2007: 18). The kind of analytical model developed here addresses this call by restoring contextual detail to its handling of the aesthetics of dance, and, likewise, by locating the aesthetics of dance at the foreground of its sociological focus.

More specifically, the thesis develops a treatment of choreographic space that seeks, firstly, to address the lack of socio-historical contextualisation in existing studies of dance space – especially those that practise a kind of ‘formalist’ approach to dance analysis within analytical frameworks borrowed from critical theory. An example of this kind of exploration of space in dance can be found in Valerie Briginshaw’s *Dance, Space, Subjectivity* (2001). Briginshaw adopts the concepts and language of French post-structuralist thinkers (for example, Jacques Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ and Gilles Deleuze’s ‘becoming’) for her study of subjectivity, and, especially, the destabilisation of subjectivity in the work of “postmodern” choreographers including Forsythe (Briginshaw, 2001: 7). Owing to its clear conceptual and interpretive parameters this is not a strictly formalist study of choreographic space. However, the focus of Briginshaw’s analysis suggests that this study, nevertheless, treats space as a matter of ‘form’. For example, she states, vis-à-vis her selection and use of post-structuralist theories:

They are all concerned with the ways in which subjectivity is constructed in and by discourse, and with critiquing the premises of Western philosophy which revolve around the concept of an ideal, rational, unified, subject, which, in turn, relies on... seeing things in terms of binary thinking. These premises result in constructions of

subjectivity in choreography and performance, where the spectator is positioned conventionally as subject and the performer as object in particular relationships to space, time and discourse.

(ibid.: 8-9)

Briginshaw conceives of dance space here as a formal substance (or strategy) according to which performers may be positioned in relation to one another and to spectators of the theatrical event. According to her use of post-structuralist thought, spatial organisation is in possession of what she terms “ideological, philosophical and political parameters” only in relation to the kind of perceptual interventions it can make into the binary construction of spectator/subject–performer/object (ibid.: 8). In other words, space is political insofar as it is an organising feature of perception and, thus, has the potential to (de)stabilise how things are seen, as well as the subject-object positions that crystallise around the act of seeing. The major way in which this thesis on choreographic space differs from Briginshaw’s is its understanding that space is ‘political’ not because it (re)organises subjectivity through perceptual means, but because it is socially produced and, thus, bears the imprints of the social conditions of its production. By extension, the methodology developed here conceives of space as extending beyond the relationships that exist between performers and spectators in a given performance space. It works with an expanded concept of ‘space’ that incorporates also the relationships and ideals of human relationality that exist in the broader artistic fields and social spaces that make up the socio-historical contexts in which dance is made.

In maintaining a close analytical proximity between the aesthetic principles of choreographic space (form) and the principles of socio-spatial organisation found in the societal environments of dance production (context), this thesis also formulates the issue of a ‘sociology of dance’ slightly differently to a major existing methodological framework in this area, as developed by Helen Thomas. For Thomas, this kind of study would involve analysing dance from two, separate, perspectives: the ‘extrinsic’ and the

‘intrinsic’. She states to this effect: “The extrinsic perspective that involves analysing the social, denotative features of dance and the intrinsic perspective that considers the aesthetic, connotative features, stand in a tense relation to each other” (Thomas, 1995: 28). Starting from this proposition, Thomas shows her focus to be the relationship of dance to broader cultural, social, and economic institutions, without consistently investigating how these relationships are expressed in the aesthetic content of choreographic works and processes. The result of this separation of ‘extrinsic’ and ‘intrinsic’ perspectives is shown in her placement of her study’s only fully-fleshed formal dance analysis (of Graham’s *Appalachian Spring*) as a concluding chapter that is separated out from her, otherwise, thoroughgoing exploration of the socio-historical contexts of American modern dance (ibid.: 149-166).

Where this thesis differs from Thomas’s socially orientated model is its conviction that ‘extrinsic’ and ‘intrinsic’ perspectives on dance should not fall into separate analytical categories used, albeit together, to illuminate separate dimensions of dance practice (‘the social’ and ‘the aesthetic’ respectively). They should be understood, instead, as inseparable perspectives because they illuminate dimensions of dance that are, themselves, inseparable. That is to say – following Lefebvre’s contention that (social) space is a (social) product – the analysis of the ‘aesthetic features’ of dance is the analysis of aesthetic features that have been socially produced. In this sense, the primary objective of this project is to reconcile ‘formalist’ and ‘contextualist’ approaches to dance scholarship into a methodology that locates aesthetic form in its societal context, and that sees societal contexts expressed in aesthetic form. As such, the thesis finds its primary methodological model not in dance studies, but in the sociology of the theatre as it has been formulated as a discipline by Shevtsova, and in particular, in her outlining of a model for a ‘sociocultural’ performance analysis. This model is especially useful to this

project and given the foregoing discussion, as it is predicated on a conviction that form and context are inseparable. Shevtsova explains:

The fundamental problem of sociocultural performance analysis concerns the relationship between performances and the sociocultural contexts in which they are generated. To say this is by no means to propose a dualistic system, with performances and contexts in separate categories. On the contrary, contexts are present in performances: performances, while happening, are processes of performing contexts, since the latter are present in them not only in their subject matter [...] but in the very way they are done.

(Shevtsova, 2001: 46-7)

Shevtsova's focus on 'the very way' that performances 'are done' is especially suggestive for this thesis, as it speaks to the reason that space has been selected as a conceptual lynchpin for a new methodology in the sociology of dance. As stated above in relation to the five spheres of spatial environment that form the integrated foundation of this thesis's analytical model, the (specifically Lefebvrian) concept of space facilitates an organic analytical movement between what Thomas would term 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' perspectives on dance because it posits that space it is *at once* social and formal. By understanding social contexts to be present in 'the very way' that formal space is organised in a given artistic production, therefore, a sociology of dance can be advanced through the qualitative study of the aesthetics of choreographic space.

Developing this methodology through a series of circumscribed case studies, the thesis makes its second contribution to dance scholarship, and, in some cases, to theatre and performance studies more broadly. Its exploration of the spatial practices of classical ballet, Balanchine and Graham, Laban and Schlemmer, and Cage could all exist (and could properly be expanded into) stand-alone studies of these varying forms and practitioners and their respective spatial aesthetics. By exploring each of these case studies using the space-analytical model outlined above, analyses are proposed for each that situate these artistic projects in the specific chronotopes of their production. As such, dimensions of these practices are accounted for in new ways that lend socio-historicising

detail to their existing treatments in works of dance scholarship (and in the case of Cage) of performance scholarship more broadly. When viewed together, however, these case studies do not stand alone but in diachronic relation, and together form the third and final contribution of this thesis. Presented as a chronicle of spatial production that fosters the spatial practices of Cunningham and Forsythe, these studies combine to produce a focussed socio-historical context through which to make novel readings of the choreography produced by these two artists. It is through the specificities of these individual case studies and, ultimately, their intertwining into a specific contextualisation of the choreographic space produced by Cunningham and Forsythe, that foundations are laid for a dance scholarship built around the idea of space as social product.

Chapter One: The Classical Model

In March 1661 Louis XIV sent instructions to Parliament that he was founding the Académie Royale de Danse, the first institution dedicated to the professional practice of classical ballet. Under the aegis of the Parisian Academy, dance was to be regulated through a pedagogical statute, recognised as an autonomous art form, and practised in the name of the monarch. In the same month that this royal mandate was delivered, Louis declared himself First Minister of France, assuming this title after the recent death of Cardinal Mazarin and taking primary control of his country's governance. Since the death of his father Louis XIII in 1643, and even at his majority in 1651, Louis had ruled France at a remove. However, in 1661 Louis placed himself at the administrative centre of his kingdom, consolidating his public authority and orchestrating what Nannerl Keohane has called "the zenith of absolutism in France" (Keohane, 1980: 258). That these two events occurred in the same month and at the personal behest of the king does not in itself attest to an intrinsic connection between them, although, as will be explored in this chapter, the founding of the Académie Royale de Danse at this time was not without its political motivations. However, the precise historical coincidence of ballet's consecration as an academic art and the peak of absolutism as a tendency in early modern European governance is highly suggestive when contextualising the formalisation of this art in relation to the dominant political ideals that permeated its earliest fostering spaces.

Included in the 1663 publication of Louis's *Lettres Patentes* for the founding of his Dance Academy is a discourse on the dance that outlines its aesthetic character:

Dance will say that the King, who has not neglected any of the beautiful practices that can grace his Royal Majesty, has not disdained to employ his marvellous address, received from heaven for all beautiful exercises, in dancing, which he knows to perfection, and that he himself is the Protector of his Academy.

(*Lettres Patentes*, in Franko, 1993: 185)¹⁰

This assertion, made on the behalf of a personified ‘dance’, not only binds the figure of the king with the future practice of the art but also suggests the highest objective of this art to be the attainment of ‘beauty’ in action. It is here that the aesthetic basis of classical ballet can be discerned and its socio-historical specificity inferred. The type of space formulated in the practice of ballet, which from hence forth will be referred to as ‘the classical model’, is cradled in the Renaissance notion of beauty as an aesthetic order. In this model, the constituent portions of a space are arranged according to a principle of harmony, where all parts are harnessed into a mutually coordinated whole and stabilised through a central point of organisation. This model forms the spatial foundation of classical ballet; it persists in varying degrees over the form’s varying historical manifestations, and is referred to directly in the choreographies of Cunningham and Forsythe.

The classical model of space is neither transhistorical nor apolitical, and the above passage of the *Lettres Patentes* offers an example of how the Renaissance notion of beauty, as it was incorporated in classical dancing, came to carry a pointed political charge. According to this mandate, dance is an art form fitted for royal patronage not simply because the king is expert in it but, more precisely, because it is deemed beautiful – an aesthetic state already part of the king’s divine endowment (‘received from heaven’). Because Louis XIV’s claim to absolute power drew legitimation from the notion of a divine right to rule, it became essential that an impression of this monarch’s proper celestial alignment were given through his actions.¹¹ As the first art to be furnished with an Academy since the king’s accession and as the primary art practised by the king himself, ballet served such a function, and did so in its constitution around a spatial model pertaining to harmony in form. The very grace of conduct conveyed in the ‘beautiful exercise’ of the dance signalled, for Louis, the particular kind of power he wished to

display: that which is bestowed by the grace of God for the harmonious rule of His kingdom on earth.¹² At its academic institution in 1661, then, ballet was both bound to the figure of the king and expressive of an aesthetic order useful for the representation of that king's right to rule.

Classical ballet's aesthetic roots in a form of 'well-ordered' spatial harmony and its subsequent use in the expression of a 'just' power in those who sponsored it, both predates and extends beyond Louis XIV's royal patronage of the form. The following analysis looks to key moments in classical ballet's historical formulation – from its nascent practice in fifteenth-century Italy, to its academic codification in pre-revolutionary France, to its choreographic crystallisation in late Imperial Russia – where its form pronounces a centrally calibrated spatial harmony. It seeks to contextualise these iterations of the classical model in the environments that produced them, and specifically in relation to contemporary ideals of a hierarchically constituted social harmony. As such, the classical model of space and its proximity to shifting ideals of hierarchical order (and, increasingly, to power that is figured as absolute) will be traced over four stages of its historical consolidation.

First to be considered are the earliest records of the dance forms that would develop into classical ballet: the mid-fifteenth-century treatises of dancing masters who were attached to the courts of dynastic families across northern Italy. These treatises suggest an alignment of the nobility's dance practice with social ideals contained in contemporary humanist thought, and evidence an incipient example of ballet's co-option as a spectacle of power by those who first sponsored and performed it. The second stage of ballet's history taken up here concerns the development of the French *ballet de cour* in the courts of the Valois and the Bourbon monarchs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of

special interest is the use of the *ballet de cour* – established under Catherine de Medici and perfected under Louis XIV – as a spatial expression of monarchical power that was striving, increasingly, towards the ideal of absolute sovereignty. The third stage of this history proceeds directly from Louis’s subsequent foundation of the Académie Royale de Danse and concerns the academic codification of ballet in technical manuals produced by French and Italian pedagogues over the eighteenth century. While the significant shifts in the cultural and political landscape of this century distanced ballet from its royal symbolism under the Sun King (as did, accordingly, the reorientation of ballet at this time as a professionalised theatrical art), the principles of space instructed in these manuals sustained the same model of organisation espoused in seventeenth-century political philosophy. The fourth and final stage of this history – representing the crystallisation of the classical model in the balletic canon – concerns the choreography of classicism on the Imperial stages of late nineteenth-century Russia. With *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), Petipa and Ivan Vsevolozhsky looked back to the political culture and aesthetic principles enshrined in the court ballets of Louis XIV, and produced what has been labelled the “ur-text of classical dance” (Genné, 2000: 149). Petipa’s choreographic materialisation of the classical model orientated a harmonious spatiality towards the absolutist aspirations – and anxieties – of his Tsarist patrons.

Absent from this chronicle is the analysis of certain genres, periods, and innovations in the practice of classical ballet that are essential to any thoroughgoing history of the form. These include, as a skeletal set of examples: the Enlightenment-era performance genre of the *ballet d’action*, developed according to principles set down by Georges Noverre in his *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (1760); the participation of ballet in the Romantic movement, epitomised in 1832 when Marie Taglioni rose *en pointe* in her father’s *La Sylphide*; the technical revisions and pedagogical legacy instituted by Carlo Blasis at La

Scala in the mid-nineteenth century; and the revolutions in the aesthetic, institutional, and material production of classical dance by Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The exclusion of these key 'moments', and others, from the history elaborated here is not made solely in service of the practicable scope of this first chapter and the thesis as a whole. The stages of ballet's history selected for analysis are those exhibiting, as indicated previously, an especially pronounced formulation of the 'classical model' of *space*. This is a model which, in its arch legibility, its strict conveyance of classical perspective, and its maintenance of a totalising proportion among parts, speaks most clearly to the innovations made by Cunningham and Forsythe in their respective choreographies of space. Because of its prominence in environments that fostered a practical rhetoric of hierarchical power, this aesthetic through-line is also essential for enunciating the socio-historical specificity and the politicised motivations of Cunningham's and Forsythe's treatments of classical form.

Fifteenth-century dance treatises and humanist notions of harmony

The middle decades of the fifteenth century saw the production of three treatises that, between them, represent the earliest surviving, systematic record of formalised dance practice in Europe (Nevile, 2008a: 7). They were written by dancing masters who worked for a constellation of ruling families based in northern Italian city-states including Milan, Florence, Ferrara, and Urbino.¹³ Domenico da Piacenza's *On the Art of Dancing and Conducting Dances* was written in 1455 and was followed by two further treatises penned by his students: Antonio Cornazano's *Book on the Art of Dancing* (1455) and Guglielmo Ebreo's *On the Practice or the Art of Dancing* (1463). These texts were dedicated to the princes, dukes, and oligarchs who patronised the dancing masters and employed them as teachers to their families and to compose dances for events at their respective residences. Significantly, in terms of the history traced here, they include details of the steps,

gestures, and performance genres – as well as the philosophical justifications for dancing – that would precipitate the development of classical ballet.

The courtly dancing these treatises were designed to record and refine took a number of forms, and took place in a number of contexts in this period. Dances were hosted, for example, by the Medici *Signores* in the republic of Florence and by the Sforza Dukes in their court at Milan. Dancing took place both inside family residences, as part of informal balls, and in major, outdoor piazzas as part of official state occasions such as weddings or the reception of a visiting dignitary. The dances themselves were performed in these environments both as social diversion – a post-banquet amusement – and as dedicated theatrical entertainment, as with the late century *intermedii*, staged as part of composite spectacles given at grander court occasions. The people who performed and watched these dances were members of the hosting families and their guests (“aristocratic men and women, courtiers, ambassadors, princes of the church”), and the men who composed these dances – the aforementioned dancing masters – were increasingly employed in an official capacity by these families (Nevile, 2008a: 33).¹⁴ Despite the diversity in the conditions and format of these events, dance, for the social elite of Quattrocento Italy, acted consistently as a sign of social status. Indeed, the dances that were organised, sponsored, and participated in by the ruling families of this time provided an arena for the display and consolidation of dynastic power.

Steven Gunn suggests that the lack of monarchical status held by some potentates of early modern Europe led to a heightened need for their public display of personal power.

Through reference to the Medici – a dynasty that rose to Florentine authority in the 1430s through mercantile and banking routes – he argues the following:

Rulers without the military and political might and genuinely distinguished ancestry of a Habsburg or a Valois had a... greater need to create the illusion of

unchallengeable power. The Medici [...] proceeded to secure their power by many means [...] including] lavish patronage of the arts. Fresco cycles, equestrian statues, triumphal arches, public spectacles, and proto-operas with amazing stage machinery all rewrote Florentine history to show its progression towards the perfection of Medicean princely rule. Spectators were awed into submission.

(Gunn, 2001: 117)

Gunn's observation highlights one of the major strategies of power that links most of the elite patrons considered in this chapter: a placement of the arts at the heart of their state's cultural programme. The Medici and their contemporaries in fifteenth-century Italy used their 'lavish patronage of the arts' to produce public works conveying themes favourable to their personal narratives of power. They also displayed, by the very spectacle of these works, their taste and magnificence as cultural sponsors, and the nobility's dancing events of this period participated in such a display. Dancers in courtly entertainments portrayed mythological characters in an allegorical celebration of individual patrons, and the heightened spectacle of many of these events, which could incorporate "rich costumes, masks, headgear, scenery, and special effects", attested to the wealth and splendour of those who produced them (Sparti, 1996: 44). However, while public dance performances were used by the ruling dynasties in what Barbara Sparti has termed a "conspicuous display of wealth [...] as] a policy of personal power", of greater interest here is how dancing – as it was defined in the treatises listed above – came to act as a sign of power in the bodies of those who performed it through its associations with humanist notions of harmony (ibid.).

The concept of harmony was enshrined as a major cultural value of the Italian Renaissance, and was articulated, predominantly, in the fifteenth-century thought and visual-artistic practice that joined dance as a legatee of noble patronage. Humanism, characterised by Gene Brucker as the renewed philosophical interest in sources of classical antiquity rooted in a re-established "*studia humanitatis*", took up (among others)

Platonic and Neoplatonic discourses and shaped major innovations in fields such as architecture, painting, and sculpture (Brucker, 1969: 230). The philosopher Marsilio Ficino, for example, was the first to translate Plato's complete works into Latin (published in 1484) and, in 1463, was given a villa at Careggi by Cosimo de Medici for the consolidated study of this philosopher and of his Roman interpreters, including Plotinus (Allen, 2002: xiii-xiv). Likewise, Leon Battista Alberti, who, in 1465, received the young Lorenzo de Medici as his personal student in Rome, offered one of the strongest voices on Renaissance classical aesthetics (Darr, 2002: 1). He published on the art of painting (1435) and principles of architecture (1452) and turned to Greco-Roman sources for doctrine and inspiration. The Italian dancing masters, who traversed the same courtly networks as these theorists, came to frame their art of dancing through recourse to the same body of thought (Nevile, 2004: 20; Berghaus, 1994: 55-56). Guglielmo Ebreo's treatise of 1463 draws particularly from the humanist notion of harmony in its presentation and praise of the dance; indeed, "*Ermonia*" appears as the first word of his text (Ambrosio, 1995: 122).¹⁵ By considering the appearance of a culturally specific notion of harmony as both an ontological and an aesthetic category in Guglielmo's text, an explanation can be offered of how the mastery of dance indicated, in this context, an elevated social position for the nobility who practised it.

The first way in which Guglielmo invokes a notion of harmony commensurate with that espoused in humanist thought is through his praise of dance as a human activity that is in concert with the movement of the soul. A consonance of inner and outer movement is orchestrated, according to Guglielmo, by music, which acts as a conduit for a broader harmonic order by stirring spiritual activity that is then expressed in the act of dancing. In the opening passage of the treatise, Guglielmo gives a philosophical justification for this art:

The virtue of dancing is an external demonstration of spiritual *movimenti* which corresponds with the orderly, arranged and perfect consonances of the harmony. This descends with delight through our hearing to the brain and the warm senses, where certain sweet sympathetic *movimenti* are generated. [...] This action from the sweetness and melody is drawn to the exterior when the body is dancing.

(Ambrosio, 1995: 126)

Guglielmo's characterisation of dance resonates with contemporary understandings of macro- and microcosmic harmony, which were informed by Platonic (and ultimately Pythagorean) theories of a universal mathematics holding in consonance the different spheres of existence (Pont, 2008: 269). Ficino's writings on music, the body, and the soul frame such a theory within a Christian metaphysic, and read consistently alongside Guglielmo's estimation of dancing. In his letter to Antonio Canigani 'On Music', written in the mid fifteenth century and published in 1495, Ficino states that

the soul and the body are in harmony with each other by a natural proportion as are the parts of the soul and the parts of the body. [...] anyone who has learned from the Pythagoreans, from the Platonists... that the universal soul and body, as well as each living being, conform to musical proportion, or who had learnt from the sacred writings of the Hebrews that God has ordered everything according to number, weight and measure, will not be surprised that nearly all living beings are made captive by harmony.

(Ficino, 1975: 142-3)

For Ficino, as for Guglielmo, the harmonic order understood to hold the cosmos in alignment manifests itself not only in the melodic properties of music but also in the material presence of the body. In this formulation, when dancing arises from music it presents a corporeal expression of the soul and, in turn, a microcosmic expression of a universally extended harmony.

The humanist construction of equivalence between the body, soul, and cosmic order offers an especially heightened illustration of Bourdieu's thesis regarding the social valuation of bodily organisation. In so doing, it indicates how the dance practice of the fifteenth-century Italian elite was invested with a robust potential for the display of

personal power. *The Logic of Practice* (1980) advances the argument that a socially produced value system can be internalised in the attitudes of the body. This is especially the case, suggests Bourdieu, in settings where socially learnt corporeal behaviours are understood to express inherent and enduring states of being and where a person's positioning in physical space is held to be analogous to their 'natural' position in the social space. Bourdieu elaborates on this vis-à-vis the special significance bestowed on physical space as it is plotted through bodily movement:

When the elementary acts of bodily gymnastics [...] are highly charged with social meanings and values, socialization instils a sense of equivalence between physical space and social space and between movement... in the two spaces and thereby roots the most fundamental structures of the group in the primary experiences of the body.
(Bourdieu, 1990: 71)

This postulation might find clear evidential basis in the courtly networks of the Italian families who patronised, read, and practised the humanist figuration of harmony contained in the texts cited above. In this context, where the movements of the body were held to be directly analogous to the movements of the soul and of the cosmos, the dancing practised by the nobility had the potential to legitimate their elevated social status by its expression of their appropriate alignment with the divinely sanctioned harmonic order. It is in this sense that courtly dance functioned, in the words of Jennifer Nevile, as a "social marker" by which the elite groups of Quattrocento Italy "made themselves appear superior and inaccessible to the rest of society" (Nevile, 2008b: 80-81). If the special position that these families occupied at the highest strata of the social hierarchy was not to be supported, as Gunn suggests, by a 'genuinely distinguished ancestry', then it could nevertheless be justified by a personal 'virtue' (to borrow Guglielmo's term) that descended from the cosmic hierarchy and was displayed in their bodies as they danced.

In order to express their correct alignment with a macrocosmic harmony, the Italian nobility's bodily behaviour needed to demonstrate an internal harmony of form. This

necessity pertains to a second notion of harmony elaborated in the Italian Renaissance and that underpins the classical model of space: its existence as an aesthetic category. Again following Platonic thought, harmony was understood by humanists as a natural scheme that both held the different spheres of existence in alignment and pervaded the internal structures of these spheres – hence Ficino’s suggestion that a ‘natural proportion’ establishes a harmony between the soul and the body, and between the parts of the body itself. This concept was carried most expressly in branches of humanist thought dealing with the question of beauty. In *On the Art of Building* (1452), for example, Alberti offers a definition of beauty that locates the value of this order in the same ‘universal mathematics’ referred to above:

Beauty is a form of sympathy and consonance of the parts within a body, according to a definite number, outline and position, as dictated by *concinnitas* [congruity], the absolute and fundamental rule in Nature. This is the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority, and worth.

(Alberti, 1988: 303 [IX: 5])

The notion that formal beauty is rooted in a mathematically expressible harmony of parts was stated across the spatial practice of the Italian Renaissance. It was manifested, just over a decade after Alberti’s text was published, in Guglielmo’s writings on dance (Brucker, 1969: 240-1, 250-1).

Following his philosophical remarks on ‘the virtue’ of dancing, Guglielmo sets out the aesthetic principles to be observed in the practice of this art. The first he lists as “*Misura*”, and he calls for the exercise of measure in a dancer’s plotting of bodily gestures and of floor patterns (Ambrosio, 1995: 127). That Guglielmo chose to privilege this principle in his treatise (as do all the dancing masters listed above), is revealing of the importance that spatial harmony held for this nascent form of ballet (Nevile, 2004: 78). For Guglielmo, the physical environment configured by a courtly dancer’s movements was expected to display the same kind of balance and consonance between parts as those architectural

works deemed beautiful by Alberti. Indeed, Günter Berghaus views this *Misura* as rooting Guglielmo's treatise not only in the artistic culture sponsored by the fifteenth-century Italian elite, but also in the humanist ontology that gave this culture a philosophical basis. Referring to the Platonic discourse taken up in the syncretic philosophy of Christian thinkers such as Ficino, Berghaus suggests that Guglielmo's "measured system of dance fulfils all the requirements Plato sets out for a true art that reflects the eternal goodness and the absolute beauty of God's creation" (Berghaus, 1994: 58).¹⁶ It was through the spatial proportion with which they shaped their dance, then, that the fifteenth-century Italian elite could display their embodiment of a universal, and divine, principle of beauty.

Bourdieu's suggestion that a 'sense of equivalence' exists in certain contexts between physical and social space takes on even greater significance here. The dances that these noble families performed, and the permanent bodily attitudes that they were trained to adopt, indicated their right to an elevated social position only in and through the mastery of a 'well-ordered' partitioning of physical space. Their correct alignment with the divine order and, by extension, their display of an inherent virtue necessary for the proper assumption of social authority, were affirmed not simply in the practice of dancing but in dancing that showed beauty in its harmonious spatial practice. This confluence of humanist ontology and aesthetics in the dance culture of the fifteenth-century Italian elite underpins the nascent formulation of classical spatiality and the special character of its initial political charge. As recorded by Guglielmo, the dancing of this period precipitated a deliberately harmonious production of space. It aspired to a bodily articulation that could assure a consonance of parts and the balance of the whole, and these principles came to form the enduring spatial prescriptions of classical ballet technique, transcribed as such in the later, academic manuals of the eighteenth century. However, before its

academic codification was initiated, this spatial model continued to evolve in the context of ballet's maturation as a courtly practice, and did so beyond its production by the oligarchs of Quattrocento Italy.

On his return to France in 1499 after his military campaign in Milan, Louis XII brought with him Guglielmo's treatise on the art of dancing (McGowan, 2008: 4). Following this, Margaret McGowan has argued that the dance practice developed in the monarchical courts of sixteenth-century France was deeply influenced by Italian sources like Guglielmo's text, and also by the travelling Italian musicians and dancing masters installed as employees of the French court (ibid.: 31). She suggests that this migration of Italian courtly dance to the royal spaces of sixteenth-century France was bolstered, from 1533, with Catherine de Medici's marriage to the future king Henri II (ibid.: 32). Catherine's residency in the French court initiated a new enthusiasm for the practice of dance and "confirmed Italian styles of dancing" as dominant in this context (ibid.). However, the "altogether different character" that courtly dancing developed under Catherine's reign in France, first as queen consort and then as queen mother, induced an explicitly theatricalised genre, the *ballet de cour*, which represents a new stage in the formulation of the classical model of space (ibid.: 151). During its two 'golden eras', first under Catherine de Medici's later reign and later under Louis XIV's rise to power, the *ballet de cour* maintained the harmonious space described above and increasingly concentrated this model around a central locus of organisation. Through their patronage of this genre, these monarchs took up ballet's established potential for the conveyance of political might and orientated it towards their respective representations of a centralised monarchical authority.

The *ballet de cour* and monarchical power

The first *ballet de cour* is predominantly deemed by historians to be *Le Balet comique de la Reine*, performed on 15 October 1581 in the Salle de Bourbon of the Louvre (Prest, 2008: 230). This performance was given as part of a fortnight of festivities celebrating the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse, a favourite of the king Henri III, and Marguerite de Lorraine, the sister of the queen. Louise of France was in fact the primary sponsor of this ballet and tasked its production to Balthasar de Beaujoyeux, the Italian musician and choreographer who had been working for the French court since his appointment in 1555 by Henri's mother, Catherine de Medici (McGowan, 2008: 12). The *Balet comique* was descended from a number of earlier entertainments sponsored by Catherine – the *Paradis d'amour* (1572) and the *Ballets des Polonais* (1573) among them – and represents the consolidation of a genre of courtly spectacle that privileged Catherine's "favourite art" of dancing (Prest, 2008: 239 n.6; McGowan, 1994: 175-6). Like previous Catherinian court entertainments, the *Balet comique* was a composite theatrical performance consisting of dedicated phrases of movement, declaimed text, music, and elaborate scenic design. It narrated a libretto composed by Beaujoyeux and was performed by a combination of hired professionals and nobility, including the queen Louise herself (Nodera, 2007: 20; Greene, 1994: 93). The audience was situated above and on three sides around the performance space and was made up of the royal party, courtiers, and "renowned" guests, all of whom took to the floor at the close of the five-hour production to perform social dances in a "grand Ball" (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 22, 31). Also like its immediate precursors under Catherine and its earlier ancestors in the courts of Northern Italy, the *Balet comique* was produced in celebration not simply of a dedicated event – in this case the royal wedding – but more broadly of the family who sponsored it – in this case the Valois dynasty, of which Henri III was to be the final monarch. This primary example of the *ballet de cour* is more precisely significant to the present history, however, because it

sought to express the power of its monarch-sponsors through its artistic representation of social harmony.

Though the bodily conduct instructed in dancing had become a key technique of courtly etiquette in sixteenth-century France, the specific form of harmony portrayed in the *Balet comique* had less to do with the expression of personal virtue in the bodies of those who performed it and more with the representation of collective order in the body politic as it was entrusted to Henri III. The figuration of Henri's kingdom as harmonious was especially important at the time of this ballet's creation, when France, as Thomas M. Greene relates, "was enjoying an uneasy respite from the intermittent religious wars which had devastated the kingdom for twenty years" (Greene, 1994: 76). Indeed, Catherine's earlier production of court spectacles supported her own efforts to restore monarchical stability. One example of this lies in the festivities accompanying the Royal Tour she conducted with her second son, Charles IX, between 1564–1566, in the hope that the magnificent appearance of the young king would quell a civil war "imminent" between Catholic and Protestant factions (Graham and McAllister Johnson, 1979: 3). The *Balet comique* might be viewed as inheriting Catherine's "use of the court *fête* to further her own political agenda" in a similar sense (Harness, 2006: 16). Greene argues that this ballet was orchestrated by Catherine's favourite Beaujoyeux in the conviction – following the Platonic doctrine of harmony taken up in the sixteenth-century French academies – that the aesthetic representation of order might effect order in those who observed it.¹⁷ He suggests that the ballet was designed in this way to "represent a healing of the body politic in order to induce the process to take place" (Greene, 1994: 77). In its libretto and production, the *Balet comique* presented the image of a French body politic restored from disease and discordance to health and order under Catherine and her third son Henri. It did so firstly by figuring 'harmony' as its major principle of organisation

and secondly by placing the king in the central position of its narrative and spatial structure.

In 1582 Beaujoyeux produced a written record of the *Balet comique* that demonstrates the importance of harmony as both an overarching aesthetic principle and an underpinning rhetorical device. This is first evident in the author's assertion that the production satisfied "the eye, the ear, and the intellect with one well-proportioned creation" (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 20). It is important to note that Beaujoyeux uses the word *corps* – rendered in the above translation as 'creation' – to describe the harmonious 'body' of this multi-formal production. Franko's reading of the text observes the political significance of this linguistic nuance, and he describes the objective of the production to be "a harmony in the body politic brought about by a fusion of the arts" (Franko, 1993: 35). The fusion of theatrical elements into a holistic, aesthetic harmony intended to express, and indeed, induce a similarly configured social ideal will become significant later on in this thesis, especially when providing a framework for measuring Cunningham's highly individuated and Forsythe's fully connective collaborative practice. For now, however, it provides a basis for understanding the *Balet comique* as a representation of a well-ordered body politic. This representation came to be addressed explicitly to the sponsors of the work, when Beaujoyeux's libretto nominated Henri III as the central agent of such an order as it would shape France's national destiny.

The ballet's libretto wove personages and episodes of Greco-Roman mythology into a narrative that both prophesied and allegorised Henri III's restoration of France to a state of harmony. The production opened with a speech delivered by Lord de la Roche, "a gentleman in the service of the Queen mother", playing the role of the 'Fugitive Gentleman' (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 22). The message this character had to deliver to the

court was twofold: firstly, it related the news that France was on the brink of a “golden age” to be authored by the king Henri; secondly, it bore an entreaty that the same Henri aid in the defeat of the evil enchantress Circe, the being who embodied a new and immediate threat to the health of the kingdom (ibid.: 22-23). The remainder of the ballet staged a struggle between good and evil, culminating in Circe’s defeat by the combined powers of Jupiter, Minerva, Pan, and Mercury, at which point the vanquished antagonist was led to where Henri sat in the Salle de Bourbon, so that she might surrender to the king in person.

Although Henri did not perform a rehearsed role in the *Balet comique* (like other audience members, he remained seated throughout the narrative action), his simultaneous presence in the fictional universe and physical playing space of the ballet underlines his centrality to the production and its rhetorical design. Greene argues that the king provided “a bridge between the fiction and the world” for the spectators of the *Balet comique* (Greene, 1994: 86). Indeed, his physical being not only made flesh the good-conquers-evil allegory of the Circe narrative (it was at his feet, after all, that the mythological enchantress surrendered), but also projected a figurative realisation of the ballet’s opening prophesy. At the ballet’s opening, Henri III of France was foreseen to cure his kingdom of its ills and inaugurate its golden age, and, by the close of the narrative, he was shown to have done just that. This coordination of ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ space as it was made around the figure of Henri III suggests that the kind of social harmony represented and, ideally, engendered by the performance of the *Balet comique* was necessarily rooted in the central personage of the king.

The physical placement of the royal party in the performance environment sustained this logic of representation and the king’s body marked the principal focus of not only the

libretto but also the spatial structure of the *Balet comique*. Flanked by Catherine de Medici and the Duc de Joyeuse, Henri was seated on a dais positioned at the centre of one of the short sides of the rectangular Salle de Bourbon. From the perspective of the spectator galleries extending along the two long sides of the hall, the royal party could be seen clearly and their platform balanced the location of Circe's 'garden' at the opposite end of the playing space. In this way, Henri was presented simultaneously as the quiescent protagonist of the narrative action and the privileged spectator of the ballet's dance sequences.

At the completion of the Circe narrative, sixteen female courtiers (including the queen Louise) came together to perform a "grand Ballet" before the king (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 30). In this choreographic sequence – a component typical of the *ballet de cour* genre that modern dance historians have termed the *danse horizontale* – the dancers moved through arrangements that figured a series of geometrical shapes as viewed from above (Cohen, 2000: 23). The dancing was recalled by Beaujoyeux in terms that speak to a Renaissance-humanist notion of a mathematical harmony, and he insisted of this performance: "So well was the order kept... that everyone believed that Archimedes could not have better understood Geometric proportions than these princesses and ladies employing them in this Ballet" (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 30). Through this culminating sequence of the *Balet comique*, a celestial harmony was shown to have descended to the terrestrial realm. Such a harmony issued, in the allegorical world of the ballet, from the healing of the French body politic at the removal of the disordered element Circe and was embodied, in the choreographic course of the performance, in the 'well-ordered' geometry drawn in the *danse horizontale*.

The grand Ballet was designed, moreover, so that its geometry was primarily legible from one position. Beaujoyeux ensured that each passage of the choreography ended in a configuration that “faced toward the King” (Beaujoyeux, 1992: 30). In this sense, the *Balet comique* positioned Henri III as both the primary author and chief witness of the newly concordant kingdom, and the harmonious production of space that had characterised courtly dancing since its cultivation in Quattrocento Italy became orientated towards a central point of focus. The use of the court ballet’s spatial harmonics for the expression of its patrons’ personal power no longer resided, in this context, exclusively in a principle of *Misura*. It was rather based in a centralising logic that matched the ideological needs of its new monarch-sponsors. In its presentation of a socio-spatial harmony conducted around a single point of authority, the *ballet de cour* genre – as established in Beaujoyeux’s ballet for the Valois – marked the development of an emphatic principle of hierarchy in the classical model of space.

The final moments of the *Balet comique* offered a coda to the figurative placement of the Valois dynasty at the heart (or, more precisely, the head) of France’s ‘harmonious’ body politic. At the close of the grand Ballet, the performers presented eighteen distinguished guests with gifts. Catherine de Medici was given a ‘device’ – a medal intended to provide a “moral portrait of its owner” – engraved with the figure of Apollo (Russell, 2007: 58; Yates, 1988: 247). This deity’s associations with the sun, prophecy, and healing combine to portray the queen mother as presiding over the dawn of a new era of political health in Valois-ruled France. The basic ‘prophecy’ of Beaujoyeux’s ballet was, nevertheless, undermined in the decade following its performance. Henri and Louise did not produce an heir and, after extended political turbulence culminating in the king’s assassination in 1589 (the same year as Catherine’s death), the Valois line expired. However, this joint use of the *ballet de cour* as an artistic context and Apollo as a figurative device for the

symbolic placement of the French monarchy at the peak of a newly ‘stabilised’ social order was taken up, with exceptional prowess, by a king of the succeeding Bourbon dynasty. In a restated adoption of ballet as a means to further a personal, political agenda, Louis XIV used the *ballet de cour* as a platform for his performance as the Sun King: the ascendant monarch who could restore national concordance in France.

Louis’s distinctive use of the *ballet de cour* in the years preceding his administrative power-play of 1661 echoed the genre’s establishment under Catherine de Medici. It did so both in its employment of ballet performance – and ballet pedagogy – in an attempt to ‘heal’ (or curb) civic discordance, and in its continued formulation of a hierarchical space representative of centralised power. It also represented what Marina Nodera has called the “apogee” of this genre (Nodera, 2007: 19). In the years that followed the *Balet comique*, danced spectacles continued to be performed in the courts of the early Bourbon monarchs but began to take on different character to the *ballet de cour* of the late Valois era. Franko has offered an especially convincing argument regarding the development of the *burlesque* genre in the 1620s. This form of court-sponsored entertainment was appropriated, suggests Franko, by the nobility that performed it; they exploited the *burlesque*’s scope for spatially contorted gesture and used it as a mode of resistance to “the intentions of royal choreography” and an increasingly centralised monarchy (Franko, 1993: 111). However, by the time of Louis XIV’s coronation in 1654, *burlesque* tropes had been removed from the court ballet and marked a return to the kind of classical order expressed in Beaujoyeux’s *Balet comique*. As with the production of this earlier ballet, the *ballet de cour* of the mid-seventeenth century offered an image of a centrally conducted harmony at a time when the representation of the king’s authority was of prime importance.

Louis came of age during a time of domestic turbulence and monarchical uncertainty in France. Following the death of his father, the growing agitations of an “economically and politically besieged” nobility set the conditions for a civil war that unfolded during the new king’s minority and over two struggles, the Fronde of the *parlements* (1648–49) and the Fronde of the nobles (1650–53) (Franko, 1994: 71). Both insurrections were led by factions of the nobility who were motivated by what they saw to be a necessary “defence of traditions, rights and liberties against arbitrary innovation and intervention by the government” sustained during the regency rule of the queen mother, Anne of Austria, and the Cardinal Mazarin (Mettam, 1988: 175). Both the re-entry of Louis to Paris in 1652, after his absence during the struggles, and his coronation two years later symbolised the return of monarchical power at the defeat of the Frondeurs (Burke, 1992: 43).

Significantly in terms of the present history, in the years immediately following the Fronde, ballet flourished as a court entertainment and personalised activity of the king (Astier, 1992: 89). The question of why Louis took up personal patronage of the *ballet de cour* at this time – when the restoration of the crown’s authority was bound with the personal status of the succeeding monarch – might be addressed in two ways. Firstly, the king’s *Mémoires* indicate his conviction that public entertainments were useful for pacifying the court and broader population, as is most clearly evidenced in his suggestion that “we sometimes hold [the people’s] minds and their hearts more effectively by [spectacle], perhaps, than by rewards and by favors” (Louis XIV, 1970: 102). However, of greater interest here is the extent to which Louis used the *ballet de cour* – and its increasingly centralised spatial logic – as a context for a kind of self-portrait.

Louis was a great performer in the early ballets produced at his court and, between the years of 1651 and 1669, he danced in forty different productions (Astier, 1992: 74, 80). He used these performances as exhibitions of power in the opportunities they afforded

him to display a divinely endowed ‘grace’ of conduct (as discussed at the opening of this chapter), and to perform as the Sun King, the role with which he emblematised his personal aspirations to absolutist rule. Louis explained his self-stylisation as the Sun King in a way that offers a metaphorical scheme for his personal ideology as an ‘absolute’ monarch, and that suggests the importance of a hierarchical harmony to the performance practice in which he engaged at the close of the Fronde. He stated of his royal emblem:

Chosen as [my] symbol was the sun, which... is the noblest of all, and which... by the light that it imparts to the other heavenly bodies that seem to pay it court [...] by never departing or deviating from its steady and invariable course, assuredly makes a most vivid and a most beautiful image for a great monarch.

(Louis XIV, 1970: 103-4)

This passage indicates the political associations Louis wished to draw from his celestial emblem: an absolute elevation above his subjects; a just conduct that would hold his kingdom in stable orbit; and endurance in his tenure of power. These same associations underpinned philosophical articulations of political absolutism produced out of Louis’s court. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, court theologian and instructor to the Dauphin, imagined the ideal form of kingship in similar terms, stating in his *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture* (1677–1679):

When states are formed, one seeks for unity and one is never so unified as under a single leader. In addition one is never stronger, because everything happens in concert. [...] Consider the prince in his cabinet. From thence flow the commands which coordinate the efforts of magistrates and captains, of citizens and soldiers, of provinces and armies, by land and by sea. It is the image of God, who directs all nature from his throne in the highest heaven.

(Bossuet, 1990: 47, 160)

Bossuet’s rhetoric translates Louis’s sun metaphor into civic and theological terms but maintains an image of absolute sovereignty as an authority that sits atop and coordinates a harmonious body politic. Such an image was useful to Louis as he prepared to assume authority against the backdrop of an undermined French monarchy, and it found a suitable frame in the *ballet de cour*.

Louis first performed as the sun in the context of the *ballet de cour* in the Hall of the Petit Bourbon on 23 February 1653, in one of the first court entertainments produced after the royal household's return to Paris [Image 1]. *Le ballet de la nuit* narrated the passage of a dark night followed by the dawn of a triumphant new day, as symbolised in the appearance, at the end of the production, of Aurora and the Rising Sun, who were "praised by [personifications of] Honor, Grace, Love, Riches, Victory, Fame, and Peace" (Kirstein, 1971: 75). The libretto of this ballet looks forward to Petipa's figuration of Aurora in what Lincoln Kirstein has termed his "Romanov *ballet de cour*", but bore immediate allegorical import in its original context and especially because the role of the Rising Sun was danced by Louis XIV (ibid.: 174). In aligning himself with an ascendant sun in a theatrical setting, Louis conveyed his promise of absolute dominion by playing with the symbolic content of levels and verticality. Through his performance as the Rising Sun, he figuratively assumed a similar position within the performance space to that assumed physically by the royal party within the audience space of the *Balet comique*. Situated at the central point above his subjects, Louis XIV positioned himself – just as Henri III had been positioned by Beaujoyeux – as the radiant monarch who would preside over the dawn of a French golden age. Through the young monarch's performance in this and in three further 'Sun King' ballets, the social space articulated in his and Bossuet's writings on kingship was imagined on stage, and delivered as part of a post-Fronde cultural discourse of absolute sovereignty.¹⁸

The adoption of the *ballet de cour* as an aesthetic context for the projection of Louis's personal rhetoric was bolstered at this time by the introduction of the proscenium stage to the theatrical spaces of Paris. This architectural innovation celebrated hierarchical order by its organisation of space around a central point of focus. The first Parisian proscenium

was commissioned by Cardinal Richelieu and built in 1641 in the theatre of the Grande Salle at the Palais Cardinal (Lawrenson, 1986: 156; Cohen, 2000: 35). Sarah R. Cohen states that “during the 1640s stages were becoming standard for major ballet productions” and when, in 1653, Louis XIV made his first balletic appearance as the Sun King, he did so within the proscenium arch (Cohen, 2000: 30). The architectural framing of ballet, commissioned at this time “under the aegis” of the court, introduced a perspectival scheme to the development of the form and induced an advanced choreographic statement of centralised harmony and structural stability (Lawrenson, 1986: 194). In assessing the bodily posture of dancers represented in paintings from the early 1650s, for example, Cohen confirms that their stance “attests to the focus of the proscenium” (Cohen, 2000: 32). She observes figures shown to be performing *Le ballet de la nuit* and identifies a central axis extending vertically down their bodies. Where one leg is raised, for instance, the opposite arm lifts to “counterpose” the lower line, tracing a balance that states the centralised perspective of the square frame (ibid.: 34). She additionally observes that linearity in three-dimensional space was developed as an aesthetic priority in this new architectural environment (ibid.: 35). Presenting their movements outwards towards a frontally placed audience, the dancers who moved within the proscenium not only accentuated an outward rotation of the hips and feet, but also traced the cubic lines implied in their new performance space.

This adjustment of balletic choreography for the new proscenium sightlines proportioned the performance space around a central axis and stabilised it into an environment of fixed lines and perpendicular pathways. The evolution of the *ballet de cour* according to the spatial prescriptions of the proscenium became instrumental to underlining the political centrality of Louis XIV. T.E. Lawrenson observes that, in the mid-seventeenth-century French context, “perspective on the stage [was] a piece of publicity [... offering] flattery

of the centralised monarchy (Lawrenson, 1986: 194). This observation becomes especially apt vis-à-vis Louis XIV's location as a performer on the framed stage. Through his appearance as *premier danseur* of the ballet within the proscenium arch, Louis XIV was able to project an image of himself as the central agent of a harmonious body politic. The new architectural device not only framed the young monarch's self-portrait as the Sun King, but also positioned him as the central focus of the performance space, from where he was shown to coordinate the well-balanced bodies of his courtiers as they moved around him through a stable visual world. In this way, the conveyance of spatial harmony in the *ballet de cour* of Louis XIV's early reign carries traces of the spectacle of power established in the 'measured' courtly dances of the Quattrocento Italian elite and the 'well-proportioned' ballets of the late Valois monarchy. However, an increased allegorical and material location of centralised authority in the balletic body of the king inscribed classical-balletic harmony with a pointedly hierarchical logic. This was a logic that ultimately remodelled the formal space of the existing court ballet to express a contemporary rhetoric of political absolutism.

While Louis XIV's public role as a dancer in the *ballet de cour* was ceased in 1669, the continued operation of the Académie Royale de Danse "ensured that the king would still be associated with the professionalized artful body, albeit from a distance" (Cohen, 2000: 141). From this point forth, the royal patronage of the form was longer expressed through the physical presence of the ascendant monarch in the playing space of the court ballet, but in the implicit royal sanction that ballet pedagogy carried after the king's establishment of personal, administrative authority. Louis's *Lettres Patentes* gave detailed instruction for the means by which ballet would be transmitted academically. They also related his reason for founding the Academy, demonstrating his sustained use of ballet as

a means for power consolidation after the civil unrest of his minority and beyond his performance in the *ballet de cour*. The opening statement reads:

During the disorders and confusion of the last wars there have been introduced into said Art, as into all others, such a great number of abuses as has almost brought them to their irreparable ruin [...]. We do desire to reestablish the said Art in its first perfection, and embellish it as much as possible. [... Thirteen nominated academicians] will maintain and run the said Academy following and conforming to the Statutes and Rules attached here... Expressly forbidding all persons of whatever high quality they may be to countervene the efforts herein contained.

(*Lettres Patentes*, in Franko, 1993: 176-7)

Franko understands this passage to express Louis's desire to confiscate "ballet from the hands of would-be competitors: the noble class" and to exert "control of his courtiers" through the technical regulation of their bodies (Franko, 1993: 109). Indeed, that Louis's instructions were sent in the very same month as his boldest administrative play for absolute power – remembered by the king as an assertion to his ministers that "it was not [his] intention to share [his] authority with them" – suggests that the academic systemisation of classical ballet was, at this time, part of the king's broader programme for securing domestic sovereignty (Louis XIV, 1970: 35). At its reclassification as an academic form, then, ballet was designed to transmit the mark of the king's absolutist space, and it would do so through the codification of the classical model in and beyond the parameters of the French court.

Eighteenth-century dance manuals and the codification of the classical model

The increasing importance of classical technique after the foundation of the Académie Royale was established in a series of manuals produced over the eighteenth century by dancing masters occupying pivotal roles at the French court and in courts across Europe. These texts were written to formalise the dissemination of ballet pedagogy, and to do so largely in the tradition of the French Academy. As dancing master Pierre Rameau pointed

out in 1725, “there is hardly a Court in Europe where the dancing master is not French” (Rameau, 1931: xii).¹⁹ Developments in classical technique, as expressed in these manuals, were designed not only to facilitate amateur courtly dancing but also, increasingly, to produce skilled professional dancers who could participate in the new theatrical culture developing outside of the court environment. With the establishment, in 1713, of a permanent, professional dance troupe and school at the Paris Opéra, and the development, in the following decades, of the *ballet d’action* on the French stage, ballet grew progressively independent from the court and, as it did so, became part of the broader cultural discourse of the Enlightenment. As Dorion Weickmann has surmised, ballet’s consolidation as a professional art outside of royal patronage facilitated a new representational logic so that, by the middle of the century, its choreographies of “monarchical glory and grandeur disappeared and were replaced by human conflicts, sentiments and souls” (Weickmann, 2007: 55). However, the dancing manuals produced over this century that classified what has become known as the *danse d’école*, nevertheless preserved a spatial model that refers to an earlier aesthetic and political discourse concerning the Renaissance ideal of beauty and the expression of hierarchical power. For the purpose of this study, the codification of the classical model in the *danse d’école*, as it succeeded and sustained the Sun King’s absolutist space, can be located in three manuals written between 1700 and 1779.

Raoul Auger Feuillet’s *The Art of Dancing*, first published in Paris in 1700, transmitted the teachings of both Feuillet and his teacher Pierre Beauchamp: the tutor of Louis XIV and second director of the Académie Royale. While P. Siris credits Beauchamp with “the Invention of this Art”, it was Feuillet’s words of instruction that found a legacy in publication, and his text is regarded as an influential formative record of the *danse d’école* (Siris, 1706: unpaginated; Weickmann, 2007: 62). Rameau’s *The Dancing*

Master, first published in Paris in 1725, is described by Cyril W. Beaumont as “the standard work on the technique of eighteenth-century dancing” (Beaumont, 1931: vii). Rameau worked as a dancing master at the Spanish court of Philip V and refers to Louis XIV (who had died a decade before the date of publication) as a royal emblem of the ballet, understanding the “rapid progress” of the form to be based in the patronage of the late king (Rameau, 1931: vii, xii). Gennaro Magri’s *Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Dancing*, first published in Naples in 1779, represents here the considerable Italian contribution to the early codification of ballet. Magri worked as a dancing master in Italy and Austria and while he is careful to assert that the Italians were “the first to invent rules for the Dance”, he, nevertheless, understands ballet to be French in its technical and theatrical maturation, stating: “We are obliged to the French for the precision which dancing shows today. They have refined it in the lathe of good taste” (Magri, 1988: 44; Weickmann, 2007: 63). Although each writer demonstrates unique focus, all three describe a common logic of organisation rooted in a particular model of space. This model preserves the historical rhetoric established in the courtly origins of the classical model, and can be expressed in three principles of bodily organisation: verticality and equilibrium in deportment, a squared orientation system; and a composite totality in movement coordination.

To take verticality as the first technical principle of the classical model is to consider, also, its affiliated spatial objective of equilibrium. Magri uses the concept of equilibrium to convey the importance of an upright stance in the deportment of the balletic body:

The Equilibrium is one of the fundamental principles of the Dance. [...] What matters the most in equilibrium is that the line, which divides each body into two equal parts from top to bottom, falls at the centre of the base. [...] In addition] the torso [should be held] very straight so that if a plumb line were hung from the sternum... the line would fall plumb in the centre of the space between the feet.

(Magri, 1998: 56)

This passage communicates the technical requirement that the classical body be built, at the most primary level, around straightness in the spine and in the associated articulation of corporeal balance. The cultivation of a vertically extended balance became a technical and aesthetic imperative of classical ballet, and would be interrogated as such in the later choreographies of Balanchine and Graham. For now, however, it is important to note that these same principles refer back to Guglielmo's principle of *Misura* and, more broadly, to the Renaissance-humanist figuration of bodily harmony as an index to a dancer's elevated position in the social space. The celestial harmony shown to have descended to the bodies of the Italian elite and, later, the divine order shown to have graced the physical conduct of Louis XIV, was based in their danced articulation of spatial balance. Similarly, Magri's later assertion that dancing instructs "grace; a hallmark [of a] Gentleman", is joined by Rameau's insistence that "the body is maintained upright and in equilibrium" so that the dancer might "comport himself in a graceful manner" (Magri, 1998: 51; Rameau, 1931: 5, 1). This placement of verticality and equilibrium in dialogue with a concept of grace, in the academic codification of balletic deportment, sustains the Renaissance crafting of equivalence between bodily and social order. Magri's emphasis on the plumb-line axis of classical dancing also describes the centralising imperative built into the classical model by the ideological orientations of the French *ballet de cour*. In so doing, it alludes to a second feature of classical-academic space.

These manuals present the square as a geometrical plan by which the dancer should orientate themselves in space. In Chapter Two of his text, for example, Feuillet describes the shape of the balletic performance environment and his representation of it in his notation system: "The Dancing-Room or Stage is the Place where we Dance, which I represent by a fort of Oblong-Square" (Feuillet, 1706: 3). He goes on to instruct of a dancer's directionality in this environment that "the Posture, or Placing of the Body,

requires that the Fore-part of the Body be over against one of the four Sides of the Dancing-Room” (ibid.) [Image 2]. This model has endured as an aesthetic economy for contemporary balletic practice and is expressed in the eight points of orientation made available through this model, which together delimit a squared geometry and align classical dancing within a perspectival viewing scheme (Grant, 1982: 1) [Image 3]. This scheme refers back to the centralised and, later, cubic space cultivated as a scaffolding for royal flattery in the late-Valois and Bourbon court ballet. Indeed, Lefebvre’s insistence that classical perspective produces “a fixed observer, an immobile perceptual field, a stable visual world” is useful for underlining how this aspect of the classical model embodies a politicised aesthetic (Lefebvre, 1991: 361). The projection of stability and permanence was, as has been discussed, a feature of Louis XIV’s personal discourse of absolutism and was facilitated, in the context of the *ballet de cour*, by the placement of his body within a perpendicular playing space. The squared orientation system codified in the *danse d’école* incorporated such a discourse, and would be expertly co-opted as an expression of court stability once more in Petipa’s later choreography for the Imperial Ballet.

A third founding principle of the classical model found in the eighteenth-century manuals is the notion of a concordant and all-over coordination system. Magri imagines the balletic body as a well-integrated apparatus, stating: “He who has learnt to Dance... places each limb in the right position and shows the just proportion and order of his whole machine” (Magri, 1988: 51). As imagined here, the body conducts movement so that it is relative across the entire structure, and articulates space as a composite whole. Rameau’s discussion of an incipient classical *port de bras* offers further detail in this respect: “I regard the arms which adorn the body, as a frame made for a picture. But, if it does not harmonise with the picture, however beautiful it may be, its value is less” (Rameau, 1931:

66, 113). For Rameau, as for Magri, the placement of the body into a balanced and perpendicular alignment is just one aspect of classical technique that cradles the aesthetic objective of dancing. A dancer must additionally ensure that each portion of movement is measured in coherence across the entire form. In other words, the aesthetic end of the classical technique is shown here to be the attainment of a totalising harmony of movement.

The principle of bodily harmony acquires further significance later in this thesis, when the totality of classical coordination brings into relief the respectively individuated and networked models of Cunningham's and Forsythe's spatial practices. For now, however, this academic principle again finds a precedent in the politicised contexts of Renaissance courtly dancing. Rameau's location of 'value' in the harmonising properties of the classical image sustains a fifteenth-century humanist discourse on beauty and, likewise, echoes Guglielmo's location of 'virtue' in dancing's consonance with a celestially extended harmonic order. Furthermore, Magri's representation of the dancing body as a holistic structure that exhibits a 'just proportion and order', inherits a notion of harmony represented in the artistic spaces of the French *ballet de cour*. His metaphor restates both the 'well-proportioned body' of Beaujoyeux's composite spectacle of Valois supremacy, and the well-ordered body politic of Louis XIV's Sun King ballets. In this sense, Bossuet's politico-philosophical assertion that, in an absolutist context, 'everything happens in concert' can be used to characterise the spatial logic of the mid-seventeenth-century *ballet de cour*, and the corporeal scheme of the eighteenth-century academicians.

The codification of these three bodily-organising principles in the didactic texts of the eighteenth century established the technical foundations for the classical model of space. A formalised spatial practice was subsequently carried in the pedagogical, choreographic,

and performing practices of later students of the *danse d'école*, the transmission of which was located, by the end of the eighteenth century, in the institution of the Paris Opéra.²⁰ Migratory careers followed by ballet practitioners ensured the dissemination of Parisian teachings across the professional ballet networks of Europe and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, legacies of the *danse d'école* had taken root in established schools and companies located in such cities as Copenhagen, Milan, and St. Petersburg (Noll Hammond, 2007: 75). The major aesthetic reforms accompanying the professional consolidation and geographical diffusion of ballet – and the ways that these reforms registered the cultural, political, and economic upheavals precipitating and following the French Revolution – are well documented, and a survey of these would fall beyond the scope of this thesis.²¹ However, it remains important to note that, in spite of the increasingly diversifying practice of ballet over this period, the basic spatial prescriptions of the *danse d'école* were sustained in otherwise innovatory practices.

Two of the strongest reformist voices of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries belong to Noverre and Blasis. In his *Letters* of 1760, Noverre proposed the reorientation of ballet to Enlightenment ideals of 'natural' human action and, through the 1820s, Blasis systematised Noverre's sentiments into a technical discourse that would shape some of the great dancer-innovators of the Romantic era (Weickmann, 2007: 57; Noll Hammond, 2007: 77). Nevertheless, both of these texts preserved aspects of the spatial model discussed above. Noverre, for instance, wrote of the "equilibrium [and] stability" and "grace and nobility" that characterise the "perfection" to which the technical execution of dancing had been brought (Noverre, 2004: 19). Blasis, for his part, instructed students of the dance to "draw [the] body well up", "hold [the] body in a perfect equilibrium", and acquire "a graceful carriage" (Blasis, 1830: 72-3).²² The common observation of academic spatiality exhibited in these texts, in spite of their differing reformist agendas,

might be contextualised in their common French-academic heritage. Both Noverre and Blasis received a deep schooling in the *danse d'école* at the Paris Opéra and inherited a pedagogical lineage that can be traced to Parisian ballet as it was performed during the reign of Louis XIV.²³

A later student of the French school, the Marseilles-born Petipa, would sustain the spatial model of the *danse d'école* upon the stages of Imperial Russia. When Petipa arrived in St. Petersburg in 1847, to take up position as *premier danseur* at the Imperial Theatres, he carried with him the same technical knowledge underpinning Noverre's and Blasis's theoretical statements of academic spatiality.²⁴ However, while the texts of these earlier masters ultimately supported the choreographic reorientations of the *ballet d'action* genre and the Romantic period, Petipa's later choreographic practice signalled a reinvigoration of the classical model of space as it had been enshrined in European courtly dancing. The return of balletic choreography under Petipa to a spatial logic formalised as part of the "princely power fantasies" of the Western European Renaissance, might be contextualised in the Imperial culture within which Russian ballet was embedded at this time (Weickmann, 2007: 53). Ballet existed in nineteenth-century Russia, as it had done in seventeenth-century France, as an extension of the court. In Petipa's *grand ballets* for the late Imperial stages of St. Petersburg and Moscow, the classical model of space was crystallised in an expression of the autocratic political culture that fostered it.

Choreographing space on the Russian Imperial stage

Russian ballet had been institutionalised in the social spaces of the Imperial court well before Petipa's arrival in St. Petersburg. The art was consolidated especially as part of reforms engaged by Romanov rulers who wished to express their personal 'advancement'

of Russia through its alignment with the political and cultural institutions of Western Europe.²⁵ When, in 1721, Peter I accepted the title ‘Father of the Fatherland, Peter the Great, All-Russian Emperor’ he signalled his status as a monarch whose power was nominally equivalent to that not only of the emperors of Rome, but also of “Louis Le Grand” (Wortman, 1995: 63). The adoption of this title marked “a cultural transformation” in which the Russian elite would look westward – like their new capital city, Peter’s ‘window to the West’ – and to France in particular, for models of cultural practice (ibid.). It was in support of this shift that “the administrative apparatus of the state” was restructured for the formalisation of absolutist rule in Petrine Russia, and that Peter the Great instigated the Imperial patronage of Louis Le Grand’s favourite art (Chubarov, 1999: 23-4).²⁶ In 1718, six years after the court’s formal residency in St. Petersburg had commenced and three years before his adoption of the ‘Imperator’ title, Peter issued a decree requiring that all nobility participate in balls where social dancing would take place (Scholl, 1994: 2). Not only did Peter dissolve the old custom that prevented women from participating in these ballroom dances, thereby opening the form to rapid development, but he also took an active role in the performance of the dances himself (Frankel, 1972: 33). This role indicates Peter’s appropriation – again in a fashion after Louis XIV – of dance and of a courtly culture in general that could express a taste refined by Western influence. Indeed, such a ‘refinement’ was already displayed in spatial form in Peter’s decision to build the architectural values of urban Europe, which he had witnessed in person during his European tour of 1697–9, into the very landscape of his namesake city. This first residence of Russian ballet was imagined through the designs of French and Italian-Swiss architects, and was configured around those structural edicts – linearity, symmetry, perpendicularity, and perspective – that had shaped the spatial practice of the Western European Renaissance (Monas, 1983: 28-29).²⁷

Beyond the reign of Peter the Great, Russian ballet continued to develop in Imperial spaces and at the initiation of imported Western expertise. In 1738, Anna I installed French ballet master Jean-Baptiste Landé as head of the first Imperial Ballet School, located within chambers of the Imperial Palace. The formal induction of ballet as part of the theatrical culture of St. Petersburg came in 1783, when Catherine the Great – a monarch who more than any sustained Peter’s cultural drive to the West – established the Imperial Ballet (Garafola, 2007: 152). Like Peter before her, Catherine’s taste for Western European aesthetics was cradled in a desire to drive Russia towards national ‘enlightenment’, and was expressed, in part, in the classicism she favoured in the construction of St. Petersburg’s spaces.²⁸ Catherine’s architectural preference was bound with her decision to prioritise ballet as part of the city’s official culture. In 1783, she commissioned Antonio Rinaldi – an Italian authority in the neoclassical style – to design the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre, a venue purpose-built to house the first incarnation of the Imperial Ballet (Brumfield, 1993: 275; Scholl, 1994: 2). By the time Petipa assumed his dancer’s post in 1847, and when he was appointed chief choreographer two decades later, this performing company was still taking its cue from the West and from France in particular. The fifty-one-year-old ballet master inherited his stewardship from a lineage of French-trained choreographers who had emigrated from Paris to St. Petersburg: Charles Didelot, who guided the Imperial Ballet during the years 1801–1837, Jules Perrot, who relinquished his directorship in 1858, and Arthur Saint-Léon, who was succeeded by Petipa in 1869 (Gregory, 1990: 11; Scholl, 1994: 3). During his tenure, Petipa absorbed the Romantic aesthetics of Perrot and Saint-Léon into the creation of a new theatrical genre. Through the *grand ballet*, which is characterised by its “grandeur, formula... regal subject matter and visual display”, and which implies, by name, a return to the ‘grand Ballet’ of the French *ballet de cour*, Petipa orchestrated the peak of French, classical-

balletic influence on the Russian Imperial stage (Wiley, 2003: 46).²⁹ This peak was reached no more decisively than in his masterpiece of 1890, *The Sleeping Beauty*.

In a letter of 13 May 1888, Vsevolozhsky commissioned Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to compose music for a new ballet. The former had been Director of the Imperial Theatres since 1881 (he would retire his post in 1899), and has been noted by Tim Scholl for his “legendary Francophilia and... status as a professional courtier” (Scholl, 2004: 31). The libretto of the new ballet would be written by Vsevolozhsky on the model of Charles Perrault’s *Le Belle au bois dormant* and the *mise en scène* would be crafted “in the style of Louis XIV” (Scholl, 1994: 22). When, after a long period of gestation, *The Sleeping Beauty* premiered on 3 January 1890 on the stage of the Mariinsky Theatre – the Imperial Ballet’s Petersburg home since 1885 – its aesthetic orientations towards “the artistic culture of pre-revolutionary France” were manifold (ibid.: ix). In the first instance, the libretto for the ballet was based, as noted by Giannandrea Poesio, in tales penned by “a seventeenth-century courtier *par excellence*” (Poesio, 1993a: 37). Further to this, its narration of the princess Aurora’s awakening from a long sleep, and its culmination in a triumphant celebration of the court recalls the setting for Louis XIV’s appearance as the Rising Sun in *Le ballet de la nuit*. That the fictional world of the ballet was located in the court of the Sun King (the libretto names Aurora’s father as ‘King Florestan XIV’), was also conveyed in its visual design: a review published 5 January 1890 describes the décor of the final act as recreating “a completely accurate large Versailles palace”.³⁰ Of greater interest to the present study, however, is how the choreographic content of *The Sleeping Beauty* reprised the absolutist spatial aesthetic of the French *ballet de cour* for the idealisation of Russian Imperial stability.

The question of the explicitly political motivations that may have underpinned the French retrospectivism of *The Sleeping Beauty* has been discussed by Sally Banes, Poesio, and Scholl, with the latter concluding that the ballet may never have been devised with the express intention of gaining court favour (Scholl, 1994: 36).³¹ Indeed, Alexander III was not a patron in the style of Louis XIV, nor even of Catherine the Great, and his “francophobia” and tepid review of the ballet for Tchaikovsky (‘very nice’) suggest that a staging of the Golden Age of the French court was not designed as a personal homage to this particular Tsar (Banes, 1998: 43). However, the autocratic culture instituted by Alexander as a reactionary means for recovering the authority of the court after the assassination, in 1881, of his father, the ‘Tsar Liberator’ Alexander II, provides a context for understanding *The Sleeping Beauty* as a production that idealised the fortitude of its patron-culture by staging the loss and triumphant recovery of monarchical order. The aforementioned parallels with *Le ballet de nuit* extend here from Vsevolozhsky’s libretto to the ballet’s immediate sociopolitical climate in that it was produced at a time when its sovereign sponsor was engaged in the pursuit of power consolidation in the wake of a political crisis.³² Likewise, as with the artistic space of Louis XIV’s *ballet de cour*, the creation of a well-ordered and centrally conducted spatial harmony offered, in this ballet, a timely vision of a stable and enduring sovereignty. Andy Adamson asserts that at this precise historical moment Russian ballet “was to provide safe entertainment for the aristocracy” and that Petipa’s stage projected an image “of stability [and] permanence, just what the court wanted to see” (Adamson, 1999: 189-90). In his choreography for *The Sleeping Beauty*, Petipa perfected such an image through a reinvigoration of the classical model of space as it had been formulated through the courtly dances of the Renaissance and as it had been built into his own training in the *danse d’école*. An advanced statement of classical spatiality characterised this ‘Romanov *ballet de cour*’ and distilled the

absolutist rhetoric of ballet's courtly origins into the expression of an idealised, Imperial space.

The first way in which *The Sleeping Beauty* projects an image of stability calibrated to the ideological needs of the late Imperial court can be seen Petipa's organisation of the immense ensemble of dancers employed by the Imperial Theatres. During its 1890–91 season at the Mariinsky, the Imperial Ballet employed no less than 143 female and 69 male dancers, and Petipa's choreography harnessed “an elaborate hierarchy... as the stage began to mirror the social stratification of its audience” (Scholl, 1994: 11). As a general rule, the dancers in Petipa's ballets were arranged around a strict company ranking system in which the lower the rank, the larger the performing ensemble. The focus of the stage was additionally trained on the centre by the placement of both the ‘star’ performers and the most conspicuous choreography in the very middle of the space, as accented by peripheral framing rows of soloists and the *corps de ballet*. This hierarchical arrangement is especially pronounced in the ‘Apotheosis’ closing *The Sleeping Beauty*: as the curtain lowers at the culmination of Aurora and Désiré's wedding celebrations, the stage presents a court in its most pristine order, with the dynastic couple occupying the central position and their courtiers framing them in decreasing rank and file. This organisation of the stage exalted the centralising imperative of the French *ballet de cour* and offered a reflection of the social architecture of the Mariinsky auditorium where the Imperial Box, which placed Alexander III as the primary witness of the ballet's premiere, was built into the central aspect of the auditorium seating [Image 4]. The positioning of the Imperial Box forged a visual presence for the Romanov dynasty that both assured its emblematic association with the ballet (again, recalling the patron-monarchs of Renaissance France) and enabled the public performance of its centrality within and for the elite society gathered at this Petersburg venue.³³ As it mirrored the Mariinsky's arena for Imperial flattery, Petipa's

stage restated the primacy of the Romanov line and celebrated a political hierarchy lying at the core of a progressively insecure Imperial culture.

Petipa's idealisation of a collective order that refers to a central point of authority was extended to his choreography for the *corps de ballet*. This is especially clear in the Act II vision *pas de deux* in which the perpendicular scheme of the proscenium is transposed to the patterning of multiple bodies. During this scene, where Désiré is shown a vision of Aurora, the *corps* is deployed in a fashion typical of Petipa's choreography for the ensemble. The dancers move as a set of identikit figures, together forming a singular body framing and shading the romantic partnering that unfolds centre-stage. The romanticism of this scene is embedded, in a narrative sense, in the tender attachment that grows between Désiré and his vision-ballerina and, in a generic sense, in the formulaic traces of the Romantic ballet that provided a major choreographic model during Petipa's artistic youth. Indeed, Poesio observes of this legacy as it permeates Act II of *The Sleeping Beauty*: "The entire vision scene is a reminder of the typical white act found in the ballets of [the Romantic] period; Aurora is briefly characterised here as the supernatural projection of human dreams" (Poesio, 1993a: 43). This commentary joins others in signalling Petipa's debt to a form of ballet that "attempted to overcome the rules of Versailles classicism" (Petrov, 1992: 55). However, Poesio also offers a topography of the Act II *corps* and, in so doing, indicates how Petipa's inheritance of Romantic tropes might be reconciled with his distinctively classical aesthetic:

The geometrical pattern followed by the nymphs – parallel lines, squares, a final circular grouping around the Lilac Fairy – reproduces the architecture of a typical maze of both seventeenth- and eighteenth-century royal gardens in which *Désiré* gets lost pursuing his vision.

(Poesio, 1993a: 39)

In this sense, far from overcoming the rules of Versailles classicism, Petipa's supernatural sequence is framed by a spatial patterning that transmits this very logic. The *corps* of this

whimsical scenario inscribes the same regular geometries and perspectival space characteristic of Louis XIV's absolutist landscapes – at the gardens of Versailles and on the stage of the *ballet de cour* – and preserved in the architectural milieu of St. Petersburg and the proscenium of the Mariinsky.

Oleg Petrov has also observed that, on Petipa's stage, "one easily recognizes the choreography of Versailles, the star of the king, the square and the allées of light radiating from it", and the extension of this scheme to the individual bodies of *The Sleeping Beauty* was carried in Petipa's emphatic statement of academic spatiality (Petrov, 1992: 56). Signifying the 'dawn' of a new era of monarchical order in the ballet, the figure of Aurora most clearly evokes the triumphalist politics of the Sun King's *ballet de cour*, and the classical vocabulary on which Petipa builds this role most clearly embodies the stable spatial order of French, academic classicism.³⁴ The vocabulary that expresses Aurora's maturity in her wedding *pas de deux* of Act III is characterised by a fastidious observation of linear and perpendicular space. The defining component of her lexicon, and a cardinal "architectural element" of many of Petipa's Imperial productions, is the *arabesque ouverte*, a stationary pose taken in profile in which the working leg, closest to the audience, is held behind the body at a right-angle to the supporting leg (Petrov, 1992: 50). This strictly square configuration would be interrogated in the later neoclassicism of Balanchine and makes its most notable appearance in Petipa's ballet at the climactic chord announcing the refrain of Aurora and Désiré's wedding *adagio*. Here a static, supported *arabesque ouverte*, placed centre-stage, sustains the wave of Tchaikovsky's melody and states the triumphant peak of the *pas de deux*, and, arguably, the ballet as a whole, in a fixed and perpendicular image. The stability of this centrepiece image is repeated in the regular geometries plotted by Aurora in her subsequent solo, notably in the linear pathway from downstage left to upstage right with which she crowns her variation.

The wedding *pas de deux* offers a choreographic realisation of academic and, by extension, absolutist spatiality. Aurora's movement through the perpendicular structures of the *danse d'école* transposes the principle of stability with which Louis XIV had figured his role as the sun – 'never deviating from its steady and invariable course' – to an Imperial context, where the idealisation of dynastic permanence had, again, become the province of classical dancing.

Petrov has contrasted this cultivation of 'ideals' characteristic of Petipa's Imperial ballet with the tendency towards a treatment of 'reality' exhibited in other Russian artistic practices of the late nineteenth century, listing the contributions of Ilya Repin, Mili Balakirev, Anton Chekov, and Fyodor Dostoevsky as examples (Petrov, 1992: 41). He concludes his comparison by stating that in its "attempt to maintain an absolute form of beauty the ballet is a-historic and a-national" (ibid.: 43). Petrov's claim can be problematised on two counts. Firstly, the late Imperial ballet's maintenance of an absolute form of beauty was itself a political matter. Petipa's construction of his stage around edicts of classical space transmitted not only an absolute, but also an absolutist aesthetic that pertains to the historico-political origins of classical-balletic form and the immediate political culture in which Russian ballet had been cultivated and was still produced at the close of the century. The attention paid by a definitively classical choreography to the formulation of ideals was both historically and nationally rooted and especially so in late nineteenth-century Russia, when the institution that nurtured ballet in this context – the Imperial court – was growing increasingly isolated from the social realities, and critical stirrings, of many of its subjects. The idealism presented in the spatial form of *The Sleeping Beauty* was, in fact, tied with very real ideological needs – met here in the projection of a stable Imperial world – that were embedded in the social space that fostered this ballet.

Petrov's claim is further problematised in the distinctively Russian (albeit Russian-Imperial) character that Petipa's choreography of space took on in the late nineteenth century. The source of a 'national' influence was his incorporation of movement figures from the Empire's folk cultures in the idealising architecture of his choreography. Following the search for domestic models in nationalist strands of Petersburg- and Moscow-based musical composition in the mid to late century, Tchaikovsky appropriated folk forms and melodies in his compositions for the Imperial Ballet.³⁵ Petipa's choreography followed suit and, in addition to the folk structures he appropriated to the ensemble dances set to Tchaikovsky's mazurkas and polonaises, a key stylistic aspect of these national dances began to shape the execution of the classical lexicon. *Épaulement*, as it is termed in classical vocabulary, describes an inter-relational placement of the head, shoulders, arms, torso, and hips, where an oppositional twisting motion, initiated in the back, coordinates these axes into a counterpointed and expansive carriage of the body. Scholl has suggested that this stylistic trope "represented the uniquely Russian contribution" to Petipa's use of the *danse d'école*, providing "a finishing touch to the otherwise 'square' positions of the French school" (Scholl, 1994: 18). A heightened sense of *épaulement* came to characterise the way in which Russian classical dancing articulated space, and, as employed by Petipa, it introduced a cultural geography to his revival of classicism on the late Imperial stage.³⁶

It is important to stress that Petipa's use of *épaulement* – like his and Tchaikovsky's broader appropriation of forms belonging to national dances of the Russian Empire – was confined within a decidedly Imperial aesthetic. In other words, his development of a Russian-national balletic style sustained an idealisation of Tsarist power, disregarding the particularities of national folk cultures and their unique and uneasy positions vis-à-vis the

hegemony of St. Petersburg.³⁷ To elaborate this point, a section of Aurora's Act III variation can be taken as a case study.³⁸ In this phrase, it becomes apparent that the use of *épaulement* does indeed transform the 'otherwise square' spatial model of the *danse d'école*. Nevertheless, it does so in the service of an overriding spatial classicism that subsumes any national-folk specificity in the continued celebration of a stable and harmonious Imperial space.

The solo opens with a phrase that plots a complex illustration of the classical-square orientation system. Unfolding through a simple series of *relevés passés*, the phrase signals multiple orientations in each movement. In a highly patterned taxonomy of the square performance environment, Aurora picks out each corner of the stage with the simultaneous directions cast by her eyes, hands, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, and feet. Although the design of the body makes use of a very sophisticated understanding of orientation, the effect is one of clarity: the kinespheric geometry confines itself to the corners of the square, as anticipated in the Feuillet's 1700 floor plans and projected in the frame of the Mariinsky proscenium. However, once a sense of *épaulement* is introduced to this phrase, a new spatial character is introduced to Aurora's kinesphere. Because of the twisting relationality that exists across the body in *épaulement*, the points in space signalled by these orientations are brought into conversation through a complex counterpoint. The harnessing of Aurora's multiple orientations into a communal relationship actually heightens her expression of the classical model. The spiralling torsion introduced in the back and shoulders travels across her body and refers each local area back to the point of initiation: the central axis of the spine. Ultimately, *épaulement* introduces an all-over coordination to Aurora's kinesphere and articulates her squared field for action as total and concordant space. To borrow again from Bossuet, the effect of this movement grammar is that 'everything happens in concert'.

Épaulement, and the heightened coordination system it sculpts in the classical body, came to acquire central importance for Balanchine's and, especially, Forsythe's later treatments of the classical model, as will be elaborated through the next and final chapters of this thesis. For now, however, it serves to illustrate the crystallisation of a politicised aesthetic in Petipa's choreography of space. In lifting balletic spatiality out of the strictly 'square' model of French academicism, and in doing so through the deep appropriation of a movement grammar belonging to popular dances performed within the borders of the Russian Empire, the introduction of *épaulement*, nevertheless, referred to a principle of space established at ballet's earliest origins in the courts of Western Europe. The effect of this stylistic trope was, ultimately, to perfect the cultivation of harmony in a dancer's plotting of physical space and, as has been established, it was in an aesthetic harmony that the classical model had historically registered the shifting political ideals of its elite sponsors. In this sense, Petipa's creation of a totalising kinespheric harmony inherited a discourse of power introduced with the Italian nobility's 'virtuous' practice of *Misura*, refined in the French *ballet de cour*'s absolutist representation of a concordant body politic, and embodied in the well-proportioned space of the *danse d'école*. In this way, the induction of *épaulement* as a defining, national feature of a Russian-Imperial balletic style heightened Petipa's revival of spatial classicism in the *grand ballet*, and served to entrench ballet even more firmly in its historical trajectory as a spectacle of hierarchical power. As canonised in Petipa's choreography for the late Imperial stage, the classical model of space was clarified in an idealisation, once more, of the 'well-ordered' sovereign space of its patrons.

Chapter Two: Classical Reforms in North America

When George Balanchine started to build the canon of what would become the New York City Ballet (NYCB) he did so upon the classical foundations bequeathed to him in Petipa's Imperial choreography. Having accepted the invitation of the young impresario Kirstein in the summer of 1933, Balanchine travelled from London to New York, where the two men founded the School of American Ballet (SAB) in the following year.³⁹ As Petipa had done almost a century earlier, Balanchine transported the academic knowledge he had gained through his training in an international ballet capital (in this case, St. Petersburg) and preserved it in his cultivation of a new branch of classicism for a new cultural setting. For a decade Balanchine and Kirstein would test and disband a number of balletic ventures (collaboratively and independently) before going on to found their permanent company in 1946, making expert use of "networks shaped by the cultural left of the 1930s and... the philanthropy of the mandarin elite" to ensure the economic survival of their new "American ballet" (Garafola, 2005b: 30; Kirstein, 1973: 16).⁴⁰ Indeed, Kirstein drew the majority of their funds from individuals and organisations that had accrued their wealth in the international marketplace of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the philanthropic operations of both the Rockefeller and Ford foundations (as well as the personal contributions of Nelson A. Rockefeller) providing considerable backing at crucial moments in the company's early consolidation.⁴¹

The shift in the material production of classical ballet from the patronage of sovereign and state to the independent location of private and commercial resources, had been pioneered in Diaghilev's 'Russian' enterprise of 1909, for which Balanchine was ballet master and choreographer from 1925 until Diaghilev's death in 1929. Like the works created by the Ballets Russes, Balanchine's productions for the NYCB were made using

the idiom of a distinctly sovereign art but no longer as an aesthetic expression of political power. The artistic philanthropy of the American industrial elite that supported the Kirstein-Balanchine venture did confer a kind of prestige valuable in that elite's navigation of its social power networks, and especially those staked out in the cultural topography of New York City.⁴² However, unlike the royal patronage discussed in the previous chapter – and unlike the shifting state directives of the Soviet context in which Russian ballet was sustained after the Revolution of 1917 – this new economic framework did not necessitate the shaping of classical form into an instrument for ideological tribute.⁴³

Bourdieu has described the aesthetic impact that might follow the 'release' of a given art from state patronage in terms that speak to the balletic innovations of both the Ballets Russes and Balanchine's individual practice. He suggests that "a cultural production free of external instruction and injunction [of this kind is] capable of discovering within itself the principles of its own existence" (Bourdieu, 1996: 139).⁴⁴ While this statement is certainly helpful for contextualising the collective artistic identity forged during Diaghilev's stewardship of his independent ballet company, and the "subjective vision[s]" of its individual choreographers, its specific wording resonates more fully vis-à-vis Balanchine's development of a classical formalism in New York City (ibid.: 140). Although this Georgian-born choreographer had commenced his American career in the wake of his apprenticeship as the last Ballets Russes choreographer under Diaghilev, he did not follow in the tradition of Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, or Léonide Massine by using the modern ballet's distance from Imperial patronage as a precedent to repudiate Imperial classicism.⁴⁵ In crafting his New York style he turned, instead, very directly to the classical grammar in which he had been versed as a pupil of the Imperial Ballet School.⁴⁶

From Petersburg to New York, Balanchine transported the principles of classical space that had been enshrined in Petipa's Imperial canon. He adopted these principles, abstracted them, and ultimately examined them – to borrow from Clement Greenberg's critical schema– “from the inside” (Greenberg, 1993a: 85). In Balanchine's case, the formal “purification” detected by Bourdieu in the autonomisation of some artistic fields after their release from the representational agendas of state patronage dovetails precisely with the formal “‘purity’ or concrete ‘abstractness’” with which Greenberg famously characterised a particular strand of the mid-century, New York avant-garde (Bourdieu, 1996: 138; Greenberg, 1993b: 56). In his seminal ‘On Modernist Painting’ (1960), Greenberg claimed that “the essence of Modernism lies... in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence” (Greenberg, 1993a: 85). Balanchine's abstraction and amplification of the spatial principles essential to the ‘existence’ of classical ballet specifies both his place in a Greenbergian canon and his significance to the trajectory of this thesis as a whole. The neoclassical style that came to emblematised the choreography and dancing of the NYCB is commensurate with Greenberg's strand of artistic modernism and, owing to its fine examination of classical form, also provides a fundamental precursor to Forsythe's later interrogation of “the universe of ballet” (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2004: 49). In this sense, Balanchine's formalist practice in New York provides a crucial link between the late nineteenth-century classicism of Petipa and the late twentieth-century classicism of Forsythe. While the Ballets Russes had steered the material and aesthetic production of ballet outside of the Russian Imperial court, it was Balanchine who made use of ballet's new political ‘autonomy’ to carve out the exposed form so important for contextualising Forsythe's later experiments with classical space.

Whereas Forsythe's relationship to the principles of classical space is mediated through Balanchine's aesthetic, the same relationship for Cunningham was mediated through the practice of another New York modernist. By the 1930s, the city had become the setting for the "heroic age" of a new, indigenously North American concert dance genre, and the dancer/choreographer Martha Graham had emerged as one of its major protagonists (Garafola, 2005a: 232). The modern dance scene of 1930s New York was partially supported by New Deal programmes such as the WPA-funded Federal Theater Project and The Dance Project (Thomas, 1995: 119-128). However, Graham's early practice subsisted largely on personal income generated through teaching, and on the kinds of donations known also by Kirstein and Balanchine (albeit on a smaller scale than those afforded these classicists). In 1932, Graham became the first dancer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1952 – one year before \$100,000 of Rockefeller funds were appropriated to the NYCB – Bethsabée de Rothschild aided in the relocation of Graham's school to new premises in Manhattan, and would sponsor performance seasons over the next two years (Jowitt, 1998: 214; 218-9). Graham, like Balanchine, made use of the philanthropic readiness of the New York social elite in the establishment of a new aesthetic. In 1926 she founded a permanent dance company in New York City – a troupe that Cunningham would join (as its second male dancer) in 1939 and that would be formally named The Martha Graham Dance Company in 1941. Over a sixty-five-year career Graham choreographed over two hundred dances and developed a highly evolved movement technique, devising a new way of organising space that offered an idiom for the modern, moving body (Horosko, 2002: 259).

The body had been recently prepared as a site for a North American modern aesthetic in a series of societal shifts at the turn of the twentieth century that had enlarged the

opportunity that (particularly) women had for cultural and physical pursuit.⁴⁷ These shifts engendered new attitudes and new opportunities for an American art form focused on movement and produced, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a generation made up largely of female artists who turned to the body as a medium for devising individual modes of artistic expression.⁴⁸ Graham, who received her dance tutelage at Denishawn – the parent institution of what came to be known as American modern dance – might be viewed as belonging to the second generation of this artistic movement. When she established her independent practice in 1926, she did so in pursuit of an alternative to the aesthetic values not only of classical ballet but also of her generic forerunners, such as her teacher Ruth St. Denis. Graham stated as much in an essay included in an edited collection of 1930 titled *Revolt in the Arts*, announcing that the ‘pioneers’ of her generation intended to

shun the Imperialism of ballet, the sentimentality engulfing the followers of the great Isadora Duncan, the weakling exoticism of a transplanted orientalism [a thinly-veiled dig at St. Denis]. [...] We... have found it necessary to deny their influence over us, and by so doing to enable us to arrive at the starting point for the American expression, the American gesture.

(Graham, 1930: 252)

In this early statement of ‘revolt’, and especially in its figuration of an ‘American expression’, Graham’s distinction to Balanchine’s Greenbergian modernism can be identified. However, it is here, also, that a common framework for measuring their respective treatments of classical space might be obtained.

As set out in this text, the goal of Graham’s modern dance was to find a mode of expression indigenous to American soil and untainted by the ‘decadent’ (and European) influences of ballet and the romantic modernists (Graham, 1930: 253). In the first instance, this goal suggests the alignment of Graham’s practice with a strand of New York artistic modernism that counters Balanchine’s formalism, that is, one based in an

expressionist priority defined by John Martin. As dance critic for *The New York Times* from 1927 to 1962, Martin was placed as witness to the burgeoning forms of concert dance in the city. A supporter of second generation ‘pioneers’ such as Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Helen Tamiris, Martin developed an incipient (and generative) theory of the modern dance as a genre that was more “authentic” than ballet and the earlier American modernism (Martin, 1965: 19). In a series of lectures given at the New School for Social Research between 1931 and 1932, he defined modern dance as such precisely because it was deemed to manifest the connection between the “physical” and “psychical” modes of human experience and make use of an evolved formal vocabulary for “the expression of an inner compulsion” (ibid.: 14, 6). Graham’s commitment to finding not an American form but an American expression specifies her place in such an aesthetic strand. However, while Graham’s modern expressionism (defined through Martin) led to a treatment of classical space very different to that of Balanchine’s classical formalism (defined through Greenberg), her placement of an idea of ‘America’ at the heart of her new aesthetic indicates the existence of a common ground beneath the Kirstein-Balanchine project and her own.

When inviting Balanchine to transport his classical practice from the cities of Europe to New York, Kirstein had been clear that it was nothing less than the foundation of an “American ballet” that he held in mind (Kirstein, 1973: 16, 17, 20). Likewise, that the Graham essay cited above was titled ‘Seeking an American Art of Dance’ suggests a similar national orientation in the goals of her formative choreographic practice.⁴⁹

Kirstein and Graham had the opportunity to engage in dialogue over their respective projects, as the former began visiting the latter’s studio from around the mid-1930s (Garafola, 2005b: 22). During private correspondence of 1938–1939, Graham took the liberty of describing to Kirstein the kind of shape that his new ballet should take in order

to be truly ‘American’. She suggested that: “You need to use the extended stage – an expansion, spread, in gesture, in leap. I feel ballet must adjust itself to the American scale, that is, lateral in concept and expansive in quality”.⁵⁰ While this counsel was intended to inform Kirstein’s Ballet Caravan – a project in which Balanchine was not involved – it provides a terminology useful for describing an essentialism about ‘American space’ to which both Graham’s expressionism and Balanchine’s later formalism pertain.

In both of these aesthetic projects, a representation of space can be discerned that translates a myth of the American spatial experience into choreographic form. John Agnew and Joanne P. Sharp describe “the American geographical imagination”, which is rooted, they argue, in nineteenth-century notions of a Manifest Destiny (the right of the Anglo-Saxon-constituted entity, the United States, to expand territorially across the entire American continent), and its means of achievement – “the future-facing expansion of the frontier by individual pioneers” (Agnew and Sharp, 2002: 81, 86, 88). Agnew and Sharp propose that these notions were legitimated as a basis for American nationhood in, and beyond, the nineteenth century by “the makers of American public culture – political leaders, writers, and educators” (ibid.: 79). Indeed, the ideal of an open and notionally untenanted space stretching beyond a westward-expanding frontier was constructed by modern historians around the promise of a socially levelled landscape that could be cultivated anew by the recently independent, white American settler.⁵¹ In his *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927) for example, Vernon Louis Parrington writes:

Along the Appalachian watershed a vast drama, magnificent in the breadth and sweep of its movement, was being enacted by players unconscious of their parts. [...] Today it is plain that those unremembered years were engaged in clearing away encumbrances more significant than the great oaks and maples of the virgin wilderness: they were uprooting ancient habits of thought, destroying social customs that had grown old and dignified in class-ridden Europe. A new psychology was being created by the wide spaces [...] the psychology of democratic individualism.

(Parrington, 1927: 131)

The intertwining of ideas of space and the notion of a republican identity was developed also in the writings of a fellow progressive intellectual and contemporary of Parrington's, John Dewey. Dewey's writings become useful later for articulating the way that Cunningham's spatial practice expresses an ideal of 'democratic individualism'. For now, however, Parrington's notion of 'wide spaces' is useful for describing an essentialism definitive of the American geographical imagination at the turn of the twentieth century.

This notion came to be sustained in the work of North American artists, and has been traced in aesthetic practices from the painting and literature of the mid-nineteenth century, (including the landscapes of the Hudson River School and the 'wide open spaces' occupied by the heroes of James Fenimore Cooper) to the cinema of the mid-twentieth century (including the cinematography of John Ford's epic Westerns).⁵² Of immediate import to the present study, the formal principles of space shared by these diverse hymns to a constitutional American landscape are implied also in Graham's note to Kirstein. Each describes a space expansive in scale, open – even limitless – in possibility, and that necessitates an extended gesture by which it might be conquered. In their respective formulations of a deliberately 'American' dance form in mid-century New York, both Balanchine and Graham made choreography that incorporates the American geographical imagination as defined above. Balanchine did so through a formalist expansion of Petipian classicism that, in its distension of classical space, paved the way for Forsythe's later work with ballet. Graham did so through the replacement of classical "artifice" with an extended depth-space expressive of her search for the American "psyche" (Martin, 1965: 6; Graham, 1930: 253). As an aesthetic project, Graham's representation of the American spatial experience is fundamental for contextualising Cunningham's later turn from expressionism, and the presence in his work of an individuated spatial logic.

George Balanchine's 'American' classicism

Two years after Balanchine had commenced his career in North America, he characterised the geographical relocation of his work through reference to a nationally specific sense of scale: “There is that love of bigness that is so important a part of the ballet. The skyscrapers, vast fields, gigantic machines, all make for thrilling spectacles”.⁵³ This same sense was registered in the classical reforms he went on to make in his North American practice. Balanchine established an amplified spatial reach for his new ballet, and the first way in which he did so was by crafting an expansion of the *danse d'école* in the training programme of SAB. The early teaching staff of the school was drawn from a pool of former Ballets Russes dancers – including Pierre Vladimirov and Anatole Obukhov – who had, like Balanchine, trained at the Imperial Ballet School (Beaumont, 1950: 9). However, Balanchine's relocation of Petersburg pedagogy to the 1930s New York context was accompanied by the induction of a new spatial character tuned to the contemporary, social ideals of the ballet's new national setting. Kirstein has described the historical moment in which SAB was founded in a way that weaves the establishment of Balanchine's American classicism with the myth of a 'land of promise' calibrated to the national aspirations of New Deal America. Romanticising the school's beginnings, he states:

After a long despairing revolutionary war for political independence, a frightful civil rebellion, participation in a first world war, and despite rumbles and ensuing depression from 1929, the United States in 1934 was hypnotized by the illusion of limitless possibility.

(Kirstein, 1984: 16)

Kirstein's use of spatial-imaginative language ('limitless possibility') echoes the optimistic imagery with which Franklin D. Roosevelt had inaugurated his presidency in 1933, and especially the latter's invocation of the “American spirit of the pioneer” that could drive the United States populace out of the Great Depression (Roosevelt, 2002: 6). In this sense, Kirstein's narrative highlights how a defining trope of the American

geographical imagination was reinvigorated in a nationally addressed, political rhetoric at the precise time of SAB's founding. In so doing, it specifies a contemporary ideal that bound a notion of United States national destiny with a sense of extended possibility, and that was articulated also in the new spatial 'reach' that Balanchine built into the foundations of his new 'American' classicism.

In an interview of 1972, Balanchine was asked whether classical dancing had changed since his early career, and his response surmises the technical amendments of his New York academy: "It's a different type of dancing today. We are trained now to cover more space – faster" (Balanchine, 1992: 192). Indeed, the training programme developed at SAB created a hyper-extension of the vocabulary and grammar of the *danse d'école*, an example of which lies in the adaptation made to the *arabesque ouverte* position.

Overriding the perpendicular form of the Petipian *arabesque*, the Balanchine version incorporates a twisting motion that ultimately amplifies the scale of this position. In an episode of *The Balanchine Essays* – a series of films created in the 1990s to ensure the preservation of Balanchine's technique – Suki Schorer (a pedagogical guardian of the Balanchine 'style') and NYCB principal Merrill Ashley explain how Balanchine would instruct this position in classroom practice (Brockway, 1994). Having assumed an *arabesque ouverte*, the dancer would be asked to reach their front arm and working leg away from the trunk of the body, twisting along their spine to engage a minor dislocation of the two limbs from the shoulder and hip socket respectively. Ashley relates the results of this position: "What happened was the whole pose grew and it expanded", thus transgressing the squared geometry of the *danse d'école* and extending the limits of the dancer's kinesphere (ibid.). Balanchine's choreographic tendency to displace the hips and shoulders from the classical 'square' has been accounted for by scholars including Banes and Brenda Dixon Gottschild as an appropriation of the "jazz" and "Africanist"

movement grammars to which he had been introduced, in a professional capacity, during his various commissions for commercial productions on Broadway in the 1930s (Banes, 1993a; Dixon Gottschild, 1996: 70).⁵⁴ While it is not the intention of this study to repudiate this existing argument, which, for Dixon Gottschild, is woven through a discussion of the racial politics of cultural appropriation in this national and historical context, an additional precedent for Balanchine's 'twisting' of the classical square can be located elsewhere.

The spiralling joint extension Balanchine required for his *arabesque* represents a logical extension of the *épaulement* characteristic of the Russian classical school. That Balanchine isolated a "procedure" of Imperial classicism in his technical practice, and magnified its spatial properties to this extent, supports his characterisation as a formalist in the Greenbergian sense in that this reform was not one of subversion but of abstraction, exposure, and amplification (Greenberg, 1993a: 85). The advanced statement of *épaulement* that formed a central aspect of Balanchine's New York *danse d'école* would come to provide the basis for Forsythe's later examination of classical form. For now, however, its formalist induction of an up-scaled reach to classical vocabulary can be viewed as a technical basis for the development of an up-scaled 'American' classicism. Schorer has described the technical preparations of Balanchine's classroom in these terms:

He knew the look he wanted on stage and it was a new, American look, even though the technique was rooted in the classical tradition. This American look was about energy because Americans are energetic. It was to be expansive because Americans occupied a whole continent.

(Schorer, 1999: 16)

Schorer's statement chimes with Balanchine's assertion that a contemporary classicism should cover 'more space – faster' and sustains the myth of American space encoded in Graham's letter to Kirstein. In the light of this statement, then, Balanchine's formalist

amplification of *épaulement* can be understood as re-contextualising the ideological import of this classical-stylistic trope. In its new use as a tool to enlarge the proportions of the classical kinesphere, *épaulement* no longer idealised a harmonious Imperial space but expressed the ‘love of bigness’ Balanchine spoke of 1935 and ‘the American scale’ that Graham had described to Kirstein as ‘lateral in concept and expansive in quality’.

It is worth pausing here to consider an aspect of Schorer’s characterisation of the ‘American look’ in Balanchine’s classicism. Echoing Graham’s characterisation of an American scale for an American ballet, she suggests that this national landscape in particular (‘a whole continent’) should foster an especially expansive form of dancing. This conceit seems particularly curious given that the ‘classical tradition’— specifically Balanchine’s Russian heritage – mentioned in this same statement was itself rooted in a national territory that exceeds geographically that of the United States. However, the paradox in Schorer’s statement can be disentangled by considering the particular kind of imagined landscapes with which Petipa’s and Balanchine’s classicisms were respectively coterminous. In Petipa’s Imperial canon, classical space expressed a grandeur envisioned geographically not in the myth of a huge Russian landmass, but in the local and classical edifice of St. Petersburg and, as such, it sustained that city’s architectural visualisation of Imperial power. Likewise, Balanchine’s distension of the classical idiom implied the kind of open scale with which the essentialism of an American national topography had been historically formulated and, as such, it carved out a balletic form proportionate to the spatial mythology of its new domestic setting. Deborah Gans has observed this precise distinction between the figuration of spatial scale in the Russian-Imperial tradition and in Balanchine’s neoclassicism in her discussion of the physical stage space occupied by the NYCB. As the dedicated dance venue of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the New York State Theater was designed by Philip Johnson specifically for the NYCB and

has housed the company since 1964. Gans observes of this stage, which measures 30 metres wide by 20 deep, that “perhaps the stage of the Lincoln Center ... evokes as much the American Great Plains as Imperial St. Petersburg in its grandeur of dimension” (Gans, 1993: 44). Indeed, Balanchine’s use of an amply dimensioned performance space suggests a form of grandeur very different to that of Petipa’s ballets for the Mariinsky and does so, again, through a formal ‘purification’ facilitating the vision of a wide open space.

As observed by Scholl, the “majority of Balanchine’s ballets” are staged with either a minimal design or complete absence of scenography; in many cases choreography is set on an empty, brightly lit stage and against a block-coloured cyclorama (Scholl, 1994: 127). This pared-down aesthetic is sustained in a costume choice prevalent in his work of the 1950s, in which dancers are dressed in the black-and-white leotard-and-tights of the classical classroom. In Balanchine’s “neo-Imperial” ballets of the mid-1940s and, especially, his “leotard” ballets of the post-war period, the tutus and perspectival backcloths that characterised Petipa’s *grands ballets* were replaced with a sparse classicism where unadorned bodies moved within an exposed and open environment (Garafola, 2005a: 242-3). This purification of the stage delivered an aesthetic consistent with Balanchine’s formalist modifications to the *danse d’école* and, like Schorer’s discussion of his new technique, critic Marcia B. Siegel characterises his economy of design as presenting an especially American ‘look’:

Perhaps it isn’t too much to suggest a relationship between these confident, unadorned bodies of Balanchine’s and the sense Americans have of being at ease in space. We don’t need to be surrounded by artificial vistas, decorative land-scaping, or reassuring architecture, because space to us is a limitless challenge, a field for conquest.

(Siegel, 1985: 228)

Siegel’s assessment co-opts a myth of American expansionism, which figures a vast and empty territory waiting to be conquered (and cultivated) by the efforts of westward-

moving pioneers, for a national contextualisation of Balanchine's formalism. Balanchine did create ballets that made use of 'decorative land-scaping' to evoke the cultural lore of the Old West, where, for example, the stage of *Western Symphony* (1954) was set to look like a nineteenth-century settlement town. However, the neutral stage for his leotard ballets shows a figurative incorporation of this same imagined landscape, by opening the performance environment for a movement of lateral scale.

The extended reach of Balanchine's *danse d'école* and the vacant territory of his stage space are mutually illustrated in the opening of the celebrated *pas de deux* of *Agon* (1957). Definitive among Balanchine's leotard ballets, *Agon*, like *Western Symphony*, was one of the works underwritten by the Rockefeller grant of 1953 (Kirstein, 1971: 242). Its staging of 'contest' across a suite of virtuosic dances for different combinations of twelve performers peaks in the first phrase of the central *pas de deux*, when the high-speed diagonal traversed by the dancers transforms the stage into Siegel's image of a 'field for conquest'. The dancers enter the bare stage in silence and wait at the upstage left wing. At the opening drum-roll of Igor Stravinsky's score, the female dancer moves first, advancing through space in a series of deep lunges, accented by a high-momentum, high-level *développé devant*, and completed in a chain of flat-footed, double *piqué* turns driving towards the target corner. Her partner follows her in canon, taking his identical *enchaînement* at one beat behind hers. While the entire sequence showcases a bold and direct consumption of space, the opening lunges cover the most terrain, unfolding as four wide bounds taking up almost half of the stage plane. The reach of these lunges is facilitated by a similar extension of limb from hip socket as that of the *arabesque* described above. Twisting at the pelvis to enable a greater range, the dancers move at the maximum limit of their kinespheres to complete their race to the far side of the stage.⁵⁵ Through its presentation of a vacant field for action and a choreography of augmented

range, the opening of the *Agon pas deux* emblematises the invitation that Balanchine extended to his North American dancers to cover ‘more space – faster’. Also, in its pointed use of ‘the extended stage’ and of ‘an expansion, spread, in gesture, in leap’, this choreography satisfies the criteria conveyed by Graham to Kirstein for the establishment of an essentially ‘American’ classicism. In this sense, it goes further than Balanchine’s (and Kirstein’s) earlier Americana ballets in staging the lateral consumption of terrain through which the American spatial experience was typically figured.

Martin Zerlang has discussed the interdependence of the notion of North American nationhood with two myths of spatial conquest: one which is based in the older construction of a westward-expanding frontier, the other, in the newer identification of an upward-reaching urban skyline. He suggests that “the conquest of America was a conquest of space, and space was conquered in both directions, horizontally under the slogan ‘Go West’, and vertically under the slogan ‘The Sky’s the Limit’” (Zerlang, 2002: 314). Balanchine’s creation of a ballet proportionate to the ‘American scale’ embodies this dual-aspect ideal of spatial expansion. He extended the classical model not only horizontally – prompting Gans to see the American Great Plains on his stage – but also vertically, evoking a different axis of scale that was already visualised in the NYCB’s contemporary urban landscape. In the aforementioned interview of 1935, Balanchine listed ‘skyscrapers’ as a characteristic feature of the North American ‘love of bigness’. Twenty years later, the extreme vertical reach of his leotard ballets realised this perception of a sky-scraping, American scale.

The vertical emphasis of his ballets of the 1950s also aligns his augmentation of classical space with a contemporary architectural expression of US, post-war ideology. In 1958 – one year after *Agon*’s premiere – construction was completed on the Seagram Building.

This mid-century skyscraper is understood by Benjamin Flowers to emblemise the national ambitions and anxieties of its economic and geopolitical climate. Emerging from “an expanding consumer culture amid the tensions of the Cold War”, the building joined the Manhattan skyline’s existing set of tributes to corporate America, but also heightened its cumulative celebration of the vitality of a capitalist democracy (Flowers, 2009: 100). The expansion, in the late 1950s, of a North American corporate presence into the sky represented a specific means of national-identity-making at a time when an ideological “confrontation between East and West” was staked out in the cultural symbols of polarised economic-political systems (ibid.: 70).⁵⁶ In this sense, the Seagram Building represents a strand of the American geographical imagination as it had been realigned to address a new axis of ‘spatial conquest’ in the Cold War context.

As an icon of this historical realignment, the Seagram Building is additionally significant to a contextualisation of Balanchine’s augmented classicism because it was co-designed by Johnson, the architect responsible for the vast stage upon which the NYCB later danced at Lincoln Center. Just as the first purpose-built home for the Russian Imperial Ballet had been designed in 1783 by Antonio Rinaldi, whose commissions exemplified St. Petersburg’s classical urban landscape, so the first purpose-built home for the NYCB was designed by an architect whose earlier New York commission epitomised the ideological import of an American corporate architecture’s ‘race to the skies’. As established at the beginning of this chapter, Balanchine’s New York aesthetic was not shaped within a cultural framework where balletic form needed to idealise the power of its sponsors, as it had done in the Imperial Ballet’s Petersburg context. Nevertheless, Balanchine’s new classicism was not only supported by the practical facilities and cultural networks produced out of a capitalist marketplace but, in its elevated reach, also

incorporated the expanded vertical scheme that was architecturally emblematic of this same economic order.

Balanchine's leotard ballets of the post-war period contain a density of "sky-high extensions" that Garafola cites as a trope of his modification to the *danse d'école* (Garafola, 2005a: 244). His tendency to extend the vertical limits of classical bodily architecture can be observed in a virtuosic piece of partnering in the *Agon pas de deux*. The dancers face each other in profile with the male dancer kneeling and the female dancer standing. As they grip each other's hands at either side of the space between them, she steps with her right leg *en pointe, en plié*, and takes a swift *développé devant* with the left. This movement extends vertically *upwards*, resulting in a '12 o' clock' line traced from the floor to the toe of the working leg; the rotation of Petipa's horizontal-perpendicular axis into a vertical line is enabled, as before, by a twisting of the pelvis that allows for the 180° reach of the leg. The female dancer then lowers her leg to rest on her partner's left shoulder and he stands up to face the back of the stage, manipulating her supported leg into a shoulder-height extension *à la seconde*. He walks in a clockwise circle around his partner, engaging a half-circle *tour de promenade*, during which she performs a slow *fouetté*, shifting the orientation of her hips and torso. By the time the *promenade* is complete, she is folded into a hyperextended *arabesque attitude*: her left toe still rests on his shoulder and her spine is arched so that her head reaches back to meet the lifted foot. He holds her right arm high above them both, and her gaze is forced direct overhead to the very peak of the space [Image 5].

This phrase accentuates the highest limits of the dancers' kinespheric space. Extreme and precarious manipulations replace the understated proportions of Petipa's partnering, and the female dancer produces lines that rotate upwards and extend into an acute vertical

linearity. As with his intensification of *épaulement*, Balanchine had taken a feature of the classical model – verticality – and augmented it for an extended classical range. Displaced from this new upward reach were the straightness of spine and equilibrium with which ‘verticality’, in the *danse d’école*, was historically coextensive. As such, Balanchine’s Greenbergian exposure of balletic form prepares a foundation for Forsythe’s later, off-balance classicism. The isolation of a principle of verticality in the mid-century, New York milieu also re-contextualised the expression of power historically performed by this component of the classical model. As discussed in the previous chapter, verticality in the bodily practice of the European Renaissance had communicated the virtue and grace with which ballet’s elite producers legitimated their social authority. Sustained as an expression of power in the Russian Imperial context, it formed a part of the aesthetic tribute paid to the Romanov dynasty in the perpendicular spaces of St. Petersburg and Petipa’s late Imperial classicism. However, once isolated and magnified in the ‘sky-scraping’ practice of the NYCB, balletic verticality came to address a proximal vertical landscape and, by extension, the new power elite that inhabited it. Tracing the extreme linear reach of Manhattan’s corporate skyline, Balanchine’s American classicism reproduced a second, nationally figured myth of spatial conquest – one that was sustained by the same economic elite that had financed his New York practice and were emblematised in that city’s high-rise spaces. His classical formalism, in other words, came to match an essentialism of mid-twentieth-century, North American urban space, materialising Kirstein’s ‘illusion of limitless possibility’ in an aspiration that faced not horizontally, but upwards.

Martha Graham’s ‘American’ expressionism

While Balanchine’s choreography of the American geographical imagination lay in his formalist expansion of the classical model – incorporating what he perceived as an

American ‘love of bigness’ – Graham’s spatial figuration of ‘America’ was both more literal and more directly critical of classical form. A definition of art given by Graham in an essay of 1937 is useful for contextualising the distinction between Balanchine’s nationally tuned project and her own. In an exposition of the attitude that Martin would later classify as expressional, Graham asserted that “art is the evocation of man’s inner nature. Through art, which finds its roots in man’s unconscious – race memory – is the history and psyche of race brought into focus” (Graham, 1979: 50). This statement demonstrates the early influence of Carl Jung, whom Graham had begun reading in the late 1930s, and especially of the Jungian notion of a collective unconscious deemed to transmit “the whole spiritual heritage of mankind’s evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual” (Jung, 1960: 158). However, the statement also resonates with Graham’s earlier suggestion, in 1930, that the expression of the nation’s “psyche” is that which should be first determined when seeking an American art of dance (Graham, 1930: 253). The conceptual overlap of these statements indicates that, even before Graham’s encounter with Jung, her choreography of ‘America’ was to be rooted in an expression of that nation’s ‘inner nature’. As the basis for Graham’s development of an American dance form, in other words, America itself “was endowed with an unconscious” (Franko, 1995: 52).

Even though Balanchine’s choreography of ‘an expansion, spread, in gesture, in leap’ would satisfy Graham’s criteria for an American ballet, his classical formalism remained anathema to her aesthetic project, which depended on a primary rejection of what she perceived to be the essentially European and artificial character of classical form. For concert dance to accommodate the American ‘psyche’, it would need to find a formal (and spatial) language very different to that offered in classical ballet. Indeed, in the same essay of 1930, Graham alleged the essential incompatibility of ballet and the American

national identity, and did so using a trope that was central to the American geographical imagination. She claimed: “It is difficult to imagine a great ballet dancer emerging from a country in which the pioneer is one or two generations removed” (Graham, 1930: 252). As Parrington had done three years previously, and as Roosevelt would do three years later, Graham turned to the figure of the pioneer for a characterisation of the essential national psychology. Whereas Schorer, Siegel, and others had used expansionist imagery to contextualise Balanchine’s formalist amplification of the classical model, Graham evoked this mythical agent of American expansion to explain her outright rejection of the classical aesthetic. Likewise, Graham’s development of a spatial practice that might authentically express the pioneer mentality was based not in a classical-linear extension of space along lateral and vertical axes, but in the sculpting of space into a volume of extended depth.

Using a logic of organisation that sought to replace classical artifice with expressionist depth, Graham presented interior volume as well as exterior line, and emphasised the movement from inside to outside, both in physical-spatial and creative-expressive terms. In a cycle of works created from the early 1930s that made a direct treatment of American themes and narratives, Graham developed this spatial aesthetic into a movement form that might conceivably act as a conduit for the American psyche. As part of her Americana cycle, Graham sought the means of accessing a national ‘unconscious’ in American cultural traditions outside of those associated with the figure of the Anglo-Saxon pioneer, identifying, in 1930, what she described as two “primitive sources” for the American dance as “the Indian and the Negro” (Graham, 1930: 254). The intersections of Graham’s national project and her aesthetic primitivism have been well established and appropriately problematised in existing scholarship, notably Ramsay Burt’s analysis of *Primitive Mysteries* (1931) (Burt, 1998: 160-189). However, Graham’s perception of the

geographical and psychological journey made in the Euro-American expansion of the nineteenth century remained central to her choreography of the American psyche. While this thread of her Americana period culminated with *Appalachian Spring* (1944), in which Cunningham created the role of the Revivalist, Graham's pronounced use of spatial depth in the expression of the pioneer-settler experience was distilled in her earlier solo of 1935, *Frontier*.

Frontier stages the experience of a lone, pioneer woman as she senses her new habitat and carves a place for herself on the edge of an expanding territory. In its representation of a North American individual obtaining a sense of place and of themselves specifically as a frontiersperson, the work registers an idea fundamental to the American geographical imagination. The Frontier Thesis, as set out by Frederick Jackson Turner in 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' (1893, published 1920), was written as a reflection on the recent closure of the frontier at the Western Seaboard. The essay marked "a turning point in American history and historiography", and its central conceit was reiterated in Parrington's aforementioned history of the Euro-American expansion (Slotkin, 1998: 29). Turner argued that the special character of United States public institutions, as well as the "striking characteristics" of the "American intellect" – generative of what Parrington would later term 'democratic individualism' – were rooted in the experience of land-shaping encountered by nineteenth-century, white settlers on the American frontier (Turner, 2008: 37). He proposed that the experience of conquering, cultivating, and civilising the "wilderness" of this continent was productive of both "the expansive character of American life" and the form of pioneering "individualism [that] has from the beginning promoted democracy" (ibid.: 1, 38, 30). In a choreographic exposition of this same narrative, Graham built *Frontier* around a spatial logic that expressed both the expansive sensibility and the individual rootedness of the settler

imagined in Turner's thesis. She described *Frontier* as being concerned with "the appetite for space which is one of the characteristics of America [and] one of the things that has made us pioneers" (Brockway, 1998). In the scenographic and choreographic content of this work – both of which emphasise interior depth as an index to psychological experience – an expression of this 'national' sense of space can be identified.

Frontier marked the beginning of Graham's long-term collaboration with Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi. The two artists would work together on twenty-two productions and Noguchi's shaping of space into three-dimensional form is commensurate with the volume-focused aesthetic of Graham's spatial practice (Graham, 1992b: 133). In lieu of a painterly backdrop screen for *Frontier*, Noguchi produced a single sculpture that incorporated the entire depth of the stage. At the upstage central area he placed a small wooden fence – the frontier of this environment. From a central point behind this fence two thick ropes extended outwards into the front corners of the proscenium, tracing diagonal lines above and over the performance space [Image 6]. The remainder of the stage was left bare. Noguchi's reflection on *Frontier* underscores the importance of depth to his design. He recalled: "These rope-formed lines of perspective in three dimensional space seemed to encompass the audience. It was for me a sculpting of a whole volume of air!" (Noguchi, 1980: 6). The set essentially shaped an empty mass of space that, while suggesting the 'wide open' terrain figured also on Balanchine's formalist stage, was derived from a distinctly internal scheme of reference.

The nine day train journey that Graham had made, at the age of fourteen, from Pittsburgh in the east to her new home in Santa Barbara on the west coast, offered the origin image for the design of *Frontier*. Graham recalled: "It was the [train] tracks that hugged the land, and became a living part of my memory. Parallel lines whose meaning was

inexhaustible, whose purpose was infinite” (Graham, 1992b: 43-4). The North American landscape is remembered here as a limitless stretch of space, as perceived in transit along the ‘parallel lines’ that would find perspectival form in Noguchi’s diagonal framing ropes. Working from this origin image, Noguchi did not attempt to reproduce the scenery of an old settlement town, as Balanchine did for *Western Symphony*, nor did he translate the ideal of the vast American West into a formalist presentation of open space, as with *Agon*. He shaped the stage around Graham’s personal memory of experiencing this landscape and, thus, materialised the essentially psychological scheme through which Graham wished to imagine ‘America’. Indeed, Martin Friedman locates the broader compatibility of Noguchi’s and Graham’s spatial practices in the success of this first collaboration, suggesting that “even at that early stage, Noguchi understood her attitudes about the dance and the need to present it in a psychological rather than literal landscape” (Friedman, 1978: 25). Noguchi’s set for *Frontier* offered not simply a paean to the majesty of the frontier horizon. In providing a visualisation of Graham’s internalised image of her journey across America, it presented the frontier specifically as the projection of the pioneer woman’s psyche.

That Noguchi designed *Frontier* as a ‘psychological rather than literal landscape’ aligns this work with Martin’s definition of American choreographic modernism, in that it represents the ‘physical’ manifestation of a ‘psychical’ experience. In aesthetic terms, this expressionist focus was emphasised in the shaping of the performance space into an interior space. Noguchi’s ropes, which encompass the entire stage, imagine the frontier line as extending not only across the horizon at the back but also overhead and beyond the depth of the physical stage, as suggested by the ‘vanishing point’ behind the fence structure. In contrast to the horizontal diagonal of the *Agon pas de deux*, which carves the stage plane into a flattened ‘field for conquest’, Noguchi’s elevated diagonals sculpt the

Frontier environment into ‘a whole volume of air’. This distinction between ‘field’ and ‘volume’ underlines how the space occupied by the pioneer woman was imagined as a fundamentally internal landscape. Contained within the boundaries marked by Noguchi’s ropes, this environment is expansive, as with Balanchine’s classical formalism, but also rooted inwards. It hypothesises the horizon vanishing far into the distance, but also presents the space as an enclosure, its limits created by the extent of the woman’s experience of it. Appropriately to this internal schema, her movement is suggestive of limit shaping. That the woman tests (and fashions) this environment from the inside is demonstrated in the gesture that becomes her motif, a *grand battement à la seconde*, in which the inverted, flattened palm of her right hand seems to be pressing up against the sky. It is also suggested in her repeated parallel-footed *bourrées*, with which she travels steadily from the front to the back of the stage, tracing the parallel edges of her encompassed territory.⁵⁷

The presentation of the *Frontier* terrain as interior volume is also maintained in the woman’s kinespheric arrangement, and especially in her mobilisation of the spine through the contraction-release dyad. Developed in classroom practice since around 1927, this spinal dyad represents the technical lynchpin of Graham’s expressionist aesthetic, and undoes the verticality of the classical-balletic spine for a coordination system rooted in the internal processes of the body (Shurr, 2002: 21). In a contraction, a deep exhalation of breath results in a concave curvature of the spine, with the navel drawing back behind the vertical axis of the body. An inhalation reverses this process, initiating an expansion of the rib cage, a lifting of the chest and straightening out of the spine: a release. Early company dancer Gertrude Shurr remembers Graham’s claim that she had not invented a dance technique but “only rediscovered what the human body can do” (ibid.). This claim contextualises the contraction-release as an expressive instrument in that it was designed

to carry impulses initiated in breath rhythms and to transform them from interior feeling to exterior effect. The dancer Yuriko has similarly described the dyad as “an inner action that produces an outer position”, and, as typified in a sequence of *Frontier*, Graham used it to exteriorise the interior field of human experience (Yuriko, 2002: 81).

At the central section of the solo, the woman returns to her base point at the central fence structure. While facing the audience, she leans into a deep *fondue* and tilt to the right; her left leg and both arms extend outwards, forming a singular horizontal line from her toe to her hands, as her body rests on and restates the upper line of the fence. Having marked the straight, lateral extension of the frontier/horizon, the woman sinks into a deep *plié a la seconde*. Still feeling the border of the fence at her back, she begins a series of sidelong sways that modulate through a series of contraction-release dyads. Her previous acknowledgement of the exterior, frontier line disappears and she begins a seemingly inward-focused contemplation of this space, rooting her apprehension of this environment through a pulsation of the spine and breath. Shurr recalls that Graham instructed her students to “carve a place for yourself in space”, and the pioneer woman appears to be doing just that (Shurr, 2002: 23). However, this ‘carving’ is not linear, as is the broad pathway along which Balanchine’s dancers drive through their ‘field for conquest’ in *Agon*. In fashioning the kinesphere through both the ‘positive’ curve of the spine and the ‘negative’ volume of air left in front of the contracted torso, the woman carves out a space of interior depth that is indexical to her inward-rooted navigation of a ‘psychological landscape’.

By shaping the frontier landscape as an interior volume beneath an exterior horizon, Graham and Noguchi characterised this space as a property of the pioneer’s psychic apparatus. As is commensurate with his formalist aesthetic, Balanchine’s extension of

classical space along broad perpendicular axes created a form proportionate to his perception of an American 'love of bigness'. By contrast, the spatial depth sculpted in *Frontier* accommodated the expressionist staging of a psychological experience that was, for Graham as for Turner, formative of the American 'psyche'. However, while the Graham-Noguchi aesthetic displaced the perpendicular axes and the spinal straightness of the classical model, it nevertheless used a cardinal feature of classical space in its creation of this inward looking terrain. Noguchi's 'rope-formed lines of perspective' not only shaped the stage into an environment of interior depth, but also anchored this space along a central axis. Likewise, the pioneer woman's deeply felt kinespheric sensation of the frontier is rooted through the central axis of the spine and, ultimately, in the central locus of the pelvis. The centralising drive of *Frontier* demonstrates the only partial departure that Graham made from the classical model and, in so doing, provides a comparative frame for measuring two aspects of Cunningham's later spatial practice. Firstly, it underlines the radicalism of Cunningham's displacement of 'the centre' after his break from Graham and, secondly, it contrasts with his staging of the individual as a distinctively North American ideological formulation.

In *Frontier*, Graham imagined an American landscape that extended, at root, from the internal life of the pioneer woman. In this sense, the work presented a narrative of the pioneer psychology underpinning Turner's frontier individualism and his broader characterisation of the 'American intellect'. The construction of this narrative around a holistic, centralised spatiality presented an image of the individual that would be uprooted in Cunningham's later turn from expressionism. While the ideal of democratic individualism fundamental to the American geographical imagination was manifested, for Graham, in a literal representation of the (American) individual as a psychologically

constituted entity, it would be manifested in Cunningham's later practice in his adoption of a non-expressionist, decentralised, and individuated spatial logic.

Cunningham's parting from Graham's spatial model will be explored more fully in Chapter Five of this thesis. For now, however, a comment made by the former in the year before his company's founding suggests the nature of his dissatisfaction with Graham's expressionism and presents an earlier twentieth-century legacy of space that provides a helpful context for viewing his work as well as that of Forsythe. In 1952, seven years after he left Graham's company, Cunningham gave an assessment of space in American modern dance. While making no explicit mention of his teacher, his assessment is suggestive of the kind of rooted spatiality conceived by Graham and Noguchi:

The American modern dance, stemming from German expressionism and the personal feelings of the various American pioneers, made space into a series of lumps, or often just static hills on the stage with actually no relation to the larger space of the stage area, but simply forms that by their connection in time made a shape.

(Cunningham, 1998c: 37)

In the light of Graham's self-characterisation as seeking an 'American art of the dance', it is especially interesting that Cunningham should attribute her strand of modernism to expressionist experiments taking place across the Atlantic. Graham herself insisted upon her independence from the German *Ausdruckstanz* movement and its major exponents such as Mary Wigman, stating in her autobiography: "Some people still think I studied with Wigman. But that is not the truth" (Graham, 1992b: 133). While Graham denied a direct pedagogical influence, she had witnessed Wigman's first tour to New York in 1930, the same year in which she contributed her 'American expression' essay to the *Revolt* volume.

It is beyond the remit of this thesis to determine the extent to which Graham's American expressionism was influenced by Wigman and her own development, from around 1910 onwards, of an expressionist dance practice in Germany.⁵⁸ However, Cunningham's comment does suggest a point of intersection between the North American spatial legacies investigated in this chapter and those developed in the pre-war German context, as investigated in the next. While Graham denied Wigman's influence, her professed 'rediscovery' of the body's movement range according to natural impulses of breath offers a counterpart to the 'natural' movement geometry sought by the founding father of *Ausdruckstanz* and Wigman's teacher, Laban. Indeed, the task of finding a spatial form appropriate to the modern, moving body, and that addressed the particular kind of 'artifice' contained in the classical model of space, had been taken up in German artistic projects extending from the turn of the twentieth century until the rise of National Socialism. The following chapter considers two of these projects, which both form important contexts for understanding the spatial practice of Forsythe and Cunningham, respectively.

Chapter Three: Movement Geometries in Pre-War Germany

Laban's *choreutics* or 'space harmony' represents an early strand of this dance pedagogue's theoretical study of human movement and was conceived in experiments conducted from 1913 in Switzerland and in Germany. As a system for classifying the body's behaviour in space, *choreutics* set out a 'natural' geometry for movement that both predated Graham's expressionist search for an 'authentic' alternative to classical-balletic form and that would directly influence Forsythe's later experiments with classical space. In a very different project, consolidated slightly later in the Weimar context, Schlemmer developed the concept of 'man as a machine' that was theorised and performed from 1912 both prior to and during his teaching posts at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau. Extrapolating geometrical components from the *danse d'école* for an experiment in the mechanised abstraction of human form, Schlemmer's choreographic accommodation of classical-spatial 'artifice' both resonates with Balanchine's classical formalism and brings into relief Cunningham's later strand of technology-informed abstraction.

Laban's and Schlemmer's projects exhibit quite opposite approaches to perceiving and using the structures of the classical model. Where one sought to subsume "the limited spatial base" of ballet into a complex geometry that was organic to the human body, the other sought to abstract geometrical forms from "the natural" and to use classical vocabulary as a means of exaggerating this process (Preston-Dunlop, 1994: 117; Schlemmer, 1979: 18). In spite of these fundamental differences, however, their respective investigations into the geometry of human movement were motivated by a common goal: the attainment of a type of unity. For Laban, this unity was to be felt in the harmony recovered between the human body and the natural world. For Schlemmer it was to be constructed as a synthesis between the human body and an urban culture driven by

mechanical technology. These two formulations of a bodily focussed unity, furthermore, were embedded in concurrent programmes of cultural regeneration developed in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, which jointly represent two sides of one coin as regards the idealisation of cultural unity in Germany after 1871. Whereas Balanchine's and Graham's reforms to classical space reflected their respective conceptions of an American-national spatial practice, Laban's and Schlemmer's spatial models inherited cultural ideals that addressed the societal shifts of a recently formed German nation state.

The broader fermentation of an ideal of unity in post-unification Germany, before it came to motivate the spatial practices of Laban and Schlemmer, is charted by George Mosse in *The Crisis of German Ideology* (1964). As the basis for his study of the intellectual origins of the Third Reich, Mosse contextualises the emergence of German nationalism in pronounced German yearnings for "cultural cohesion" precipitated by socioeconomic crises of the nineteenth century (Mosse, 1998: 2). He clusters these crises around the machinations towards and ramifications of German unification in 1871 and the concurrent societal effects of rapid industrialisation. The promise of a full union of the independent German states after the creation of the German Empire, argues Mosse, was left unmet in the perceptions of the broad German populace. The ideological "confrontation" that took place between "utopian" anticipations of national unity after the Napoleonic Wars and Revolutions of 1848 and Otto von Bismarck's subsequent "bloodless *Realpolitik*" formed one basis for the frustrations citizens felt with the 'unity' of their new nation (ibid.: 3). Indeed, Anne Harrington measures Bismarckian politics in the light of earlier, fervent calls for national unity produced by the *Burschenschaften* (a nationalist student organisation formed in 1815 in the wake of the German wars of liberation) suggesting that "Bismarck's active fomenting of internal dissension in Germany along party lines, as a strategy to maintain his power, hastened the disillusionment of many who had once

dreamt of serving and supporting the 'national whole' (Harrington, 1996: 19-20).

Frustrations with the political implementation of German unity were based in a concern that this national 'whole' was but a nominal one, and Mosse locates a fortified basis for such frustrations in the convergence of unification with the Industrial Revolution.

After Germany had established itself as a unified political agent in Europe, the question of the position it would take among international powers incentivised its economic and industrial growth. German territories subsequently underwent a process of rapid urbanisation with a marked increase, in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the percentage of the nation's city-dwelling population. The empire's new capital Berlin, for instance, rose in population from 826,000 in 1871 to over two million by 1905 and, by the turn of the twentieth century, over half of the nation's workforce was engaged in urban, industrial labour (McFarlane, 1978: 106; Wende, 2005: 106). Mosse coordinates the effects of industrial and urban growth in the late nineteenth century with a sustained domestic concern that the unity recently forged between German peoples was a superficial one. He suggests that the

national self-awareness which many Germans had always desired [was seen to be displaced with] material pursuits – making money and building up cities – [destructive of] those ancient German traditions which to many minds had been the real driving force behind the movement for unification.

(Mosse, 1998: 3)

A "more 'genuine' unity" came to be sought, suggests Mosse, by Germans in the face of their simultaneous political unification and national industrialisation (ibid.: 4). Such a unity was to be forged culturally – locating the responsibility for a national 'cohesion' in the creative practices of German citizens – and would be pursued in both conservative and progressive efforts to heal the alienating effects of the modern industry and its societal infrastructure that were perceived to have stalled a true unification of German people.

Laban's and Schlemmer's differing investigations into movement geometry represent the outlooks of two different groups directed by ideals of cultural unity in this context. Established at the turn of the twentieth century and precipitated in concerns arising from previous decades, both groups posed questions regarding the place of human beings in the newly configured nation state through reforms to physical and artistic practice. Laban's development of an organic geometry for dance demonstrates an affinity with the *Lebensreform* ('life-reform') movement of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Testing concepts set out in earlier strands of German romanticism, *Lebensreform* culture located the path to cultural renewal in a conservative 'return to nature' that necessitated the shunning of modern technology, and conceptualised this return especially as the reconnection of German-speaking people with their primordial and shared 'roots'. Likewise, Schlemmer's induction of a machinic bodily geometry was embedded in a contemporary movement, consolidated in the foundations of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907 and accelerated, after the First World War, at the foundation of the Bauhaus in 1919. In this anti-romantic cultural programme, a synthesis of arts, crafts, trade, and industry aspired to reconcile German culture with the technological advancements that were driving its economy. It is in relation to these polar opposite but commonly motivated cultural objectives that the principles of 'harmony' and 'synthesis' expressed in Laban's and Schlemmer's spatial practices can be contextualised.

In a diary entry of September 1922 Schlemmer identified a dual 'consciousness' in modern artistic practice. He saw this duality as expressing inverse outlooks that were based, nevertheless, in a common motivation. He wrote:

Both these modes of consciousness – the sense of man as a machine, and insight into the deepest wells of creativity [which he had characterised earlier in this entry as “a search for the roots and... the original, primordial impulses”] are symptoms of one

and the same yearning. A yearning for synthesis dominates today's art.

(Schlemmer, 1972: 127)

Schlemmer's identification of both a futuristic and a retrospective orientation in his contemporary artistic milieu describes the respective projects that he and Laban pursued in their Bauhaus and *Lebensreform* environments. His suggestion that these outlooks are jointly indicative of a yearning for 'synthesis' also resonates with the terminology ('cultural cohesion', 'genuine unity') with which Mosse characterises the broader impulse towards a national unity in Germany after its concurrent unification and industrialisation. In this sense, the principles of synthesis and harmony that characterise these two artists' spatial models each represent commonly grounded and historically specific conceptualisations of unity. Later in this thesis these same principles provide especially useful frameworks for measuring the absence or presence of spatial unity in the work of Cunningham and Forsythe. Whereas Schlemmer's principle of 'synthesis' brings into relief Cunningham's rejection of totality in his otherwise comparable practice of spatial abstraction, Laban's space harmony would come to feed directly into Forsythe's development of a connective spatial aesthetic.

In the light of the historicising framework adopted here, it is essential to acknowledge that a broadly articulated yearning for 'unity' in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German context was also productive of a particular form of nationalism. Mosse charts the advancement of a nationalist discourse, conceived in nineteenth-century philosophy and historiography, which framed the problem of German national unity in ethnic terms and precipitated the intellectual apparatus for what he terms "the 'German catastrophe' of our times" (Mosse, 1998: 4). Proposing the basis of German nationhood to lie in the myth of a unified (and exclusionary) Aryan race, this discourse was institutionalised in conservative political organisations of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, appropriated by the NSDAP as it was consolidated after the First World War,

and invoked with force as this party ascended to power under the leadership of Adolf Hitler after the economic crises of the 1920s. The “wonderful spectacle of our Volk rising anew” promised to the nation by Hitler in a speech of 1932 given before the Industry Club in Düsseldorf was an event that hinged, in National Socialist rhetoric, upon the unification of a primordial ‘German’ people (Hitler, 1990: 91). In the early years of the Third Reich the varying cultural reform agendas that had been pronounced by the practitioners and groups of the previous decades were evaluated and employed in pursuit of this goal, and the work of both Laban and Schlemmer fell under its scrutiny.

One wing of Laban’s study in ‘preindustrial’ spatial harmonics – the Movement Choir – proved to be an opportune practice for Nazi appropriation, whereas the technology-informed aesthetic of Schlemmer’s work and that of his colleagues at the Bauhaus found its termination at the onset of the Third Reich as “the first and... Nazism’s most notable cultural victim” (James-Chakraborty, 2006: xviii). Through a placement of Laban’s and Schlemmer’s practice in the context of the two cultural reform agendas outlined above, a context can be offered for the ways in which their conceptualisations of ‘unity’ were apprehended so differently at the inception of Hitler’s totalitarian regime. Furthermore, by viewing these artists’ movement geometries in the light of *Lebensreform* and Bauhaus agendas, this chapter accounts for their distinctive models of space, each of which are useful for contextualising the ways in which Forsythe and Cunningham address ‘totality’ in their later choreographies.

Rudolf von Laban’s space harmony

In *Choreutics*, a text published posthumously in 1966 but written in 1939 as a summation of theory developed since 1913, Laban defined the system for which this book was named as: “The practical study of various forms of (more or less) harmonised movement”

(Laban, 1966: vii). Laban's concept of harmonised movement chimes with the notion of harmony discussed in Chapter One of this thesis and especially that contained in the humanist thought and early balletic practice of the fifteenth century. Both Laban and Guglielmo, for instance, identified the need for the dancing body to move in balance with a naturally occurring and universal principle of spatial proportion. However, while Guglielmo's notion of *Misura* was elaborated over ballet's theatrical development into a formalised aesthetic system, Laban maintained that his 'space harmony' did not represent the creation of a new aesthetic *per se* but the rediscovery of the body's natural experience in space. He explains in Part I of *Choreutics*, for example, that his study is concerned with "our *natural* orientation in space", "the fluid *reality* of space", and "the *real* structure of human movement and motion in *nature*" (ibid.: 5-8).⁵⁹ A subsequent contention of the *choreutics* project was, that by practising this form of harmonised movement, human beings might learn to reconnect with their natural surroundings and inherent kinaesthetic state.

That Laban conceived of *choreutics* as a study in naturally occurring movement demonstrates the affinity of his project with the core values of *Lebensreform* culture. Indeed, the type of reform programme aspired to in this culture was promoted in the special working environment selected by Laban for his earliest explorations in space harmony. Laban's major work as a theorist of movement commenced after the summer of 1913, when he moved his small group of students from the institutional buildings of Munich – where he had commenced his dance practice in 1909 – to a utopian commune of *Lebensreform* designation, situated at the rural outpost of Monte Verità, a hill overlooking Lago Maggiore near the southern Swiss town of Ascona.⁶⁰ The beginnings and practical basis of *choreutics* in the 'dance farm' that Laban ran at Monte Verità from 1913 to 1919 will be explored shortly in more detail. For now, however, an explication of

the broader value-set of the *Lebensreform* movement is useful in providing a sociocultural framework within which to locate Laban's theorisation of a 'natural' space harmony at this time. The idealisation of unity between people and nature in this context also suggests a way by which the later Nazi appropriation of Laban's explorations in group harmony – also conceived at Monte Verità – was ideologically feasible.

The *Lebensreform* movement consisted of diverse private organisations, clubs, and communities that, according to Steven Aschheim, “mushroomed in pre-World War I Imperial Germany” and expressed, at its base, “the stresses of rapid industrialization” (Aschheim, 1992: 112). A definitive objective for all of these groups was to mark the route to cultural regeneration in Germany and German-speaking territories through a rejection of urban fragmentation in favour of rural rootedness. This was pursued variously through practical programmes and theoretical writings that promoted physical exertion in natural, outdoor landscapes and that advocated the adoption of nudism, vegetarianism, and communal living (Kaes et al., 1994: 673). Underpinning the ‘return to nature’ slogan shared by these various groups was a contention that the physical and spiritual health of the individual, the community, and, the nation was to be based in a reunion of human beings with their natural state of being, which had been fundamentally diverted by the interventions of industry and urbanisation. This contention also permeates Laban's professed rediscovery of the body's natural experience in space and expresses a latent ideological orientation that would ultimately expose his practice to German nationalist interest. Representing one line of thought that channelled the yearning for ‘cultural cohesion’ in modern Germany, the idealisation of nature in the *Lebensreform* movement, and Laban's space harmony within it, exhibits the inheritance of a nineteenth-century volkish discourse.

The concept of the 'Volk' had been standardised by philosophers and historians writing in the mid-nineteenth century and demonstrates a concern with the origins of the German people not only as a 'Folk' who share a geographical region and cultural traditions but as a 'Race' who are bound by an inherent nature.⁶¹ Of primary importance to the early volkish rubric was the quest to define an essential, German-national identity. Mosse argues that this was motivated by the recent "foreign occupation" of German territories during the Napoleonic Wars and the concurrent "wave of romanticism" that had carried notions of transcendent and spiritual essence to the fore of contemporary intellectual discourse (Mosse, 1998: 14). The idea of an ancient and enduring German Volk emerged as a key focus of this quest by offering a means by which modern Germans could forge a sense of national self-awareness – in spite of military contestations or political borders – on the basis of a shared, primordial nature. The primary value that this discourse located in 'nature', furthermore, led to its formulation of a highly critical position vis-à-vis the societal effects of industrialisation.

Historian and folklorist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl constructed an inverse association between a cohesive German identity and the atomising effects of urbanisation in *The Natural History of the German People* (1854–69). In his first volume, *People and Places* (1854), Riehl laments "the distorted, unnatural character of urban growth" (Riehl, 1990: 71). He blames urbanisation particularly for disrupting "community life" and, by extension, for undermining the original "character, traditions, and occupations" of the German people that, he argues, form nothing less than the "trunk and roots" of the "national organism" (ibid.: 71, 40). It is on account of this association of industrialisation and national disunity that volkish thought called for a 'return to nature', with Riehl idealising the German 'Fields and Forests' as the ancient landscape from which the German Volk had drawn its essential national character (ibid.: 47). It is on account of this

reasoning, it should also be noted, that volkish discourse fortified its racist orientation, calculating national inclusion on ethnic grounds and imagining ‘origin’ landscapes in which to root certain ‘races’ so as to construct a scale of superiority among them (Mosse, 1998: 4-5). Carried later into the nineteenth century, a volkish call for the reunion of the German people with their natural habitat was only amplified in response to political unification under Bismarck and the concurrent and accelerated industrialisation of the German empire, ultimately articulating one call for the (re)generation of a truly national culture. Preserved in *Lebensreform* programmes at the turn of the century, the “longing for a preindustrial past” with which volkish thought had formulated its nationalist outlook was expressed particularly in communities such as the one Laban joined at Monte Verità, which aimed to live in harmony with a rural environment (Herf, 1984: 15).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a crop of *Lebensreform* colonies assembled in remote locations both within and outside of German national borders. Mosse identifies these utopian outposts as sites for the inheritance of volkish thought, explaining: “Basic to the utopian movement was the urge to return to the land. It embodied an effort to root the Volk in the soil once more, to reconstruct surroundings that had a natural rhythm, that soothed the discord of urban life” (Mosse, 1998: 108). Indeed, the *Lebensreform* commune that had resided at Monte Verità since 1900 had, by 1910, become a spiritual and artistic retreat for those of German-speaking “intellectual Europe” who wished to escape the cities (Green, 1986: 1).⁶² To its inhabitants, this commune represented an opportunity to build an isolated world upon the foundations of an idealised, pastoral life. By its location on the foothills of the Alps, and its lifestyle of nudism, land-cultivation, and various forms of mysticism and nature-worship, it offered a bond with the natural environment as the basis upon which “anarchists, vegetarians, communists, and anthroposophists” could forge a common counter-culture (Santos Newhall, 2002: 29).

After the initial summer school conducted at Monte Verità in 1913, Laban adopted this site as his permanent domestic and professional base – teaching, choreographing, and developing his ideas in this setting for six years. The Asconan community would disperse in the summer of 1914 in response to the news of war (Preston-Dunlop, 1986: 36). Laban, however, stayed on at the commune with his lead pupil Wigman, not leaving neutral Swiss territory for Germany until the spring of 1919 – the time at which the Treaty of Versailles was being negotiated. In this move to Monte Verità, Laban settled his exploration in movement on the periphery of industrial and war-torn Europe, selecting a site for his practice that was, in principle, rooted to nature.

Laban's positioning of dance in the geographically rural and politically peripheral site of Ascona can be understood as a manoeuvre towards the ideal of a rural and preindustrial experience of space. In an undated article titled 'Town and Country Dwellers', Laban explained the origins of his group harmony practice at Monte Verità in these terms:

The beginnings of the movement choruses arose, I think, from a genuine desire and need of the present generation, for movement. Living in towns, they had got farther and farther away from free movement. Their machine-made life gave little opportunity for any creative outlet. [...] When the structure of bodies and minds becomes rigid and convention demands that the body be encased in clothes and shoes, which are directly opposed to any freedom of movement, it is time that something be done.

(Laban, no date, c.: 1)

The premise of Laban's move in 1913 from town to country was that he and his students could avoid acquiring the kinaesthetic artifice built up in the 'machine-made' life of the modern city. In the environs of the commune at Ascona, they could, instead, reclaim and move freely through an environment untouched by urban stratification and, by extension, rediscover their natural movement impulse. Laban and his dancers not only led a lifestyle at Monte Verità that annexed them to nature (the pursuit of vegetarianism, growing their own food, clothes were home-woven when clothes were worn at all), but, for daily dance

practice their studio was the open fields and slopes of the hill, where they danced barefoot and often naked (Hodgson, 2001: 82-3). It was in this setting that Laban started to develop his theory of space harmony and made his ‘discovery’ of an organic geometry for human movement that expressed the ideological tenets of the site itself.

At Monte Verità, Laban began to develop a training method named ‘movement scales’ – an activity that he regarded to be “the basis for the experience of spatial harmony” (Laban, 1966: 90). In this method, the dancer would stand to a spot and generate momentum with which to take their torso and limbs on a chain of sequential journeys, tracing a number of pendulous trajectories through space.⁶³ These daily scales were designed to refine the dancer’s control of their instrument and to form the practical basis for an exploration of the body’s natural movement pathways. The notion of movement pathways or ‘trace forms’ represents, for Laban, a means of visualising the architecture of the kinesphere. Articulating the body’s potential movement trajectories, trace forms are an aspect of *choreutics* that would become central to Forsythe’s later exploration of kinetic space, especially informing his use of proprioception in the development of ‘realtime’ choreographic processes. For Laban and within the Asconan context, the multiple trace forms that were proposed to form the entire scaffolding of the kinesphere – and which could be articulated by following the ‘natural’ impulses of the movement scales – provided evidence of a natural spatial harmony in human movement. Indeed, based on his conviction that “standard scales will become first an experiment, later an awareness of the curious structural world which forms the base of all impressions and expressions of our life”, Laban began to formalise what he believed to be the natural geometry of movement (ibid.: 82).

These experiments at Ascona led to the contention, explicated later in *Choreutics*, that when the limbs move freely around the body during the practice of movement scales, they naturally find pathways in space that set out a more complex geometry than that of the square model for classical orientation. Instead of the four corners of the square, or eight corners of the cube, dictated in the directional scheme of ballet, Laban proposed that natural movement articulates twelve points around the body's sphere of movement. Between these twelve corner points extend twenty equilateral triangles, which together form the boundary surface of a scaffolding. Laban identified this shape as a pre-existing geometrical form termed the *icosahedron*, and understood this form to make up the orientation framework for the body's natural experience in space (ibid.: 101-2) [Image 7].

Measured alongside the orientation system of the classical model, the *icosahedron* offers a geometrical conception of the kinesphere that subsumes a perpendicular environment into a space that is run through with a multidirectional and ever-changing set of trace forms. Laban, accordingly, described the natural character of movement as something that produces a constantly modulating environment:

We must remember that the form of a movement is not one line only; it is not an arabesque or a curve... but a cataract of forms, as if a heap of jewels or precious stones had been poured out [...] It is as if the single forms would grow and shrink, swallow each other or give birth to new ones, changing their shape in a continuous transformation.

(Laban, 1984: 16)

The *icosahedron* framework offers here an alternative to the stable and linear kinesphere of the classical model, presenting a crystalline scaffolding within which the moving body can articulate a continuously changing space. Laban's rejection of structural permanence in his conceptualisation of kinetic space is that which provides a precursor for Forsythe's later development of an essentially impermanent spatial practice. However, while Laban's *icosahedron* represents an attempt to mobilise the structures of movement orientation,

Patricia Baudoin and Heidi Gilpin have observed a way in which it actually sustains the stabilising drive of the classical model. They observe that Laban's "model unfolds into a virtually infinite number of possible planes [that are nevertheless] delineated by the axes that transverse the body at that center point" (Baudoin and Gilpin, 1989: 74). The centralising imperative of this model can be inferred especially from Laban's later methodology for teaching *choreutics* to his students in England, especially at the Art of Movement Studio he established in Manchester in 1946. Here, life-sized *icosahedron* frames were constructed within which the student would conduct their space orientation exercises, producing a rather dogmatic pedagogy in which movement was analysed according to a fixed, encapsulating geometry that places the dancer at its static centre.⁶⁴ Like Graham's rooted spatiality as discussed in the previous chapter, Laban conceived of a movement practice more 'natural' to the body than classical ballet, but did so, nevertheless, while maintaining 'the centre' as a basic spatial premise. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, Forsythe would adapt the *icosahedron* model by finding ways of mobilising 'the centre' within and around it, and, in so doing, would develop an aesthetic that further idealises what Laban termed "the fluid reality of space" (Laban, 1966: 8).

Laban's conviction that the *icosahedron* model represented the 'reality of space' locates his theoretical project in the practical programme of life-reform at Monte Verità, and in the ideological programme of the *Lebensreform* movement more broadly. Like Graham, Laban's reforms to the perpendicular scheme of the classical model express an attempt to introduce the dancing body to non-artificial movement. However, while Graham would pursue an 'authentic' bodily practice as a means for expressing, artistically, the inner transformations of the human psyche, Laban was motivated by a very different goal: to make a systematic analysis of the natural laws that govern human movement. Indeed, the

value of the *icosahedron*, for Laban, was that it demonstrated how the ‘natural’ architecture of human movement corresponded precisely with organic structures that “appear to exist everywhere in nature” (Laban, 1966: 109). He claimed further to this effect:

The present systematic description... is not imposed from without, but is based on the inherent laws of natural movement [...]. The *movements* of our body follow rules corresponding to those of mineral *crystallisations* and structures of organic compounds. The shape which possibly offers the most natural and harmonious tracks for our movements is the *icosahedron*. [...] Any action or any form of behaviour unfolds within the bounds of dynamic crystallisation.

(ibid.: 108; 114)

These words communicate Laban’s conviction that geological matter retains the same geometry as human movement. They suggest, furthermore, that the central advantage of his ‘discovery’ of the *icosahedron* ‘in’ the kinesphere was its legitimation of *choreutics* as a scientific study of organic spatial form. The type of harmony that was worked out in this crystallography of movement, then, concerns the coordination of human movement with the spatial matter of the natural world. In the light of the counter-cultural environment in which Laban conceived his investigations, this notion of harmony can be understood as expressing the desire to unite the body with a naturally occurring, rather than artificially fashioned experience of space. In this respect, the movement geometry elaborated from Laban’s experiments at Monte Verità distils the *Lebensreform* ‘return to nature’ imperative into a spatial practice designed to harmonise human beings with their natural surroundings and ‘inherent laws’ of action.

As with the choreographic representations of harmony discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the idealisation of harmony in Laban’s early work came to be utilised in the expression and consolidation of a ‘harmonised’ political state. The reconnection that Laban’s *choreutics* project aspired to facilitate between people and nature was, in theory, addressed to the universal (that is, trans-national and extra-political) structures of organic

matter. However, its promotion of a harmony that occurs naturally between people and a preindustrial landscape – and especially as it was fostered in a utopian, *Lebensreform* context – exhibited a latent volkish reasoning that rendered a branch of his spatial harmonics vulnerable to German nationalist appropriation. Laban’s theory of space harmony did not only concern the individual body during the Ascona years but also extended to a concept of ‘group harmony’ within communal dance. The Movement Choir, Laban’s practical realisation of this concept, was co-opted during Hitler’s early years in power as a step towards implementing the Nazi doctrine of ‘community’. This was made possible, initially, by a broader re-articulation of *Lebensreform* values under National Socialism according to a radicalised volkish agenda.

Trading on convictions espoused in volkish thought, such as Riehl’s notion that “the study of folk, not the study of constitutional systems, ought to be the beginning of all political wisdom”, Hitler set out the terms of German regeneration after the economically turbulent 1920s according to the political myth of a racially defined ‘people’s community’ (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that was to be galvanised through the folk credo of ‘Blood and Soil’ (*Blut und Boden*) (Riehl, 1990: 40; Pine, 2007: 2). In a speech broadcast on every radio station across Germany on 10 February 1933, less than two weeks after he was appointed Chancellor, Hitler announced the state adoption of volkish ideology:

Volk and Erde – those are the two roots from which we will draw our strength and upon which we propose to base our resolve. [...] We want to resurrect the Volk on the foundation of the German peasants, the cornerstones of all *völkisch* life.

(Hitler, 1990: 247-8)

The goal embraced by the *Lebensreform* movement of reinvigorating the cultural health of Germany by rooting the people to the land and its attendant folk-pastoral practices was susceptible in this way to manipulation via the Nazi propaganda programme. The corporeal practices of the *Lebensreform* movement offered no exception in this respect. Indeed, Eric Michaud has observed that “for Nazism, there had to be no break in the

continuity between the ‘spiritual community’ and the ‘physical community’, the Volksgeist and the Volkskörper, any more than between the Idea and its realization” (Michaud, 2004: 58). Given its *Lebensreform* orientation, Laban’s choric dance form was appropriated at this time as a corporeal technique through which the Nazi state could attempt to realise its Idea of a national people’s community.

Laban’s Movement Choir was engendered in early experiments at Ascona and standardised after 1922 in work with amateur groups in Hamburg (Toepfer, 1997: 100). The early incarnation of the form consisted of improvised movement sequences performed collectively in a natural, open-air environment and conducted by a choir leader. The intended effect was one of individual liberation in conjunction with communal transcendence, producing a free and collectively spontaneous articulation of physical space (Laban, 1969: 7). After Laban returned to Germany in 1919 the Movement Choir was formalised as a civic dance form and taught to groups of non-professional dancers in institutes established by Laban and his students which, by 1926, existed in fifteen cities across Germany, Austria, and Hungary (Toepfer, 1997: 100). By the late 1920s, the Movement Choir had been popularised as an urban leisure activity in a network of amateur groups across Germany. Karl Toepfer states that, by the end of the decade, “Laban movement choirs affiliated with dance schools alone numbered nearly one hundred” (Toepfer, 1997: 301). The popularity of Movement Choirs in Weimar Germany can be contextualised firstly in a sustained ‘desire and need’ – to return to the words of Laban – ‘of the present generation, for movement’ in the face of intense population growth in urban areas.⁶⁵ Indeed, in an article of 1926, dance critic Artur Michel accounted for the “eagerness with which men and women rush to the motion choirs called into being by Rudolf von Laban” in the realisation made by “the big-city dweller... that he has been neglecting... his breathing, blood-

circulating body” (Michel, 1994: 679-80). A further reason for the prevalence of Laban’s choric dance form at this time is based in a heightened, contemporary concern with societal atomisation in the wake of the Great War. Indeed, Swiss composer and *Lebensreform* theorist Wolfgang Graeser wrote in 1927 of “a Germany that had been torn to pieces” (Graeser, 1994: 685). He reasoned that because “the external façade was shattered and decayed [...] a self-discovery process” had begun among Germans that represented “a search for a physical and spiritual unity” (ibid.). Laban’s Movement Choir, which sought to connect human beings to one another through an inherent and natural movement harmony that was deemed to exist between them, presented one means by which citizens of Weimar Germany could perceive themselves as belonging to a repaired physical and spiritual community.

After the National Socialist accession, and during the administrative consolidation of the state in the early 1930s, the life-reformist promise of the Movement Choir – that a communal harmony could be regenerated among its participants – exposed this form to Nazification. Indeed, its typically *Lebensreform* ethos was redefined according to Hitler’s racialised concept of community. In 1934 Laban was appointed head of the Deutsche Tanzbühne, a department of the Reich Chamber for Culture (RKK) that was incorporated under Joseph Goebbels’s Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. The following year, he was made a naturalised German citizen and his Movement Choir network was officially renamed *Gemeinschaftstanz* (Community Dance) (Karina and Kant, 2003: 319-20). From this point forth, Laban’s choric expression of spatial harmonics was practised in the name of the Führer in towns across Germany. It was appropriated as a German-national (or, more specifically, ‘Aryan’) folk dance and was instrumentalised as a practice that could regenerate, embody, and express the ‘physical and spiritual unity’ of the German Volk.⁶⁶

The refocused function of the Movement Choir was communicated in a 1936 state-produced booklet, *Wir Tanzen*. In an essay titled ‘The Meaning of Community Dance’, Laban’s assistant Marie-Luise Lieschke states:

We have grown out of the I-and-You era into the We era – but not so the we are merely ‘masses’: we are a people’s community [*Volksgemeinschaft*], led by a leader [*Führer*], and our lay dance is education in this sense: to lead and become led.

(Lieschke, 1988: 7)

The Nazi incarnation of the Movement Choir may be understood in this sense as a vehicle for state-ordained, group indoctrination. In its practice as *Gemeinschaftstanz*, coordinated communal dancing was designed to subsume heterogeneity under a singularly designated paradigm of national identity, diverting the free-form spatial exploration of the earlier Movement Choir in an attempt to fuse participants into the racially determined ‘unity’ of Hitler’s *Volksgemeinschaft*. Initially developed in the hills of Ascona as a means for achieving personal freedom through unison dancing, Laban’s practice of group harmonics was diverted as a tool for the Nazi domestic coordination project. This ideological shift transposed the supposedly liberating principles of his space harmony, as well as its pastoralist idealism, into a radicalised volkish means for the programmatic cultural and ethnic streamlining that characterised the first three years of the Nazi regime.

By 1937, however, Laban had fallen out of favour with the bureaucrats of the RKK and was forced to leave Germany. The state endorsement of choric dance was also diminished at this time, and the term *Gemeinschaftstanz* was dropped from official discourse in the same year (Kew, 1999: 82).⁶⁷ Jeffrey Herf identifies a concurrent historical transition in Nazi domestic policy that, in part, explains this shift in its use of Laban’s dance practice. Around this time, state efforts turned from the ideological cementation of a national

community towards the practical consolidation of economic, industrial, and military power, as ultimately orientated towards territorial expansion. Herf argues:

By the time the four-year plan was initiated in 1936, both the Nazis and the conservative elites had broken with the more pronounced pastoral and antitechnological resentments that had previously characterized German nationalism. Fulfilments of Nazi ideology and industrial advance reinforced one another.

(Herf, 1984: 220)

Herf's description of early Nazi ideology as exhibiting 'pronounced pastoral and antitechnological' sentiment contextualises the state appropriation, before 1936, of *Lebensreform* practices (including the Movement Choir) for a volkish pursuit of domestic 'unity'. By the same token, it also brings into relief the problematic relationship that existed, in the early years of the Nazi regime, between the state and those cultural programmes that exhibited a pronounced industrial and pro-technological sentiment. Indeed, a second branch of cultural regeneration directed towards the ideal of cultural unity permeated reformist programmes of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany. This branch of reform represents a second way in which artists of modern Germany channelled the desire for 'cultural cohesion' after German unification and before the formation of the Third Reich. It was characterised by a distinctively pro-technological stance, and was advanced by a group of practitioners who met with swift persecution at the rise of National Socialism.

Oskar Schlemmer's spatial abstraction

In April 1930 architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg – author of *Art and Race* (1928), the text that set the criteria by which artworks would be pronounced 'degenerate' under the Nazi regime – was appointed head of the Weimar Advanced School of Fine Arts, Architecture and Crafts, a site that had from 1919 to 1925 accommodated the Staatliche Bauhaus (Michaud, 2004: 127).⁶⁸ In October 1930, within six months of the appointment, the destruction of murals that adorned the school buildings had been ordered, and their

removal was overseen by Schultze-Naumburg who was operating under the aegis of the Nazi Institute for the Preservation of Culture (*Kultusbewahrungsanstalt*) (Schlemmer, 1972: 270). The murals in question had been painted by Schlemmer for the first Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923, and, in a diary entry of 27 November 1930, this artist recorded his view of the increased Nazi targeting of Bauhaus works in Weimar. He wrote:

The horrible thing about this cultural backlash is that it is not directed against works of a political nature, but against purely artistic, aesthetic works, identified with ‘Bolshevism’ merely because they are new, unusual, different, original. In fact, the purge of the Weimar Museum has affected artists whose profoundly German mentality and loyalties no one in his right mind would question.

(Schlemmer, 1972: 274)

Schlemmer’s statement draws attention to two features of the Bauhaus project – and his own aesthetic within it – that are useful for contextualising its condemnation under National Socialism and its cultural divergence from Laban’s contemporary *Lebensreform* orientation.

The first of these is highlighted by his consternation that works with no ‘political nature’, which are ‘purely artistic, aesthetic works’, should be targeted for destruction. With these words, Schlemmer identifies a primary way in which the Bauhaus project sat so uneasily within the Nazi aesthetic criteria: its tendency to prioritise form and function over expression and content. Indeed, Franz Schulze locates the ‘degenerate’ label as it was assigned to modern abstract artworks within a broader contemporary discourse of anti-Semitism and understands this label to be based in a perception of these works’ ‘anti-Volk’ outlook. He argues that “right-wing *völkisch* sentiment saw the modern arts as pernicious and pathological, the expressions of a rootless *undeutsch* urbanism for which the International Jew was made the most readily fitting symbol” (Schulze, 1985: 187). The focus on form that characterised the Bauhaus project and Schlemmer’s aesthetic, in other words, became a dangerous prospect for Hitler’s regime in that it offered no volkish

character, no sense of rootedness to blood and soil that could be incorporated into the nationalist and racist rationale that delineated Nazi ideology and its early, cultural implementation.

In the case of the Bauhaus, the '*undeutsch*' urbanism that came to signal the modern arts' 'degenerate' nature under National Socialism did have its roots, nevertheless, in what Schlemmer terms a 'profoundly German mentality'. An accommodation of urban structures (both aesthetic and economic) characterised the Bauhaus project, and is represented in its attempt to fuse industry and mechanical technology with the creative arts. Indeed, the broader agenda of this institution exhibits an approach to cultural regeneration in the Weimar context that was as pro-technology as the *Lebensreform* project was 'for' nature. However, this agenda's subsequent incompatibility with a volkish idealisation of preindustrial life – and, by extension, with early Nazi rhetoric – does not diminish its basis in a distinctively German national impulse. The foundation of the Deutscher Werkbund – the organisation out of which the Bauhaus grew – saw the consolidation in Wilhelmine Germany of a cultural rubric that promoted a productive relationship of art to technology, industry, and economy, and the potential of this relationship to drive the regeneration of a German national culture. This rubric would be renewed by Werkbund member Walter Gropius in his founding of the Staatliche Bauhaus at the dawn of the Weimar Republic. Schlemmer's development of a spatial practice that borrowed an organising logic from mechanical technology can be viewed in the light of this historical impulse towards a synthesis of art and technology. By placing his work at the Bauhaus in the context of this industry-aligned movement for German cultural regeneration, both its historical proximity to and aesthetic distance from Laban's *choreutics* can be accounted for. Additionally, the differences between the form of spatial abstraction developed by Schlemmer and that developed, thirty years later, by

Cunningham, can be fruitfully measured in the light of the technological paradigm with which the former was working before the Second World War.

The Werkbund was an association made up of “two dozen architects, artists, craftsmen and manufacturers” who came together at the call of prominent cultural motivators such as the architect-bureaucrat Hermann Muthesius (Maciuka, 2006: 2). The ultimate goal of the organisation was to forge a productive unity between the professions it represented. By 1914, this goal had become widespread, with the Werkbund’s membership numbering 2,000 (Schwartz, 1996: 10). An official programme produced by the group in 1910 set out the terms of this new unity:

The aim of the association is ‘the refinement of production work in a unified effort of art, industry, and the crafts, through education, publicity, and concerted action’ [...] The association seeks its collaborators first of all in that area where production work proves accessible to refinement through artistic ideas.

(Deutscher Werkbund, 1969: 19)

The benefit of the Werkbund to German society was intended to be both economic and cultural. This dual objective grew, as did the volkish objective that underpinned the contemporary *Lebensreform* movement, from a concern with the future of the industrialised German nation state.

The reign of Wilhelm II, (1888–1918) the second and last Kaiser of the German Empire, marked a reorientation of Germany’s outward-looking policies in terms of both its military and industrial position within Europe, producing state reforms that were central to the dual objective of the Werkbund. Supporting the development of an aggressive foreign policy characterised by a naval arms race with Britain at the turn of the century, the Prussian state government initiated parallel domestic reforms that raised industrial production to a national priority (Wende, 2005: 119). One branch of these reforms was administered by government advisor on education, and future Werkbund founder

Muthesius, who, in 1904, introduced a mandatory workshop and construction element to Prussian schools of art that would ultimately place “design education at the service of a modern economy” (Maciuka, 2006: 2, 10). The subsequent reform to goods manufacturing proposed by the Werkbund in 1907 can be seen as a legacy of this state-driven and economic motivation for pedagogical reform across Wilhelm II’s Germany. The young nation’s additional need to compete in an international commercial marketplace was channelled into the Werkbund’s vision of an improved German industrial production, to which the design quality of goods produced by trained artists would be essential.⁶⁹

The founding principles of the Werkbund were not only economic in motivation. An inward-looking concern also preoccupied the Werkbund members and “the reconquest of a harmonious Culture” – declared by architect Fritz Schumacher in his address to the Werkbund’s inaugural meeting in Munich on 5 October 1907 – became the overarching objective of the association (Schwartz, 1996: 13). Under this rubric, an alliance of artistic skill with the industrial means of commercial production was intended to bridge the gulf that separated the cultural and economic spheres of modern Germany. It was a deeper unification of German society, in other words, that drove the Werkbund’s people and projects and, unlike the philosophy that impelled the *Lebensreform* movement, a harmonious culture for the Werkbund was not one rooted in an ideal of preindustrial volkish life, but that established a synthesis of modern, and urban, cultural practices. The ‘yearning for synthesis’ identified in Schlemmer’s diary entry of 1922 encapsulates the cultural objective of not only the Werkbund but its post-war descendent, the Bauhaus. It was in the wake of the Werkbund’s reforms to German design pedagogy and its guiding ideal of cultural harmony achieved through an art-industry alliance, that the Bauhaus formulated its own programme in 1919.

“Art and technology, a new unity!”: the slogan penned by Gropius that came to define the working aesthetic of the Bauhaus was introduced as a self-identifying dictum at a lecture given in August 1923 during the first Bauhaus exhibition at Weimar (Schwartz, 1996: 223). This slogan articulated both the continuation of a Werkbund-aligned outlook in the pedagogical ethos of the Bauhaus, and a renewed emphasis on the importance of an art-industry alliance after the devastating socioeconomic impact of the First World War, the fall of the German Empire, and the attempts of the newly created Weimar Republic to rebuild the nation. Indeed, Matthew Wilson Smith understands Gropius’s ‘new unity’ as a Werkbund-informed solution tendered to the problem of a disintegrated post-war Germany. He argues that in the Bauhaus rationale,

the only radical solution was a total one, one in which sundered parts were integrated again – not, as *völkisch* Romantics would have it, through appeal to primordial sentiment, but through appeal to objective or organizational and technological power. Not so much a recovery as a total reengineering of the real.

(Smith, 2007: 49)

To take Smith’s observation as a basis upon which to weigh the models for cultural regeneration proposed by the romantic *Lebensreform* movement and the pragmatic Bauhaus respectively, where one looked back in hope of recovering the preindustrial past, the other looked forward towards the construction of a technological future, as embodied in Gropius’s “ultimate aim of all visual arts... the complete building” (Gropius, 1969: 31). During Gropius’s directorship, the Bauhaus was envisioned as a site for the organised construction of a ‘total’ future for industrialised Germany, and was marked by an alliance of technological prowess with the creative spirit of a community of teachers and students. This alliance was evidenced by the school’s curriculum. Not only did the Bauhaus workshops facilitate the design and production of utility objects for market consumption, but they also offered commercially orientated contextual topics such as advertising and poster design (James-Chakraborty, 2006: xviii). Furthermore, the major symbol of the age

of industrial production – the machine – formed a compositional emblem in design work across all departments. It is according to the logic of mechanisation that Schlemmer developed an aesthetic focussed on spatial abstraction and synthesis in his work at the Bauhaus. This technological orientation also accounts for the disparity between his concept of bodily geometry and Laban's crystallography.

A painter and former military cartographer, Schlemmer was hired as a 'Master of Form' by Gropius in December 1920. By 1922 he had taken over the stone and wood-working workshops in Weimar and by 1923 he had inherited Lothar Schreyer's role as director of the Bauhaus Stage.⁷⁰ For the Bauhaus exhibition of 1923 – the same occasion for Gropius's coining of the 'new unity' slogan and for the creation of the Nazi-targeted murals discussed above – Schlemmer was invited to write the school's first public manifesto. This text offers an acute rendering of the Bauhaus's technology-inspired aesthetic and the reasoning behind Schlemmer's abstracted movement geometry. He states:

Mathematics, structure, and mechanization are the elements, and power and money are the dictators of these modern phenomena of steel, concrete, glass, and electricity. Velocity of rigid matter, dematerialization of matter, organization of inorganic matter, all these produce the miracle of abstraction. [...] The speed and supertension of commercialism make expediency and utility the measure of all effectiveness, and calculation seizes the transcendent world: art becomes a logarithm. It, long bereft of its name, lives a life after death, in the monument of the cube and in the coloured square.

(Schlemmer, 1969c: 66)

The death of expressionism, a transition that Schlemmer saw as a necessary step in the development of a modern German art, was propelled, according to this logic, by the need for an artistic practice that truly answered to the 'miracle of abstraction' witnessed by modern Germans at the dominance of mechanised culture. Because the 'transcendent world' could now be seized, and systematised, by 'calculation', the romantic need for artists to express the immeasurable depths of experience was replaced, for Schlemmer,

with the need for a form-focussed organising practice that united art with the ‘expediency and utility’ of modern industry. Two areas of Schlemmer’s work can be seen to provide an arena for this techno-futuristic outlook and both produce a movement geometry that exhibits his earlier cited ‘sense of man as a machine’. In the personal theory of art that he developed through his private writings and published essays and his career-long choreographic project, the *Triadic Ballet* (1922), Schlemmer developed a conception of the human body in art that incorporated the broader synthetic project of the Bauhaus.

In his seminal essay ‘Man and Art Figure’, which first appeared in the Bauhaus-published collection *The Theater of the Bauhaus* (1925) Schlemmer identified the three emblems of his age as “*abstraction [...] mechanization [...] and the new potentials of technology and invention*” (Schlemmer, 1979: 17). Schlemmer saw these emblems as being inextricably linked and as representing the new age of ‘art as logarithm’ that he had announced in his earlier manifesto for the Bauhaus. Together, these emblems set out the tools and the sphere of influence from which modern art should draw in order to bring modern culture into synthesis with modern industry. Likewise, Schlemmer cautioned that modern theatre “must not ignore these signs” and, in the context of his performance theory and practice, it was the human body that was ultimately selected as the medium through which to explore them (ibid.: 18).

The first emblem and the most important to the present study, abstraction, was understood by Schlemmer as a process that “disconnect[ed] components from an existing... whole”, as is illustrated in a pre-Bauhaus diary entry of October 1915 (ibid.: 17). The passage in question produces a methodical catalogue of the human body, listing fourteen anatomical parts where each is separated from the other and equated with a geometrical form.

Schlemmer lists these parts in a column extending down his diary page, thus:

the square of the ribcage
the circle of the belly
the cylinder of the neck
the cylinders of the arms and lower thighs
the circles of the elbow joints, elbows, knees,
shoulders, knuckles,
the circles of the head, the eyes,
the triangle of the nose,
the line connecting the heart with the brain
[and so on]

(Schlemmer, 1972: 32)

In this serial taxonomy of human anatomy Schlemmer had produced the concept that would underpin his geometry for dance. An approach to organisation where the human body is conceptually separated into its constituent parts would also be adopted later by Cunningham. However, as will be explored in chapters Four and Five of this thesis, Schlemmer's presentation of his abstracted parts in serial form produced a kind of linear totality that would be rejected in both Cage's and Cunningham's later practice of coexistence. For now, however, Schlemmer's blueprint for a serialised bodily abstraction indicates the nature of the relationship between 'abstraction' and his two further emblems of modernity. This concept of the geometric body was informed not by the elemental structures of nature, as with Laban's work, but by the structuring processes of mechanised culture and new, mechanical technologies. Rephrased to address the broader historical framework of this chapter, Schlemmer had selected a model for bodily organisation from the same industrial, social space that Laban had rejected in his move to Ascona.

Schlemmer's breaking down of the body into its constituent parts demonstrates a process of abstraction isomorphic to the physical appropriation of the body as a tool for labour under industrial capitalism. Lefebvre explains this process with respect to Taylorism, a North American theory of labour management developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the closing decades of the nineteenth century:

Taylorism, one of the first 'scientific' approaches to productivity, reduced the body as a whole to a small number of motions subjected to strictly controlled linear

determinations. A division of labour so extreme, whereby specialization extends to individual gestures, has undoubtedly had as much influence as linguistic discourse on the breaking-down of the body into a mere collection of unconnected parts.

(Lefebvre, 1991: 204)

Following Lefebvre's logic, as employed in the factory setting envisioned by Taylorism, the atomised body may rightly be discussed as the result of an extreme corporeal 'division of labour'. The sequential compartmentalisation of human anatomy is, in this instance, made in the service of the utilisation of its constituent parts to form a productive whole. In other words, the labouring body is conceived of as a mechanism. In terms of Schlemmer's integrated trio of modern emblems, mechanisation, and the technological constructions that it deployed, introduced a functional model for the abstraction of human form.

Schlemmer's notion of an abstracted body was drawn, in this sense, from the compositional logic of the machine. However, where the Taylorist body is imagined as a tool for capitalist production and, as such, employed on the factory floor, Schlemmer's concept of 'man as machine' was both conceived for and tested in the field of artistic production: existing on the page and, later, on the stage. The subsequently problematical relationship that this machine-inspired figure held with the Bauhaus ideal of 'utility' did not go unnoticed by Schlemmer.

As he noted in a letter to Otto Meyer of 14 June 1921, machines "owe their existence to... pure considerations of functionality" whereas artworks remain "so romantically unfunctional as if begging for salvation" (Schlemmer, 1972: 108). Schlemmer understood that his man-as-machine did and could not possess functionality as its *raison d'être* and thereby would never exhibit the utility that lay at the heart of mechanisation. However, he did see an alternative reception of mechanisation in artistic practice, expressed in a question to Meyer: "Are [machines] teaching art how to rid itself of romanticism and be concrete?" (ibid.). The adoption of the compositional logic of machines enabled, in other words, a re-conceptualisation of art as an organisational rather than expressive practice. It

is here that the significance of Schlemmer's theory to the trajectory of this thesis as a whole is especially pronounced. His conception of modern art as the organisation of calculable form rather than the expression of immeasurable impulse provides a precursor for Cunningham's development of an abstracted aesthetic in his own turn from the expressionism of American modern dance. Schlemmer's characterisation of his 'concrete' aesthetic as a response to the procedures of mechanisation, furthermore, provides a foil for measuring Cage and Cunningham's fascination with the spatiotemporal logic of electronic technologies.

Considered in the immediate light of Schlemmer's working environment at the Bauhaus, the lesson that he described to Meyer as receiving from machines also contextualises his aesthetic difference from Laban. While Laban's inheritance of the German romantic tradition, via the *Lebensreform* project, was expressed in his pursuit of an organic geometry for dance, Schlemmer's fascination with the form and function of machines, as institutionally bolstered in the Bauhaus, was expressed in his pursuit of an abstracted geometry that presented man 'as' machine. This movement away from expressionism, instituted across the Bauhaus's highly pragmatic 'reengineering of the real', was announced choreographically in Schlemmer's career-long experiment with abstracted classicism, the *Triadic Ballet*.

Schlemmer had commenced work on this ballet in 1912, collaborating with ballet dancers Elsa Hötzel and Albert Burger at the Stuttgart Court Theatre. Although early parts were performed in 1916, it was not until Schlemmer had joined the Bauhaus faculty that the ballet received its official premiere at the Stuttgart Landestheater on 30 September 1922. The *Triadic Ballet* was subsequently presented as part of the Bauhaus Stage's oeuvre during the Weimar exhibition of 1923 and continued to be performed across Europe by

Schlemmer's Bauhaus touring company, developing through a series of revisions until its final performance under Schlemmer's supervision in 1932.⁷¹ In structure, design, and movement content, the work examined features of classical form with the abstracting tool of a precise mathematical logic. The work featured classical costuming (tutus), classical vocabulary (*chaîné* turns), classical technique (pointe work), and most acutely, a sense of classical space in its carefully visualised perpendicular scheme. However, Schlemmer's use of these classical tropes was always placed in the service of bodily abstraction. In an essay of 1926 titled 'The Mathematics of Dance', he discussed his interest in classical ballet in exactly these terms:

I am for the body-mechanical dance, the mathematical dance. [...] I am referring to the creations in ballet that arise from space. [...] Space, like architecture... is an abstraction in the sense of being a contradiction of nature, if not a protest against it.
(Schlemmer, 1969b: 118)

In stark contrast to the naturalist rationale that lay behind Laban's reforms to the geometrical scheme of classical ballet, Schlemmer took the classical model as the vehicle through which he might place the dancing body in an artificial environment configured through the logic of mechanisation.

An illustration created by Schlemmer in 1926 titled 'Abstract of the Triadic Ballet' indicates the mathematically conceived structure of the work [Image 8]. A grid construction demonstrates the work's tripartite organisation. Three Series named 'Yellow', 'Rose', and 'Black' – after the shifting colours of their stage environments – contain five, three, and four variations respectively, performed as solo, duet, or trio by one woman and two men. The grid illustration presents a precise graphic rendering of this structure and enacts an abstraction of the work as a whole through the spatial discretisation of its constituent parts. The grid schema is further materialised in the work itself through a synthesis of scenography and movement design that accentuates the perpendicular space of classical ballet. In Series I, variation 3, a duet between a man and

woman unfolds upon a marked-out floor plan that consists of a six by six grid. The grid plan is used by the male dancer as a map by which he may navigate the space according to right angles. This use of plane geometry as a visualisation of the mathematical order of the floor surface is also translated into what Schlemmer calls the “solid geometry”, or stereometric space of the dancers’ bodies (Schlemmer, 1972: 127). A significant part of the duet is made up of what might be termed an ‘orientation exercise’ where the two dancers, standing in the classical first position, pivot on the spot to face the front, then the side of the stage. The repetition of this simple alternating sequence carves a square geometry into the dancers’ general space and a rigidly observed straight line extending from the lower spine to the neck both reiterates this perpendicular scheme in the dancers’ kinespheres and creates a mechanically formulated version of classical ballet’s vertical posture.⁷²

Considered as an exercise in orientation that is contradistinctive to Laban’s free-flowing movement scales, this sequence accentuates the artificial cube structure of the classical model. Here, a geometry of dance is presented that does not seek to return movement to its natural state through a complexification of the classical scheme (Laban’s *icosahedron*) but that engages a simplification of ballet’s perpendicular space in order to isolate this very trope as a constituent part of the form-abstracted. In this sense, Schlemmer’s treatment of ballet also demonstrates a similar means of appropriation to that of Balanchine’s classical formalism. Like Balanchine, Schlemmer did not subvert the aesthetic structures that make up classical ballet but rather used this form as a stockpile of technical and spatial components that could be isolated, extracted, and exaggerated. Whereas for Balanchine, however, the exaggeration of classical form facilitated the reorientation of this art towards his perception of a new, national-spatial character, for Schlemmer, it facilitated his staging of the ‘miracle of abstraction’ that could unite human

form with the organising logic of machines, and, by extension, orientate art towards the age of mechanisation.

Schlemmer further sustained the abstracting tendencies of the *Triadic Ballet* by employing a costume design that would enact the “metamorphosis” of human form (Schlemmer, 1979: 25). Demonstrating a fascination with the costuming conventions of classical ballet, a diary entry of September 1922 mentions the teacher of Petipa: “Vestris... always danced in an immense black wig, with a face mask and a large gilt sun made of copper on his breast” (Schlemmer, 1972: 127). In the *Triadic Ballet*, Schlemmer exaggerated the amply dimensioned costumes that adorned early ballet professionals and transformed them into devices for abstraction, using the same approach to anatomical disconnection as that recorded in his diary entry of 1915. The final variation of the ballet is a solo performed by a figure that Schlemmer named ‘The Abstract’. The dance exhibits very little movement, consisting of only three minimal extensions and rotations of the arm, and thus designates costume design as the primary agent of bodily organisation. The Abstract is a masked figure, the human body inside it completely encased so that none of its natural features are displayed. The figure itself however, is constructed according to an exaggeration of shapes offered by human anatomy. The ‘head’ is a mask divided vertically down the centre along the line stated by the nose: the right half is formed as a perfect sphere, the left extended as an oval with a small painted circle marking the position of one eye. The torso is expanded into a voluminous barrel shape, drawing the ‘circle of the belly’ that Schlemmer identified in his 1915 taxonomy. Likewise the arms and legs are formed as cylindrical extensions, each tapering out from a thick rounded ‘bulb’ shape, accentuating the ‘circles of the joints’ that he identified in the hip and shoulder sockets. Through this costume Schlemmer had composed a complete transfiguration of human form according to geometries extrapolated from its anatomical

structure. The work culminated, therefore, in a literal materialisation of anatomical abstraction.

Taken in its entirety, the *Triadic Ballet* demonstrates Schlemmer's attempt to put into practice his theory regarding the need for modern art to answer to its industrialised age. His abstraction of geometrical components from both the spatial model of classical ballet and the organic form of human anatomy demonstrates the alignment of his practice with his first 'emblem' of his time. By adopting a mode of composition that was (in his understanding) native to the age of mechanisation, and by using this method to organise human form in space, Schlemmer had offered a response to Gropius's call for a new unity of art with technology. However, the 'unity' represented in Schlemmer's work extends beyond his adoption of a technology-inspired method as a route to the synthesis of man with machine. It also lies in the emphasis he placed on the creation of a spatially total work. While defining abstraction as a process that 'disconnect[s] components from an existing whole', he also proposed that "abstraction can result in generalization and summation, in the construction in bold outline of a new totality" (Schlemmer: 1979a: 17). Indeed, Schlemmer's treatment of form exhibits a tendency to produce a unified assemblage, or a reconstructed whole, which is especially pronounced in his use of a serial logic for arranging the constituent parts of an abstracted entity. This tendency is present, for example, in his columned taxonomy of human anatomical parts (the diary entry of 1915). It pervades the grid diagram with which he visualises his *Triadic Ballet* as a total score made up of consecutive lines of action ('Abstract of the Triadic Ballet'). It is also presented in the theatrical materialisation of his earlier taxonomy, (costume design for 'The Abstract') in which the adjacent alignment of shapes presents a reconstituted human form – its components organised sequentially to produce a geometricized unity.

Schlemmer's employment of abstraction in conjunction with a principle of serialisation emphasises his 'borrowing' from mechanical technologies, as Lefebvre's description of the Taylorist body – 'strictly controlled linear determinations' – underlines. It also recasts the emphasis placed by the Bauhaus on the unity of art and technology as a more general impulse towards the presentation of aesthetic totality. Smith's previously cited assertion that the Bauhaus project represented an attempt to forge a 'total solution' to the problem of a post-war, disintegrated nation, and 'one in which sundered parts were integrated again', provides a context for understanding the importance of synthesis to Schlemmer's work at this institution. He not only developed an aesthetic of abstraction, orchestrating a symbolic synthesis of artistic and technological organisation, but also further mined the organising logic of machines so that the 'sundered parts' of an abstracted whole might be 'integrated again' into a total sequence. In this sense, Schlemmer's work can be understood as channelling the Bauhaus call for a new unity in two respects: firstly by staging 'man as a machine' and secondly by modelling a spatial aesthetic that visualised this institution's aspiration towards totality.⁷³

The particular kind of 'totality' promised both in Schlemmer's aesthetic and in the wider Bauhaus project, was very different from the 'unity' idealised in Laban's *choreutics* and *Lebensreform* culture, and this difference contextualises the respective fates of these two projects in the early years of the Third Reich. As has been established, Laban's *choreutics* was formulated in pursuit of a harmony between human beings and their natural, preindustrial state of being. The *Lebensreform* agenda of this project exhibited a volkish outlook that ultimately allowed Laban's concept of communal harmony to be appropriated as an early component of the Nazi apparatus for a total, racially defined people's community. Schlemmer's 'sense of man as a machine', on the other hand, was formulated in pursuit of a synthesis between the creative arts and the industrial present.

His principle of synthesis answered Gropius's utopian call for the unification of art and technology as a basis from which to rebuild Weimar Germany, a call that had, itself, been inherited from the Werkbund's earlier restructuring of the national design economy for 'the reconquest of a harmonious Culture' in the Wilhelmine era. In the context of this pro-technological programme for cultural cohesion in modern Germany, Schlemmer's work represented a form of totality that was essentially incompatible with the totalitarian vision of the early Nazi state. The total future imagined in the institutional agenda of the Bauhaus – and in the aesthetic projects that interpreted this agenda – was one in which the cultural 'whole' was not defined through a common basis in primordial blood and soil, as was the case in the Nazi myth of *Volksgemeinschaft*. It was to be constructed as a new alliance between human beings and the aesthetic, social, and economic phenomena that, as Schlemmer wrote to Meyer, defined "our age... under the aegis of industrialism" (Schlemmer, 1972: 108).

Having overseen the destruction of Schlemmer's '*undeutsch*' murals in Weimar in 1930, Schultze-Naumburg went on to play a role in the 1932 closure of the Bauhaus at Dessau, a town that had recently elected a Nazi majority to its municipal council (Droste, 2002: 227-8). Five years later, Schlemmer's paintings would be incorporated into the apogée of the Nazi regime's public condemnation of modern art works, and were hung in the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition that toured Germany in 1937 (Schlemmer, 1972: 251). Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's attempt to continue the Bauhaus as a private school in Berlin was also halted in April 1933 – three months after Hitler was appointed Chancellor – when the school building was "searched and placed under seal" by the Gestapo (Droste, 2002: 233). The institution was finally closed at the resignation of its directors in July of that year (*ibid.*: 236). After the Bauhaus was officially and permanently dissolved, a number of its faculty and former faculty – many of whom were

under the threat of persecution – fled Nazi Germany to find refuge in North America. One of the institutions that would receive Bauhaus émigrés and that would prove to be a “spiritual heir” to the abolished German institution was Black Mountain College, a liberal arts school founded in 1933 and situated in North Carolina (Harris, 2002: 245).

A former Bauhaus student and assistant to Schlemmer at Weimar, Xanti Schawinsky, arrived at Black Mountain College in 1936 after a period of working as a designer in Milan (Neumann, 1993: 156). Invited by Joseph Albers, who had been teaching at Black Mountain since its inaugural year, Schawinsky founded a ‘Stage Studies’ programme at the college that had its pedagogical roots in Schlemmer’s Bauhaus Stage Workshop. Developing a performance practice named *Spectodrama* that sustained Schlemmer’s aesthetic emphasis on abstracted totality, and, especially, the notion of a ‘total theatre’ that incorporated multiple formal elements into an integrated whole, Schawinsky established a collaborative performance tradition at Black Mountain that extended to Cunningham’s foundation of his company there in 1953.⁷⁴ While Schawinsky’s productions at the college carried the legacy of Schlemmer’s experiments in spatial abstraction and synthesis, a later Black Mountain-fostered experiment in performance provides an immediate and essential context for understanding Cunningham’s non-unifying strand of choreographic abstraction. Exhibiting a stark distinction to Schlemmer’s (and, later, Schawinsky’s) total form as it was conceived in the context of the Bauhaus Stage, the untitled theatre event that Cage produced at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1952 staged an outright rejection of aesthetic totality and, in so doing, set a basic precedent for Cunningham’s later choreography of space.

Chapter Four: John Cage's 1952 event

During an interview conducted in 1967, Richard Kostelanetz put it to Cage that his aesthetic might be placed in a legacy of North American music and arts, in which Charles Ives featured as an “ancestor” (Kostelanetz, 1980: 55). To this Cage responded briefly in the affirmative before adding: “But I’m inclined to point out that your comment is a linear one, which is a Renaissance question, which is a European question, which is a non-electronic question” (ibid.). This response characterises Cage’s sensibility with regards to conceptualising both space and time, in which linearity, sequence, and hierarchy are figured as outmoded principles for use within organising practices. Indeed, the 1952 event, which Cage produced in the context of the Black Mountain summer institute of that year and for which he enlisted the collaboration of artists including Robert Rauschenberg, David Tudor, and Cunningham, exhibits such a sensibility.⁷⁵ By treating the objects and performances that constituted this event as a collection of parts that occurred simultaneously but separately, Cage pioneered a mixed-media practice that rejected an aesthetic of synthetic totality in favour of presenting a “coexistence of dissimilars” (Cage, 2006: 12).⁷⁶ In its arrangement of sonic and visual elements into a collection of autonomous and equally important parts the 1952 event also provided a blueprint for Cunningham’s later spatial aesthetic.

Cage’s response to Kostelanetz’s question additionally suggests a chronotopic context within which to situate such an aesthetic, and provides a frame through which to measure the organising logic of the 1952 event in its contradistinction to the totalising impulse of Schlemmer’s work at the Bauhaus Stage, which had been sustained at Black Mountain College through Schawinsky’s performance projects of the 1930s.⁷⁷ Cage’s contention that ‘European’ and ‘non-electronic’ forms of enquiry were characterised by a linear

rationale has led Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman to wonder, “what would an ‘American’ or ‘electronic’ question look like, and what kind of answer would it elicit?” (Perloff and Junkerman, 1994: 3). A response to these questions might be fruitfully located in Cage’s mixed-media production at Black Mountain. The rejection, in the spatiotemporal fabric of 1952 event, of a linear and totalising rationale in favour of one characterised by simultaneity and plurality can be understood as an attempt to formulate an organising practice that is appropriate at once to its ‘American’ place and ‘electronic’ time. As a self-consciously North American and mid-twentieth-century artist, Cage understood his practice to be distanced from the compositional traditions of Europe and the functional models of pre-electronic technologies. As such, the total sequence of abstracted parts that characterised Schlemmer’s perception of mechanical technologies in the pre-war German context came to be fundamentally displaced in Cage’s presentation of a dispersed ‘coexistence of dissimilars’ – a model of organisation that was addressed to both the national setting and technological era of its production.

This chapter examines the 1952 event in order to identify the principles of organisation that chart and contextualise the transition from the form of spatial abstraction practised by Schlemmer in pre-war Germany to that developed by Cunningham in post-war North America. Bringing into relief a fundamental shift in the dominant mode of technological production over this period, this transition is especially helpful for historicising those technologies (and their attendant organising paradigms) with which Cunningham and, later, Forsythe are so fascinated. By the time Cunningham had founded his company in 1953, his work was beginning to give definition to a technique of abstracting the human frame into its constituent parts, a choreographic scheme that had been tested three decades earlier in Schlemmer’s conceptualisation of the machinic body at the Bauhaus. Cunningham’s choice of how to organise these constituent parts, however, demonstrates

an aesthetic very different to Schlemmer's serialised abstraction and indicates an inheritance of the 'coexistence of dissimilars' model that was advanced by Cage for the Black Mountain production. The joint national and technological distinction made in Cage's interview of 1967 can be taken as a point of departure for contextualising this transition. His avowed rejection of 'European' and 'non-electronic' modes of enquiry is useful as a basis for identifying the socio-historical specificity of his mixed-media practice in 1952, and the influence of its organising logic on Cunningham's later treatment of space.

Exploring the ways in which the spatiotemporal logic of the 1952 event is specific to ideals of both a national setting and a technological era, the present analysis will focus on two sets of ideals formulated in proximity to Cage's practice at Black Mountain. First to be considered is the ideological climate of Black Mountain College as an institution that sought to foster a specifically democratic form of community life, and that did so in the light of the pedagogical and political philosophy advanced by Dewey – a practical and symbolic guardian of that school. Second to be considered are the perceived transformations to the experience of time and space ushered in by the ubiquity of electronic media after the Second World War, as conceptualised by Marshall McLuhan – to whose theories Cage was openly indebted. Taken together, these two conceptual frames are useful for measuring the socio-historical specificity of Cage's theatrical aesthetic as it strove towards ideals of individuation, simultaneity, and decentralisation – all of which were developed into hallmarks of Cunningham's spatial practice. The second, historical-technological frame here extends from the assertions (theoretical and practical) of Cage himself, and from those of Cunningham in relation to Cage's 1952 event, and as such shall be placed at the end of this chapter to form a conceptual link from Cage's model of organisation to that of Cunningham. The first, geographical-national

frame grows from a consideration of the institutional milieu in which Cage and Cunningham consolidated their early practice at Black Mountain, and of how the North American, progressive ideals that shaped the particular understanding of ‘community’ in this context created an especially fertile environment for Cage’s experiment in collaborative autonomy.

The Black Mountain context

The catalyst for the creation of Black Mountain College was the dismissal, in April 1933, of John Andrew Rice from his position as Professor in Classics at Rollins College in Florida. The outcome of a protracted dispute regarding the Rollins student timetable – which Rice had recommended through committee channels as being not sufficiently flexible – his departure led to the dismissal or resignation of a collection of students and staff who stood in support of him. With some of these colleagues, Rice set on an expedited project of securing premises, funds (largely through private donations), a faculty, and a student body for the opening of his “often discussed... ‘ideal college’” (Harris, 1987: 1). By September of that year, Black Mountain College was open. Consisting at its inauguration of twenty-two students (both men and women), twelve faculty members, and occupying the rural campus grounds of the YMCA-owned Blue Ridge Assembly, which is situated in the hills overlooking the North Carolinian town of Black Mountain, the College aspired to cultivate a genuinely progressive college-level education.⁷⁸

In a parallel fashion to the early twentieth-century, German cultural reform programmes considered in the previous chapter, the progressive movement in North American education was motivated by what Lawrence Cremin describes as “a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life – the ideal of government by, of and for the

people – to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century” (Cremin, 1961: vii). As with the foundation of the Werkbund in Wilhelmine Germany, the readjustment envisioned here was intended to be at once economic and cultural, keeping a sense of national cohesion at its heart. The development of a progressive educational practice was intended to prepare American citizens to subsist professionally within an industrialised labour market and to contribute sensitively to a set of common interests that could restore mutual – and, in this context, democratic – associations between individuals after the atomising effects of industrialisation. Emerging as “the leading spokesperson for progressivism” at the turn of the twentieth century was Dewey, whose practical programmes and pedagogical theory – especially his seminal *Democracy and Education* (1916) – provide an incisive expression of the dual objective of this reform movement (ibid.: 120).⁷⁹ Especially important to the present analysis is Dewey’s conception of ‘democracy’ as a model of social interaction that was to be cultivated in the new educational environments shaped through progressive reforms. Dewey defined democracy as “more than a form of government”, and primarily as “a form of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” that, nevertheless, accommodated the equal and autonomous participation of each individual (Dewey, 1997: 87). This particular formulation of the democratic social space as something that balances the individual and the group came to provide a central ideal upon which the Black Mountain principle of community was built, and provides an appropriate rationale through which to contextualise Cage’s later artistic pronunciation of the individual in his communal practice at this institution.

According to Black Mountain historian Martin Duberman, Rice was of the opinion that existing liberal arts colleges built in the progressive era – including Rollins (founded 1885), Sarah Lawrence (1926), and Bennington (1932) – had “perverted... the whole

spirit of their alleged master, John Dewey” (Duberman, 1974: 40). Black Mountain was envisioned by Rice as the first college to function as a truly Deweyan institution. Moreover, Mary Emma Harris views the idealistic aspirations of the college’s founders to be characteristic of an intensive cultural response to the Great Depression, which had reached its depths in the year of Black Mountain’s founding. She suggests that “despite the unemployment and financial hardship, the Great Depression gave rise to a garden of utopian ventures... [in which] artists, intellectuals, educators, and politicians... envisioned an ideal world” (Harris, 1987: xxi). In a similar vein to the founding of the counter-cultural site at Ascona at the turn of the twentieth century and that of the Bauhaus after the Great War, Black Mountain College was established as a utopian educational outpost that might realise a particular vision of an improved future. In the case of Black Mountain this vision was projected through the North American, and essentially Deweyan, progressive-educational ideal: to form a microcosm of the perfectly democratic society.

In the first instance, this ideal was pursued in the tendency of the college to organise itself as a community. Indeed, in a twenty-three-year existence characterised largely by the consistency with which its founding mission provided a licence for dispute, the college’s identification as a community was sustained through its history as a guiding and self-determining principle. An incipient example can be located in Albers’s explication of the design for the Black Mountain seal, which featured two concentric circles imprinted with the college’s name and location around the outer circumference, as revealed in an internally produced leaflet of March 1935. Albers accounted for the design in terms that demonstrate an early identification of the college as a community, stating that “as a symbol of union, we have chosen simply a simple ring. It is an emphasized ring to emphasize coming together, standing together, working together” (Harris, 1987: xix) [Image 9]. This constitutional goal of pursuing a communal project in education and an

educational project in community was put into practice through the multiple activities conducted jointly with formal studies and that shaped daily life at the college. As reported by the author Louis Adamic after visits between 1935 and 1937, these activities included “wood-chopping, road-mending, rolling the tennis courts, serving tea in the afternoon... done by groups composed of students and members of faculty” (Adamic, 1990: 58-9). Perhaps the apex of this pedagogical philosophy put into practice was the communal construction of the Lake Eden campus, the site that would house Cage and Cunningham during their later visits to Black Mountain. The Lake Eden site was developed between 1940 and 1941, when the entire college, staff and students alike, came together to build their own campus from the ground up.⁸⁰ Two years after this massive project was completed, a welcome speech delivered to new students by the rector of the College, Bob Wunsch, described Black Mountain as “first a community, then a college”, attesting to what was by then a robust self-identification as an educational facility in which the population not only studied, but also lived, together.⁸¹

The centrality of ‘community’ to the Black Mountain project made an impact on Cage and Cunningham, who became long-standing guests of the college over the late 1940s and early 1950s. Having accepted Cage’s letter of enquiry, Black Mountain first hosted the pair for a week in April 1948, during which time they showcased their individual work. Over the next five years, the two artists would visit the college together on five separate occasions.⁸² Their activities over these visits ranged from short demonstrations, in which their existing practice was performed to the college population, to summer-long teaching and artistic residencies resulting in new programmes of music, dance, and collaborative practice. In an interview of 1996, Cunningham recalled the impression left upon him by the unique community dynamic at this site:

Black Mountain College... was... one of the first interdisciplinary situations. It was a small school, but the disciplines of various kinds, both art and science, were mixed,

and I remember one of the pleasures for me was that everyone ate in this large open room, the dining hall. And you sat at tables with people from totally different situations than your own. I was there as a teacher of dance, and I'd give a dance class in the morning, and rehearsing in the dining hall in the afternoon. And at either lunch or dinner you would eat with someone from the Physics Department, or someone from the Visual Arts Department, or someone else... it wasn't really in any sense to me a conventional educational institution at all. It was something where you gained by experience, by observing, by listening, and by talking.

(Cunningham, Kirk, and Goodman, 1996)

The significance of this recollection to an assessment of Cage's and, later, Cunningham's practice in relation to the Black Mountain ideal of a democratic community lies in the resonances that it bears with some of the major tenets held in Deweyan thought.

Such resonances lie firstly in Cunningham's observation that Black Mountain was an educational institution where one 'gained by experience', a statement consistent with Dewey's central conviction as both a progressive reformer and a pragmatist thinker that educational growth and social experience were synonymous. In the closing passage of *Democracy and Education*, for example, Dewey posited his ideal context for institutionalised learning as "an educational scheme where learning is the accompaniment of continuous activities or occupations which have a social aim and utilize the materials of typical social situations", moving further to assert that "under such conditions, the school becomes itself a form of social life, a miniature community" (Dewey, 1997: 360). In this statement Dewey imagined a theoretical scenario not dissimilar to the one Cunningham perceived as unfolding in practice in the dining hall of Lake Eden, the same space, significantly, which would house the 1952 event and the inceptive performances of the Cunningham company in 1953.

Cunningham's depiction of the Black Mountain social 'happenings' is most precisely congruent with Dewey's thought, however, in that the richness of experience that the former found in these manifestations of the college as a 'miniature community' is

predicated on a relational model basic to Dewey's conception of 'democracy'.

Cunningham's enjoyment of the college communal dinners – and the practical use he intuited in such situations – resided in their creation of an environment that nourished the free interaction of individuals, each of whom came from a 'totally different situation' and each of whom brought their diverse and independent capacities to bear on a communal situation. The notion of associated action between autonomous individuals (who are deliberately accentuated as such) characterises the Black Mountain communal dynamic as being distinctively Deweyan in nature and would come to pervade the performance practice that Cage (and later, Cunningham) facilitated at this site.

The importance of Dewey's thought for understanding the particular kind of democratic community towards which Black Mountain aspired might be observed initially in this institution's founding ideals as determined by Rice. The college's principle founder was a personal acquaintance and staunch admirer of Dewey, naming him as the only man he had ever known "who was completely fit and fitted to live in a democracy" (Rice, 1942: 331). The philosopher would accept invitations from Rice to visit the college several times in its early years and to become a member of its Advisory Board, and, while Rice's personal attempts to instate Black Mountain as an education 'for and in democracy' were by no means consistent nor unproblematic, he located the principles on which this aspiration was based securely in Deweyan thought (Duberman, 1974: 102).⁸³ That Rice associated Dewey directly with his conception of the college's founding credo is clear enough in his recollection of a piece of advice given to him by the philosopher in response to concern over the "life span of an idea" as it would function centrally to the college's existence (Rice, 1942: 324). According to Rice, Dewey advised that to ensure against the college's departure from its original ideals he needed simply "to keep [his] eye on the individual" (ibid.: 324-5). This commitment to the individual as a key and inviolable component of

the group came to define the Black Mountain ideal of community and finds a theoretical elaboration in Dewey's pedagogical and political writings.

In 'My Pedagogic Creed' (1897) Dewey states his basic educational philosophy to reside in a conviction that "the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals" (Dewey, 1972: 86). The reciprocal construction of this tenet was transposed across his pedagogical writings more broadly as well as his texts that dealt principally with questions of political ethics, through which he placed the relationship between the individual and society-at-large at the very heart of his delineation of the democratic ideal. Dewey's diagram for the ideally functioning democratic society both reserves a central place for the individual and specifies a very particular deployment of individuals in relation to one another. While, for Dewey, the safeguard of individual autonomy is part of what ensures a truly democratic societal shape, the relational model on which this configuration is based does not equate to what Daniel Savage has termed the "atomized individualism of the libertarian liberal" (Savage, 2002: 35). Indeed, during a passage of 'The Ethics of Democracy' (1888), Dewey pledges his allegiance to "the theory that men are not isolated non-social atoms, but are men only when in intrinsic relations to men" (Dewey, 1969: 231). For Dewey, as a modern liberal intellectual, the democratic ideal is one in which individual liberty was cultivated as an inherently social condition whereby individuals exist in and act through a mutual interdependence with one another. It was from this conviction that Dewey drew his definition of both the democratic social ideal and a democratic model for education, expecting in both of these standards a reconciliation of the individual with the group whereby "in conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organization; that in which the individual and society are organic to each other" (ibid.: 237).

In his characterisation of Dewey's democratic model as presenting "a community of autonomous participants" Savage points to the way in which this same principle was taken up in the pedagogical aspirations of Black Mountain College and, later, in Cage's 1952 event (Savage, 2002: 36). Adamic's chronicle of his conversations with Rice demonstrates the latter's conceptualisation of the college as a community that nevertheless 'kept an eye' on the individual. Adamic recalled Rice's contention that "in general, the effort of Black Mountain College is to produce individuals rather than individualists", that "the individual, to be complete, must be aware of his relation to others," and that in this arrangement "the whole community becomes [the individual's] teacher" (Adamic, 1990: 58-9). The point was not that individual interest should become subsumed into the common will of the college population through the constant designation of the one as identical with the group-at-large. Nor was it for the people who resided at Black Mountain to withdraw into pockets of self-imposed isolation, taking no notice of the needs and actions of those with whom they shared the college grounds. Rather, the Black Mountain credo deferred to a uniquely Deweyan principle for understanding the implications of 'community'. This was one in which the population could function as a coexistence of independent yet associated individuals, where each acted autonomously while referring their action to that of others. This would ultimately create an environment comparable to that imagined in Dewey's pedagogic creed, in which individual agency emerged as an organic property of group participation and in which, reciprocally, a single community emerged from a diversity of self-directed interests.

It is important to reiterate at this stage that this particular construction of the Black Mountain community dynamic existed far more robustly as a premise than it ever did either in practical consensus or as an institutional realisation over the college's years of

operation. However, the collaborative performance practice produced over the college's history did provide a fertile artistic ground for testing such a principle. Indeed, both Schawinsky and Cage credited the college with providing a productive environment for the development of their respective collaborative performance projects. Schawinsky, for his part, recalled how, "realising that the atmosphere at Black Mountain was favourable to experimentation, I thought why not get at 'total experience'?" (Schawinsky, 1973: 2). However, where Schawinsky recognised the college as a location in which the cross-fertilisation of disciplines and individual artistic expertise facilitated the resurrection of a Bauhaus-informed 'total' theatre, Cage encountered this space as a catalyst for an anti-totalising, explicitly individuated mode of theatrical practice. In reflecting upon the unique constitution of the Black Mountain summer institute of 1952, Cage noted the multiplicity of its resources to be of paramount importance: "I think that the Happening business came about through circumstances of being at Black Mountain [... it] resulted from the fact that there were many people and many possibilities and we could do it quickly" (Kostelanetz, 1989: 103-4). While Schawinsky's multi-formal yet totalising *Spectodrama* was certainly facilitated by practical resources resulting from the Black Mountain community ideal discussed above, it was in the individuated aesthetic of Cage's 1952 event that this same ideal found practical expression.

The 1952 event

The 1952 event was a one-off performance given in the context of that year's summer institute. Commenced in 1944, these institutes formed an annual programme in which practitioners from a variety of fields were invited to live at the Black Mountain over the summer months for the purposes of teaching students in their specialist subjects (forming a kind of collective guest faculty), developing on-going individual projects, and collaborating across disciplines in the creation of works to be showcased at the college

(Duberman, 1974: 279-81). The 1952 event represents the exemplar project of the summer institutes' collaborative tendency, consisting as it did of a collection of activities and objects devised on-site by a set of artists with whom Cage had been living at Black Mountain during that summer. The participant artists were: Cage, Cunningham, painter Rauschenberg, musician Tudor, Black Mountain student (and later lighting designer) Nicholas Cernovitch, and poets Charles Olson and M.C. Richards (both of whom were permanent members of the Black Mountain faculty). The audience was equally specific to the college environment, being "comprised of faculty, students and local people in the Black Mountain community" who had gathered in the large dining hall at the Lake Eden campus for the purpose of watching, in Cunningham's words, "an evening of theatre" (Fetterman, 1996: 98; Duberman, 1974: 356).⁸⁴

A methodological problem arises here in the difficulty of reproducing an authoritative account of the performance itself. As has been noted by Duberman: "There are – one might even say, by design – varied accounts" (Duberman, 1974: 351). The significance of this variety will be detailed shortly, but for now an outline of the event may be drawn from Cage's itemisation of the occurrences that made up the performance, provided during an interview conducted in 1965 and starting when the audience entered the space.

Cage narrates:

In each one of the seats was a cup, and it wasn't explained to the audience what to do with this cup – some used it as an ashtray – but the performance was concluded by a kind of ritual [in which attendants arrived to pour] coffee into each cup. At one end of the rectangular hall, the long end, was a movie [by Cernovitch] and at the other end were slides. I was up on a ladder delivering a lecture which included silences and there was another ladder which M.C. Richards and Charles Olson went up at different times [in order to read out their poetry]. [...] Robert Rauschenberg was playing an old-fashioned phonograph that had a horn and a dog on the side listening, and David Tudor was playing a piano, and Merce Cunningham and other dancers were moving through the audience and around the audience. Rauschenberg's pictures [the White Paintings] were suspended above the audience... at various angles, a

canopy of painting above the audience.

(Cage, et al., 1995: 52)⁸⁵

In addition to this itemisation provided by Cage, the event was characterised by a very specific organisation of its constituent factors in space and time. The spatiotemporal constitution of the 1952 event was based in principles of non-hierarchical arrangement and an interpenetrating individual autonomy, reproducing, at its core, the organising logic contained in the Black Mountain ideal of a democratic community.

The audience members of the event were located in blocks of seats configured inside the performance space, and were engaged from above by Rauschenberg's paintings and from all sides by the performance activity. Again, Cage provides a cogent map:

The seating arrangement... was a square composed of four triangles with the apexes of the triangles merging towards the center, but not meeting. The center was a larger space that could take movement, and the aisles between those four triangles also admitted movement. The audience could see itself [... and] the larger part of the action took place *outside* of that square.

(Cage, et al., 1995: 52)

The performance activity maintained a multi-aspect relationship to a multi-aspect audience, taking place in many points around a seating arrangement that had already divided the audience group into four converging lines of perspective [Image 10].

Although each seat was orientated towards the apex points of Cage's four triangles, the surrounding activity invited a 360° range of visual attention from each audience member, evading the designation of any single 'front' for performance projection or spectator reference and, as such, designating no spectator position as better than any other. Indeed, when asked by a member of the Black Mountain community, Johanna Jalowetz, which of the seats was 'the best' Cage replied that "they were all equally good [...] since from every seat you would see something different" (ibid.: 52). Cunningham has further noted that "the audience was seated in the middle, unable to see everything", and both of these observations provide an essential precedent for the evolved decentralisation of space that

characterises Cunningham's later oeuvre (Cunningham, 1968: [16]). This spatial configuration, which 'by design' instigated a variety of perspectival views in its spectator group, partially explains the problem of extracting a singular and total account of the performance from the recollections of those who observed it. Not one person was in a position to see the same version as any other or to see what happened in its entirety. Offering itself to posterity through an accumulation of diverse and often conflicting recollections, the 1952 event is composed even as a historicised production according to the individual (and, in theory, 'equally good') perspectives that were built into its spatial structure.

The temporal structure of the work also accommodated a principle of individuation-among-many, in that it was plotted to attest to the autonomous nature of the various performance materials and their contributing artists. In a second edition of the Kostelanetz interview of 1967, Cage was careful not to identify himself as the 'author' of the 1952 event, stating: "It isn't published. I planned the thing. Without my deciding to do it, it wouldn't have happened" (Cage and Kostelanetz, 1971: 27).⁸⁶ This response provides a conceptual reasoning for Cage's handling of the event's temporal structure. By his account, Cage did not 'author' the 1952 event, rather he 'planned' it, and this planning consisted largely of dividing and allocating the duration of the work among its participants and allowing the remainder of the 'authoring' to become the responsibility of each individual. After inviting the collaborators to participate, Cage devised a time chart for the work in which its total duration of around 45 minutes was broken into multiple 'time brackets'. Using chance procedures for decision-making, he assigned each participant a selection of those designated time brackets that they could choose to fill with any activity or none at all. Cage then established the start time of the performance, established the space as detailed above, and joined his collaborators for the performance

itself, which would be the one and only instance in which their respective prepared activities would come together to share a time and a space (Duberman, 1974: 350).

The result in performance was a coincidence of aural and visual occurrences and periods of silence and stillness, the order, pace, and material content of which Cage knew very little or nothing about until they each happened in performance. Other than the temporal instructions offered by Cage – within which each artist, nevertheless, had licence to do nothing at all – every component of the assembled activities and objects was self-directed by the artist who had contributed it. The self-direction of many, as enabled by Cage, cultivated an environment in which multiple, independent performances intersected by chance and in which each artist maintained their respective autonomy in a state of coexistence (but not synthesis) with their collaborators. Cunningham, for example, recalls that his improvised dance – which took place largely within the aisles of the triangulated seating structure – did not have “anything to do with what anybody else was doing necessarily” (Duberman, 1974: 356). Further underlining the autonomy of each contributor, the ‘value’ of their respective contributions was levelled within an even spatiotemporal field, which established no component as permanently more visible or audible than any other. In setting up a situation for the interaction of autonomous variables in unrelated and equal terms, Cage idealised a non-hierarchical space in which discrete performances coexisted across multiple centres of individual authority.

Historians of Cage’s work and Cage himself have accounted for the notions of space, time, and authorship exhibited in the 1952 event in a set of personal influences that had been accumulated by the artist at this pivotal point in his career. As Duberman has recorded from his 1969 interview with Cage:

In Cage’s mind, Huang Po and Artaud (along with Marcel Duchamp’s doctrine that the work of art is completed by the observer) ‘all fused together into the possibility

of making a theatrical event in which the things that took place were not causally related to one another – but in which there is a penetration, anything that happened after that happened in the observer himself.’

(Duberman, 1974: 350)

To be sure, the lectures by Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki on the tenets of Zen Buddhism that Cage attended at the University of Columbia between 1949 and 1951 had introduced the latter to the twin ideas of unimpededness and interpenetration, which jointly pervade the performance environment of the 1952 event (Kostelanetz, 1980: 52). In particular, these ideas describe a situation in which all components are understood as being equally and simultaneously at the centre of a given event (unimpeded by one another) yet in constant association in every direction with every other simultaneously central component (forming an interpenetration among separate parts) (Cage, 2006: 46-7). Likewise, Artaud’s *Theater and Its Double* – translated to English by M.C. Richards during the 1952 summer institute – reinforced Cage’s conviction that, once released from the centripetal structure of a text, the activities of a theatre work “could all be free rather than tied together [... working] independently [with] neither one controlling the other” (Cage in Kostelanetz, 1989 : 104). Lastly, Cage’s commitment to the ideas of Duchamp (whose influence had been cemented in New York through the 1951 publication of Robert Motherwell’s *The Dada Poets and Painters*) extended to his consignment of interpretative agency to every individuated spectator, each of whom would bring unique associations to their observation of an event. This event, subsequently, would live on in as many unique hermeneutic trajectories as there were audience members (Harris, 1987: 228).

While Cage certainly brought concepts he had derived from these three conceptual stimuli to his planning of the 1952 event, Black Mountain College provided a practically and ideologically fertile ground for cultivating the common principles of organisation shared across them. A correspondence can be traced between the principles displayed in Cage’s coexistent, decentralising, and anti-totalising collaborative practice and those built into

the Black Mountain community ideal. By articulating the former in the remarkably compatible terms of the latter, which has already been established as reproducing the social promise of Dewey's progressive formulation of the democratic ideal, Cage's 1952 event might be understood as being essentially orientated to a form of political practice. It is illuminating, in this respect, to read two pieces of writing alongside each other: one in which Duberman surmises the very Deweyan Black Mountain concept of individual responsibility, and the other in which Cage outlines his definition of 'anarchy' as a political worldview.

Describing the balance sought in the Black Mountain *modus operandi* between the individual and the group, Duberman writes:

It was hoped that a double sense of responsibility would emerge out of the varied contacts and opportunities Black Mountain provided: that which an individual owes to the group of which he is a member, and that which he owes to himself – with neither submerging the other. From the beginning Black Mountain emphasized the social responsibilities that come from being part of a community, yet tried to see to it that personal freedom wouldn't be sacrificed to group needs. Rice, for one, liked to stress how different each person was from every other and how expectations of performance should vary accordingly.

(Duberman, 1974: 42)

This description is consistent with previously cited comments made by Rice on the Black Mountain dynamic and by Dewey regarding the ideal relationship between the individual and the society of which they are part. Under this rubric, the communal needs of the group are defined as those that fundamentally accommodate the liberty of the individual, whose autonomous action, in turn, is always referred to that of the multiple individuals who constitute that group. In this sense, Duberman's description also sets out a diagram for communal practice as it was materialised, aesthetically, in the 1952 event. Here, the multidirectional interaction of discrete practices that were each directed *in situ* by independent agents created a mutual space exhibiting the autonomy and difference of each.

The focus placed by Dewey, Rice, and Duberman on the double responsibility of the individual in the context of the Black Mountain group is present not only in Cage's collaborative event that 'came about' because of 'the circumstances' of this site. It is also present in his formulation of what it means to engage in anarchic practice – the political position to which he and Cunningham, when pushed, most commonly referred their collaborative aesthetic.⁸⁷ Towards the end of 'Overpopulation and Art', a late mesostic poem composed for a reading at Stanford University in January 1992, Cage includes the following passage:

Anarchy / really does have The future / people are talkIng / abOut / it is creative
coNduct / As opposed to / subordiNate / conDuct it is positive / individuAlism to
follow a way of thinking / that pRoposes you can assume / for your own aCts /
responsibility / Visibly / rEsponsible / fiRst to yourself and then to society

(Cage, 1994: 37)

Cage's understanding of anarchy, as displayed here, is inflected with a distinctively Deweyan tone. As with Duberman's description of the Black Mountain community dynamic, which was formulated in pursuit of an education for and in democracy, Cage's anarchic social space is essentially one in which the individual possesses a responsibility both to their autonomous, personal liberty and to their mutual, social associations.

William Brooks characterises the Cagean notion of 'anarchy' in similar terms, stating that, for this practitioner, "anarchy requires that every individual remain poised between autonomy and connectedness, refusing obstruction of self or others but not refusing interpenetration" (Brooks, 2002: 217). In the light of this statement it becomes clear, in the first instance, that Cage's appropriation of the Zen concepts of 'unimpededness' and 'interpenetration' was addressed towards a political sensibility. However, when considered in conjunction with Duberman's 'double responsibility' description of the Black Mountain credo, the nature of this sensibility can be refined. While named by Cage

as ‘anarchy’, the societal diagram that this artist described in his final piece of poetry – and which was imagined in the spatiotemporal structure of the 1952 event – shares a premise with the individualist conception of democracy theorised by Dewey and tested at Black Mountain College. Because of its persistence in both the communal event Cage devised at this site and his discussion of his personal politics, the notion of an interdependent individual liberty suggests the alignment of Cage’s collaborative practice with a North American, progressive ideal of democracy. According to this ideal, social interaction is modelled in a non-hierarchical environment that accommodates the ‘free’ but associated action of autonomous agents. Presenting an image of individuals acting together to achieve a ‘coexistence of dissimilars’ in a mutual time and space, this ideal is also useful for tracing a political sensibility in Cunningham’s later choreography of space.

In the final passage of the poem cited above, Cage states: “electrOnics our technology / makes the revolution for us” (Cage, 1994: 38). This statement chimes with the 1967 interview cited at the beginning of this chapter. In Cage’s thinking, the artistic disinheritance of linearity, sequence, and hierarchy – a disinheritance that can be observed in practice in the 1952 event – represented a departure not only from a continental situation (‘Europe’) but also from a technologically defined era. Cage’s desire to avoid ‘non-electronic’ questions suggests a second framework for contextualising the organising logic of the 1952 event. It also provides a further point of precedence for contextualising Cunningham’s choreographic treatment of space, which over most of his oeuvre made defining practical and conceptual intersections with electronic technologies. While Schlemmer’s mode of organisation sustained a mechanically informed treatment of space, Cage’s (and, later, Cunningham’s) might be thought of as announcing a new spatiotemporal practice, which draws deliberately from an organising model emblematised in electronic media.

In order to understand the comparative significance of Schlemmer's practice and the 1952 event in their relations to a 'mechanical' and an 'electronic' logic respectively, we may turn to McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964). This text provides an explication of the cultural shift brought about in the transition from the 'mechanical age' of conversion power to the 'electronic age' of circuitry. McLuhan is an appropriate theorist to introduce at this stage for two reasons. Firstly, his work concerns the cultural impact of a technological revolution contemporary to his period of writing in the middle decades of the twentieth century, which saw the rapid scientific development as well as the industrial and commercial implementation of electronics. The crucial issue formulated in McLuhan's thinking is that the dawn of the electronic age, or the "electric revolution of this century", introduced a new pace, scale, and patterning to "human affairs" and produced a new paradigm for societal organisation in this era (McLuhan, 1964: 199; 8).

McLuhan's understanding of this paradigm shift is primarily invoked, however, as it is one that Cage credits with "corroborat[ing] the views of poets, painters, and musicians in society", and articulating "things that we [artists] did dimly, that we actually acted upon but often did not realize in terms of words" (Kostelanetz, 1989: 58). Cage's attested "devotion" to McLuhan, and in particular to the latter's identification of the electronic revolution as something that engendered new models for artistic composition can be observed in a passage of the Cage/Kostelanetz interview of 1967 (ibid.). The two discuss the matter thus:

Kostelanetz: Surely your influence upon the avant-garde practitioners in all the arts has been extraordinary?

Cage: I'll agree and disagree; but I would like to minimize the personalities involved and emphasise the fact that change was inevitable. I would go along utterly with McLuhan on this point – that the media we're involved in did it.

Kostelanetz: Do you accept then McLuhan's primary presupposition that shifts in the predominant media of communication can be so totally determining?

Cage: True.

(Cage and Kostelanetz, 1971: 15)

It is not the intention of this thesis to adopt the technological determinism employed as a methodological apparatus by McLuhan and taken up as an explanatory framework by Cage. Indeed, the analytical reductionism of McLuhan's causal treatment of technology, culture, and historical change has been well established by cultural historians, notably in 1974 by Raymond Williams in his *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Williams, 2003: 1-15,121-138). However, the electronic paradigm outlined by McLuhan exhibits an organising logic compatible with the spatiotemporal principles of the 1952 event. As such, McLuhan's argument in *Understanding Media* is used here as a lexicon with which to describe a mode of technological production – and its attendant paradigm for societal organisation – with which Cage was fascinated, rather than as a methodological frame for understanding the relationship of that technology to social change more precisely. As a theoretical work on the cultural impact of electronics that was read and recognised by Cage, the text is especially useful in its provision of a set of ideas with which to characterise his aesthetic in its particular distinction to Schlemmer's work with mechanisation.

McLuhan describes the difference between pre-electronic and electronic models for organisation in two ways that are especially relevant to the differentiation of Schlemmer's theory and practice and Cage's 1952 event. The first difference concerns the conception of time in both paradigms. A contrast exists, for McLuhan, between the mechanical referent of the sequence – a series of units that represents a linear division of duration – and the electronic condition of simultaneity. The first is epitomised by the mechanical clock and the Fordist assembly line, and the second in the instantaneous speed of electronic communication technologies such as radio and television, which, according to McLuhan, give a sense of “our co-presence, everywhere at once” (McLuhan, 1964: 248).

The notion of “plurality-of-times succeed[ing] uniformity-of-time” as achieved by the shift from ‘sequence’ to ‘simultaneity’, here defines the difference between McLuhan’s mechanical and electronic age (ibid., 1964: 152). This temporal distinction also characterises Schlemmer’s and Cage’s respective apprehensions of such technologies in their artistic practice. As has been established, Schlemmer’s staging of ‘man as a machine’ was contingent on his conceptual and aesthetic abstraction of human form into a total and linear sequence of units. For Cage, however, an experience of time compatible with the contemporary ‘media we’re involved in’ was expressed, in the 1952 event, by a guiding principle of simultaneity. McLuhan’s sense of ‘our co-presence, everywhere at once’ corresponds with the state of temporal ‘coexistence’ into which Cage organised the constituent parts of this performance.

McLuhan’s second distinction between mechanical and electronic modes of production concerns the conception of space in both paradigms. A contrast exists under this rubric between the ‘centralist’ patterning belonging to mechanical technology and the ‘decentralist’ patterning belonging to electronic technology. The first is epitomised, according to McLuhan, in the railway system that requires “rail-heads and big urban centers” and the second in the electric grid system that “permits any place [and any number of places] to be a center” (McLuhan, 1964: 36). The notion of a movement from “a centralist structure” to a “pluralism of centers” as achieved through the transition from a singular point of authority to one of multiple points, again suggests a correspondence between McLuhan’s paradigm-shift from mechanical to electronic, and the differing spatial practices that shaped the *Triadic Ballet* and the 1952 event respectively (ibid. 272-3). For Schlemmer, the components that had been ‘disconnected’ from an existing whole during a process of abstraction were nevertheless reconstituted in a centralised scheme. This is exemplified in the floor-plan of Series I, variation 3 of the *Triadic Ballet*. Here,

the performance environment is envisioned as a total square, configured according to an exaggerated perpendicular scheme and specifying a central axis towards which the dancers refer their action during the 'orientation exercise' described in Chapter Three. For Cage, however, the organisation of space in the 1952 event replaced what McLuhan terms a 'centralist structure' with a 'pluralism of centres'. While based within a floor plan in which four triangles of seating converged towards a shared and central apex, the activities of this event resisted a perspectival focus by occurring at different points and orientations all around the space. Further to their spatial dispersal, each activity was self-directed, autonomously, by that artist who had conceived it, creating a coexistence of equally important centres of activity.

Cunningham has also described the aesthetic of the 1952 event in terms of a new spatiotemporal experience at the onset of electronic ubiquity. As he explained to Duberman in 1967, the 'values' according to which the 1952 event was composed were related

to the way life itself is all these separate things going on at the same time. And contemporary society is so extraordinarily complex that way. Not only things going on right around you, but there are all the things that you hear instantly over the television, that are going on someplace else... that idea of separateness, of things happening even though they are separate, they're happening at the same time.

(Duberman, 1974: 357)

Not only does Cunningham here articulate the Cagean concept of interpenetration (the occurrence of multiple simultaneous events, each separate and none representing the one centre), but also attributes this mode of organisation to the modified experience of space and time he perceives in his contemporary mediatised society. Cunningham's choreographic practice, and especially that which he developed since his company's founding at Black Mountain in 1953, exhibits a treatment of space that reproduces the same kind of environment mapped out in his description of the 1952 event. At later stages

of his career Cunningham made extensive use of electronic devices as instruments of composition and performance. However, Cage's agreement with McLuhan regarding the broader compositional shift engendered by electronic technologies in the mid-twentieth century provides an apt conceptual frame within which to identify a coherence across Cunningham's oeuvre in its entirety. Throughout each stage of his practice Cunningham transposed the model of organisation that had been tested in Cage's 1952 event for a choreographic treatment of space.

Chapter Five: Merce Cunningham's 'No Fixed Points'

In an essay of 1994 titled 'Four Events that Have Led to Large Discoveries' Cunningham outlined an overarching chronology for his practice. This was plotted according to points of engagement with four compositional methods that were developed over four, cross-fertilising stages of his career. Occupying a period that reaches from his early dances of the 1940s to the penultimate decade of his career in the 1990s, this chronology rests upon a series of 'events' that each introduced a new means of composition to his practice. The first event occurred in the mid-1940s during Cunningham's formative collaborative work with Cage, and concerns their partnership's defining characteristic – the decision to “separate the music and the dance” so that these two forms could exist in a relationship of interdependence (Cunningham, 1997b: 276). The second event followed the first in close succession – taking place concurrently with the formalisation of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the early 1950s – and consisted of Cunningham's inaugural use of “chance operations in the choreography” (ibid.). The third event is described by Cunningham as “the work we have done with video and film”; it dates to the early 1960s in his works for television and was consolidated in his collaborations with Charles Atlas from the mid-1970s (ibid.). The fourth event, which proved to offer the final, major compositional tool with which this choreographer would work, occurred in the early 1990s with Cunningham's use of software and, especially, of “a dance computer, *LifeForms*” (ibid.).

In aggregation, these four events can be viewed as a series of choreographic methods that together set the technical course of Cunningham's practice, from his earliest work just prior to the foundation of his company at the 1953 Black Mountain summer institute to his final work in his final year of life, *Nearly Ninety* (2009). These events provide,

therefore, a prism through which to view Cunningham's choreography of space over his career in its entirety. Roger Copeland has acknowledged that a logic of development ties each of the four events, suggesting that "the journey from event 'a' to event 'd' was all but inevitable" and "that each discovery laid the groundwork for its successor... [leading] like a chain of dominos – from the one to the other" (Copeland, 2004: 184). In continuing to observe that "the decision 'to separate the music and the dance' finds its anatomical equivalent in chance-generated compositional processes", Copeland also points to an inherent aesthetic character that binds these events (ibid.). This chapter views Cunningham's oeuvre from the vantage point of the four events he identified in his statement of 1994. However, it understands these events not simply as a chain of reactions, with one engendering the next in a cause-and-effect teleological progression, but rather as a series of methods for dealing anew with the same enduring principles of space.

Cunningham's practice exhibits a spatial model that might be characterised by two consistently evident principles of organisation: 'coexistence' and 'flexibility'. The first principle relates to a model of composition detailed in the previous chapter with regard to Cage's mixed-media practice at Black Mountain College. According to this principle, the constituent parts of a pluralistically conceived whole are treated as autonomous elements of equal importance. The second principle of organisation, which appears in conjunction with Cunningham's practice of coexistence, is that of flexibility in structure.

Cunningham's spatial practice exhibits a principle of flexibility in that it plots a mobile environment consisting of points and frames of reference that are not only multiple and discrete but also shifting. Both of these principles are inextricably linked, as is suggested in what is perhaps Cunningham's most direct explication of his spatial practice. In an interview conducted in 1980 he stated:

So I decided to open up the space to consider it equal, and any place, occupied or not, just as important as any other. In such a context you don't have to refer to a precise point in space. And when I happened to read that sentence of Albert Einstein's: 'There are no fixed points in space', I thought, indeed if there are no fixed points, then every point *is* equally interesting and equally changing.

(Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 17-18)

In this statement, which depicts a space made up of multiple, equally important, and constantly shifting foci, Cunningham reveals a common aesthetic basis for the four central events of his career. Read in conjunction with his retrospective chronology of 1994, Cunningham's 'no fixed points' statement suggests his selection of choreographic methods to be indicative of a movement towards a particular model of space.

Four existing models of spatial practice that have been previously discussed in this thesis are especially useful for contextualising Cunningham's choreography of space. The first two are significant because they provide antecedents from which Cunningham explicitly departs or through which he explicitly works: the classical model and Graham's expressionist model. Both of these dance forms provide technical systems from which Cunningham draws, and both exhibit principles of space that bring into relief his coexistent and flexible aesthetic. Two further spatial models are useful as elucidating contexts for Cunningham's spatiality: Schlemmer's model of abstraction and Cage's model of individuated 'coexistence'. Both of these approaches to composition produce prototypes, or nascent manifestations (whether acknowledged or not) of the spatial model that Cunningham would develop choreographically.

Before moving on to identify the socio-historical significance of Cunningham's engagement with these existing spatial models, it is worth considering his discussion of the conceptual origins of his practice and its relationship to a broader societal environment. Cunningham has suggested an immediate conceptual frame in which to

situate his spatial model by identifying a connection between Einstein's 'no fixed points in space' statement and the tenets of Zen Buddhism:

It was the statement of Einstein's which I read at that time, where he said there are no fixed points in space. And I – it was like a flash of lightning – felt well that's marvellous for the stage. Instead of thinking it's front and centre, [one could] allow any point – very Buddhist – any point in the space to be as important as any other. It opened the way one could think.

(Cunningham and Tusa, 2003)

Cunningham's assertion that each point in space should be 'equally interesting and equally changing' is certainly compatible with the Zen concepts of 'unimpededness and interpenetration', and especially as they were filtered through the thought and practice of Cage. It should be noted that the difficulty in fixing a secure direction of influence between the work of Cunningham and Cage is acute, with the younger artist's work certainly not falling into a consistently faithful echo of his most important collaborator's innovations.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in referring intermittently to two further organising paradigms 'outside of' his artistic work Cunningham suggests not only an aesthetic-conceptual but also a socio-historical context for his practice that chimes with Cage's identification of a model societal environment for his own work. In Cage's rhetoric, as has been established, this environment consisted of essentialist constructions of both a technological era (electronic) and national situation (North American), representing his 'disinheritance' of 'non-electronic' and 'European' structures. Cunningham also demonstrated an interest – albeit often through allusion – in both of these dimensions to that chronotope-ideal as it has already been introduced through Cage.

Firstly, Cunningham indicated the profound importance of the role of post-war commercial technologies in enacting a paradigm shift for artists working in this era. There is evidence of this, for example, in his aforementioned assessment of the 1952 event, where he likened the performance environment to "contemporary society" in which there

are “all the things that you hear instantly over the television”, which “even though they are separate, they’re happening at the same time” (Duberman, 1974: 357). He has further made reference to this paradigm shift in comparing his work to that of writers such as James Joyce, which

goes from paragraphs, to sentences, down to words – and now to words themselves separated, so you don’t have even a whole word, you just have part of a word. And that is quite apparent – and seems to me quite reflected – in our technology. That doesn’t mean that they did it because of technology. It just happens that those ideas are in the air. Technology is full of this... the electronic system where they cut things so fine... you get it in television all the time.

(Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 27)

In positing the importance of an ‘electronic system’ to thinking about artistic work which, like his own, performs an abstraction of formal elements into a state of discrete coexistence, Cunningham circumscribes an historical era in which to situate his particular treatment of space. This circumscription aligns with Cage’s professed interest in the organising logic of electronic technologies, as located historically in the previous chapter through McLuhan’s identification of an ‘electronic age’.

While Cunningham is careful to avoid an outright deterministic understanding of the relationship between a technology and contemporary forms of cultural expression (‘that doesn’t mean that they did it because of technology’), this technologically defined ‘era’ is nevertheless presented, as it is in both Cage’s and McLuhan’s thought, as an essentialist construct. The impossibility of assigning objective temporal markers to the era in question is symptomatic, more broadly, of the slippages that occur in attempting to isolate stable technological ‘ages’ both according to technical-scientific developments and their subsequent cultural impact. This would explain, for example, the apparent chronological discrepancy in Cunningham’s discussion of television – developed as a broadcasting technology from the late 1920s but only reaching public ubiquity after the Second World War – in conjunction with the formal innovations of a pre-war writer such as Joyce. A

solution to dealing with such a historicising difficulty lies in understanding Cunningham's references to an 'electronic system' as being indicative not of a stable date bracket in which to root his concept of space, but of a paradigm – attendant to a particular technology – with which his spatial model shares an organising logic. Likewise, recourse to McLuhan's epithet of an 'electronic age' is employed methodologically here not as an objective measure of a chronological course but as a periodising apparatus that enables an identification of Cunningham's choreography of space with a particular mode of technological production. This approach allows for a later differentiation between Cunningham's choreographic employment of technologies and that of Forsythe. While both artists began to work in the 1990s with digital tools, only the latter produced a spatial model that embodied the experiential logic of what might correspondently be termed a 'digital age'.

In addition to specifying an historical period through the identification of and with an 'electronic system', Cunningham alludes to a national situation, and political sensibility, for his spatial model through references to what might be termed a 'democratic system'. There are instances in interview when Cunningham accounts for the nature of his practice through recourse to ideals already discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the social space of Black Mountain College. Black Mountain provided one of Cunningham's formative working environments, housing his practice soon after his emergence as an independent dance maker and up until the formal establishment of his troupe in 1953. Cunningham's statement, made four years after the inauguration of his company at Black Mountain, that his "feeling about dance continuity came from the view [...] that we live in a democratic society [and that] people... are mutually independent of, and related to each other", and his description in 1980 of his company's 'politics' as representing "a kind of individual behaviour in relation to yourself doing what you do and allowing the

other person to do whatever he does”, testify to his identification with a set of organising precepts that underpinned the Black Mountain concept of democracy (Cunningham, 1997a: 101; Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 164). Following from Cunningham’s comments, this chapter builds on the previous contextualisation of Cage’s practice against a North American, progressive formulation of democratic individualism, in order to understand Cunningham’s spatial model as pertaining to a pre-existing social ideal.

The two contextualising rationales offered in Cunningham’s intimations of a social time and place for his work are of particular interest given the conceptual remit of this study because they facilitate a location of his spatial model in its socio-historical landscape. Rather than resting analytically, for example, at the acknowledgment that Cunningham was influenced by a Cagean appropriation of Zen philosophy, this chapter proceeds by taking Cunningham’s references to a social space outside of his work as a pretext for dealing with a necessary subsequent question: why might a North American artist working in the middle of the twentieth century make work compatible with the Zen concepts of unimpededness and interpenetration? In the light of this methodological orientation, the intentions of this chapter are twofold. The first is to identify a consistent manifestation of the twin principles of coexistence and flexibility in Cunningham’s oeuvre, viewed specifically through the prism of the four self-identified methods that structured his sixty-five-year career. The second is to read these principles – through their comparative placement alongside four spatial models already detailed in this thesis – as indicating a conception of space specific to this artist’s working chronotope.

For purposes of conceptual clarity and chronological coherence, the following analysis is split into two stages. The first deals with the earliest two choreographic methods: the separation of the formal elements and the employment of chance procedures. These two

belong together not only because their inception occurred within one decade of each other (framing the consolidation of the Cunningham Company in the early 1950s) but also because they became co-dependent as a means of establishing his spatial model. These two methods are also useful for highlighting the embodiment in Cunningham's collaborations and choreography of a politically-inflected conception of space, pronounced as such through his departure from the two technical antecedents detailed in Chapters One and Two of this thesis. The second analytical stage of this chapter deals with the final two choreographic methods: the use of video and film, and of digital tools, both of which facilitated an amplification of the spatial model formalised in earlier stages of Cunningham's career. These later methods provide a joint frame through which to assess the embodiment in Cunningham's choreographic space of an organising logic associated with a particular technology. This, ultimately, provides a point of transition from the logic of mechanisation (as outlined in Chapter Three) to that of digitisation (as will be discussed in relation to Forsythe's practice in Chapter Six).

Collaborative autonomy

Coexistence was first introduced to Cunningham's practice by the decision to separate the musical composition from the choreographic process, which enabled the music to be conceived of as "a second and independent layer coexisting with the dance, occurring in the same time but in the ear rather than the eye".⁸⁹ This method was developed during Cunningham's early collaborative work with Cage in New York in the mid-1940s, a time at which the former was making his conclusive transition from dancer to choreographer-performer. Cunningham was already known for his technically buoyant performances with The Martha Graham Dance Company, with which he danced as a soloist between 1939 and 1945 (Denby, 1998: 27). The lightness with which Cunningham's particular embodiment of Graham's vocabulary was identified is certainly coextensive with his

decision to supplement his training at this time by taking classical class at SAB, as arranged for by Kirstein and Graham (Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 38). Cunningham's technique might be understood as being descended from these two New York strands of technical dance training (Graham's technique and the Petersburg-derived *danse d'école* taught in Balanchine's school), as will be discussed later in relation to his use of chance procedures. However, these two forms also provide anti-models against which he defined his earliest choreographic practice. Tantalizing to his transition from Graham-dancer to independent choreographer was Cunningham's decision to distance himself from "the old forms" sustained in "the modern dance" of his teachers and contemporaries, and to seek new "formal methods of choreography" (Cunningham, 1998c: 38). These would no longer depend on the classical structuring tropes of "theme and variation, and associated devices – repetition, inversion, development, and manipulation", as they were maintained in both the neoclassical Balanchine-Stravinsky partnership and the expressionist Graham-Horst aesthetic (ibid.). The employment with Cage of a hitherto uncharted time structure that facilitated the separation of the music and the dance was, therefore, an early means by which Cunningham positioned his practice for a supersession of the existing New York dance vanguard.

The method of composing according to a time structure had been developed independently by Cage in his musical compositions of the late 1930s, but was first used by Cunningham and Cage together in their creation of the solo dance *Root of Unfocus*, performed as part of their debut joint programme of music and dances presented at the Humphrey-Weidman studio, New York, on 5 April 1944. At this exploratory stage of collaborative autonomy, the choreographic and musical scores did retain a formal relationship of sorts in that both were composed according to a pre-determined time structure, where, at the beginning and end of each of the three sections, Cunningham's

and Cage's respective phraseologies would coincide. Within the three sections themselves, however, no relationship was forged between the music and dance with each unfolding independently from the other (Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated [4]). Within a decade, this method had developed even further towards a disassociation of movement and music. *Symphonie pour un homme seul* (later renamed *Collage*), which was commissioned by Leonard Bernstein for the Brandeis University Arts Festival of August 1952 and performed to excerpts from Paul Schaeffer's *musique concrète* work of the same name, was the first occasion on which the only elements common to the music and dance were the length of time and the perimeters of the space in which each played (E. Brown et al., 1998: 49). Remy Charlip, a founding member of Merce Cunningham Dance Company, has recalled that Cunningham's tendency to rehearse his works in silence – relying only on a stop-watch for time-keeping – began with the development of this production, which was rehearsed to last a precise duration of twenty-seven minutes and thirty-six seconds (ibid.: 56). Cunningham has said of the conceptual resonances of this logical conclusion to the music/dance separation that “time became a mutual field in which both the sound and movement progressed” (Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated [13]).

The notion of a ‘mutual field’ is central to understanding how the separation of the music and the dance – as developed methodologically in this early work – corresponds to Cunningham's broader production of space. The placement of the music and the dance as autonomous elements in a shared performance environment has served as a model for the separation of all formal elements in Cunningham's dance works. His productions exhibit not only a temporal coexistence of the dance and music but also a spatial coexistence of the dance and décor, of the constituent choreographic sections of a work, of the individual dancers of an ensemble, and of anatomical zones of the body. The notion of a mutual field is additionally important in that it is contingent on the spatial model expressed in

Cunningham's 'no fixed points' statement. Cunningham has said of the transposition of the music/dance separation across his entire theatrical outlook: "I think it is essential now to see all the elements of theater as both separate and interdependent. The idea of a single focus to which all adhere is no longer relevant. [...] No one point is more important than another" (Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 140). In viewing the separation of theatrical elements as a route to creating a mutual field in which the constituent foci retain equal centrality and an interpenetrating dynamic, Cunningham sets up a correspondence between this first choreographic method and the abiding principles of coexistence and flexibility through which his spatial model is delineated here.

Cunningham's depiction of the theatrical elements as both 'separate' (coexisting) and 'interdependent' (cooperative in their respective flexibility) also describes the kind of collaborative model tested in Cage's 1952 event. Through Cunningham's recollection of that performance as "a complexity of events that the spectators could deal with as each chose" a theatrical precedent for his choreographies can be identified (Cunningham, 1998a: 141). However, in as much as Cunningham's creation of a mutual field for the coexistence of a 'complexity of events' implies a generic extraction from Cage's mixed-media practice, it also indicates an aesthetic parting from two other formative influences: Graham's choreographic practice and the technical system of classical ballet. In an aforementioned essay titled 'Space, Time, Dance', written in the same year as Cage's Black Mountain performance, Cunningham described the problems he saw as pervading the space produced in classical ballet and American modern dance:

The classical ballet, by maintaining the image of Renaissance perspective in stage thought, kept a linear form of space. The modern American dance [...] made space into a series of lumps, or often just static hills on the stage with actually no relation to the larger space of the stage area, but simply forms that by their connection in time made a shape.

(Cunningham, 1998c: 37)

This statement can be read as a context for detailing Cunningham's overall departure from the spatial models of classical ballet and Graham's aesthetic. Through a comparative placement of Cunningham's 'mutual field' alongside the aural-visual environments produced typically through the classical and Graham models, the former's choreographic space might be defined in its very distinction to the absolutist and expressionist imperatives he describes above.

This distinction is especially clear in Cunningham's collaboration with Rauschenberg, the visual artist who produced twenty-two visual environments for the Cunningham company from 1954 until its reputation-defining world tour of 1964. Among Cunningham's multiple and long-term collaborators, Rauschenberg stands as a singularly important figure given the trajectory of this thesis, in that his participation in the 1952 event serves to emphasise the inheritance in Cunningham's productions of an individuated organising logic tested at this Black Mountain performance. The first way in which Cunningham's work with Rauschenberg demonstrates a departure from the spatial models of the former's dance antecedents is in its replacement of a 'depth' approach to configuring a performance environment with a 'field' approach. This aesthetic distinction is especially important because it concerns the spatial manifestation of Cunningham's departure from expressionism, as is illustrated in the visual environments created by Noguchi for Graham's *Frontier* and by Rauschenberg for Cunningham's *ÆON* (1961).

As discussed in Chapter Two, Noguchi's design for *Frontier* provided a psychological landscape within which Graham could locate her expressionist study of the pioneer individual. In addition to actualising a psychologically retrieved image (of Graham's childhood journey across the United States), Noguchi's set provided a spatial analogue for its deep-rooted source by, in his own words, 'sculpting a whole volume of air' with the

two, rope-formed lines of perspective that channelled the focus of this space inwards. Imagining the performance environment as a holistic expanse of space, Noguchi staged Graham's memory-image in a volume of air that could accommodate the roots of her expressional impetus for this work. This treatment of space also provides a point of technical difference between Graham's and Cunningham's respective organisation of the kinesphere, as will be discussed later in relation to chance choreography.

Exhibiting a stark divergence from Noguchi's psychological landscaping, Rauschenberg's designs for *ÆON* illustrate David Vaughan's characterisation of Cunningham's "'field' approach to the use of space, in which a number of different things may be occurring simultaneously" (Vaughan, 1998: 153). The visual environment for *ÆON* enacted a collapse of the expressionist scheme modelled by Noguchi for *Frontier* in that it consisted of disparate, unrelated elements, none of which were rooted in a shared, expressional idea. Rauschenberg's set for *ÆON* included "three small magnesium explosions [that] took place at the footlights, their smoke ascending and gradually clearing during the first few minutes [of the work]"; photo-flash bulbs attached to the dancers' wrists, triggered during *allegro* sequences; and the manoeuvring of an 'Æon machine', an object constructed by Rauschenberg that would pass, via a pulley mechanism, across the stage and above the dance action (Vaughan, 1997: 126). The Æon machine in fact provides a microcosm of Rauschenberg's entire visual scheme. Creating a 'combine' sculpture, this object was composed of an assemblage of disparate found-items (including a deconstructed umbrella frame, an exposed battery, and a suspended spotlight), which coexisted on the same frame in absence of a centrally anchoring point. Indeed, at one stage in its development, this production was to be named *Combine* (ibid.).

The performance environment created for *ÆON* follows Cage's prototypical Black Mountain model in that it established a situation for the coexistence of autonomous activities and objects that conferred equal centrality onto each. As Cunningham has similarly explained of his company's collaborative model:

What we have done in our work is to bring together three separate elements in time and space, the music, the dance and the decor, allowing each one to remain independent. The three arts don't come from a single idea which the dance demonstrates, the music supports and the decor illustrates, but rather they are three separate elements each central to itself.

(Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 137)

While both *Frontier* and *ÆON* used a scenography constituted of three-dimensional objects (both relinquishing the classical reliance upon a perspectival back-drop), the former sculpted an environment of psychological depth composed of a volume of space rooted in an expressional impulse, whereas the latter assembled a mutual field for unrelated activities, none of which cohered to produce a singularly expressible content. In other words, Cunningham's collaborative mutual field replaces the dense, 'static hills' of the expressionist space he described in 1952 as stemming from 'the personal feelings of the various American pioneers' with a broad plane for the coexistence of individuated, shifting points of action.

Copeland has offered a conceptual framework for understanding Cunningham's departure from expressionist dance, suggesting that

Cunningham, Cage, [Jasper] Johns, and Rauschenberg are the single most important pioneers of one of the great paradigm shifts in the arts of the late twentieth century: the transition from modernism to postmodernism.

(Copeland, 2004: 229)

He qualifies this more specifically by suggesting that the group's steps in this direction were located in their particular movement away from abstract expressionism, where "Cunningham is to Graham as Johns and Rauschenberg are to a painter like Pollock" (ibid.: 8). As regards the working distinction between the Graham-Noguchi depth-space

and the Cunningham-Rauschenberg mutual field, Copeland's position might certainly be offered theoretical support in Frederic Jameson's identification of a 'spatial turn' in postmodern aesthetics. Jameson writes of the hallmarks that distinguish a 'postmodernist' from a 'high modernist' organising logic: "The first and most evident is the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" (Jameson, 1984: 60). The cultural departure from high modernism is signalled in Jameson's analytical rubric – as it is in Copeland's contextualisation of Cunningham's work – by the artistic departure from expressionism. This is because the spatial manifestation of both of these transitions demonstrates a rejection of interior depth in favour of flatness of field, and the attendant rejection of a rooted and singularly constituted 'content' in favour of detached, heterogeneous, and oscillating fragments of form. In choreographic terms, this Jamesonian model would map on to the crucial distinction already made between Graham's depth- and Cunningham's field- approach to organising a performance environment: the former implying a depth of memory-time, the latter subsisting on a flattened (Jameson's 'spatialised') temporal simultaneity.

Despite the corroboration that Copeland's analytical framework finds in Jameson's delineation of the 'postmodern' logic, an alternative rationale for contextualising Cunningham's rejection of expressionist space is sought here and especially as Copeland himself is careful to acknowledge the discursive difficulty of attempting to define Cunningham's practice simply as 'postmodernist' or 'modernist' or even as straddling the two.⁹⁰ According to the theoretical orientation of this thesis, those analytical categories remain ultimately unsatisfactory for a thoroughgoing socio-historical as well as an aesthetic contextualisation of Cunningham's practice. By considering the spatial distinction between *Frontier* and *ÆON* in the light of two ideological formulations of 'the individual' previously considered in this thesis, their respective reliance on 'depth' and

‘flatness’ can be better contextualised. For Graham, the individual of *Frontier* is conceived as a lone and psychologically rooted entity – a vehicle for her expression of the essential American ‘psyche’ and forming a vital part of her search for an American-national practice. For Cunningham, on the other hand, ‘the individual’ resides most clearly in the multiple, autonomous points of authority that make up his performance environments. The congruence of what might be termed Cunningham’s aesthetic of individuation with the Black Mountain ideal of ‘democracy’ will be elaborated further in relation to Dewey’s writings later on. For now, however, Copeland’s discussion of Cunningham’s aesthetic in relation to postmodernity suggests a way in which his ‘mutual field’ aesthetic also problematises the spatial model of classical ballet.

Copeland states that “the most striking parallel between Cunningham’s work and postmodern culture more generally is undoubtedly his rejection of ‘wholeness’” (Copeland, 2004: 233). While this statement is certainly useful for reiterating Cunningham’s departure from Graham’s holistic model it also describes the distinction of Cunningham’s performance environment to the stable ‘totality’ enshrined on the classical stage. This might be brought into relief by considering the dissociative theatrical elements in another Rauschenberg collaboration, *Winterbranch* (1964), alongside the totalising visual harmony of *The Sleeping Beauty*. A point of definitive distinction between these two works can be grasped in the pinnacle moment of Petipa’s ballet, as discussed in Chapter One: the static, supported *arabesque* of Aurora and Désiré’s wedding adagio. At this point in Petipa’s depiction of the royal union, the fixed *arabesque*, the restated melody of Tchaikovsky’s score, and the bright, total illumination of the stage as framed from the proscenium arch all produce – in their shared climax – a pristine image of monarchical stability. While the classical model is predicated on a basis of aesthetic totality and permanence, the performance environment established in Cunningham’s

productions is characterised by the fragmentation and changeable arrangement of its parts.

Michelle Potter has discussed Cunningham's work with Rauschenberg as producing a flexibly configured performance environment and, in so doing, highlights one of the spatial consequences of the separation of the elements in *Winterbranch*. She states:

Rauschenberg's work for Cunningham reflects that distinctive Cunningham approach to collaboration that not only encouraged the autonomy of collaborative elements, but that allowed them to be altered in performance, even if this was often problematical.

(Potter, 1993: 20-1)

Rauschenberg was given leave to design the visual environment for *Winterbranch* independently from the other contributing elements, which were, in this case, Cunningham's choreography (exploring the mechanics of falling) and Le Monte Young's musical score, *2 sounds* (consisting of hyper-amplified sounds of ashtrays scraped against a mirror and pieces of wood against a Chinese gong) (Vaughan, 1997: 135-137). Although Rauschenberg devised costumes and properties for this work, it is his contribution of a lighting design that is of primary interest here.

Discarding a proscenium lighting rig, Rauschenberg chose to light the stage through pivoting searchlights positioned at the wings and upstage partition of the space, consequently illuminating some sections of the dance while plunging others into darkness (Potter, 1993: 16). This approach to lighting dance provides an antecedent to Forsythe's disorientating lighting schemes, as will be discussed in the following chapter. For now, however, it demonstrates the flexibility with which the coexisting elements of this production interacted, and the subsequent mutability introduced to the performance space. As related by Cunningham: "The lighting [for *Winterbranch*] is done freely each time, differently, so that the rhythms of the movements are differently accented and the shapes

differently seen, partially or not at all” (Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated, [49]). In allowing for his choreographic space to be altered by its interpenetration with Rauschenberg’s mutable lighting scheme, Cunningham not only retained a commitment to the “kind of anarchy where people may work freely together” with which he had characterised the collaborative model of *ÆON*, but also embraced a spatial impermanence that is necessarily excluded from the absolutist model of Petipa’s late Imperial works (Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated [81]).

It is important to acknowledge that Cunningham’s assertion of freedom afforded the individual participants of his productions (‘where people may work freely together’) is highly problematised by the participation of his dancers. Carolyn Brown – the dancer with whom Cunningham worked most closely during the first two decades of his company’s existence – highlights the way in which Cunningham’s dancers were certainly not ‘at liberty’ to direct their own contributions to productions such as *Winterbranch*, as were, for example, the participants of Cage’s 1952 event. She suggests:

The official Cage-Cunningham dogma requires the autonomy and freedom of each theatrical element – movement, light, sound, decor. And so the dancers, the only ones who are neither autonomous nor free, must responsibly do their work, continually at the mercy of those whose flights of fancy with gloom and glare, noise, and obstacle can inhibit their ability to dance well.

(Brown, 1975: 28)

The dancers, in other words, are the only participants who are not free to determine the material they bring to the production, behaving more as vehicles of Cunningham’s choreographic vision than as agents of creation in the same fashion as the composer or designer. Cunningham’s tendency to employ dancers as an extension of his singular choreographic authorship (very rarely using improvisation or collective movement devising) provides an important point of comparison for Forsythe’s practice, especially as regards a political-organising paradigm that might be implied in the working process.⁹¹ In

relation to a discussion of the ‘flexibility’ of Cunningham’s dance space however, Brown’s observation of the lack of freedom afforded his dancers provides a further point of clarity.

Brown objects not to a lack of co-authorship in the working process but to the sensory pressures which, during the course of Cunningham’s productions, are imposed on the dancers’ execution of the choreography. This objection serves to underline the importance of flexibility as a property of Cunningham’s choreographic space, especially as it is figured corporeally in performance. The performances given by Cunningham’s dancers were expected to be technically precise – maintaining the clarity of the spatiotemporal structures integral to the autonomous dance component – while also demonstrating the perceptual alterability of the choreographic content through its interpenetration with the other theatrical components. The flexibility of presentation inherent in Cunningham’s collaborative autonomy demonstrates a second kind of spatial ‘flattening’, this time of the ‘Renaissance perspective in stage thought’ he described in 1952 as belonging to the performance environment of classical ballet.

In classical works such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, all theatrical elements conspire to a total aural-visual harmony, reserving a principle visual focus to the centrally placed choreographic content. The technical execution of movement is expected to be both precise and consistently shaded by its neighbouring collaborative elements in an unchanging, all-over design from performance to performance, ultimately preserving the (ideal) work in an immutable and canonical stability. In Cunningham’s productions, however, the hierarchical-vertical scheme implied in the classical stage’s perspectival imperative is flattened in the creation of a horizontally articulated performance environment, organised to display not a stable climactic image where the dance content is

placed centre but a simultaneity of unfixed events that share no static point of reference. Here the dance occupies just one centre among many and accommodates its own perceptual alteration through a flexible interdependence with individuated collaborative elements, ultimately revealing a work that shifts configuration through each presentation. The ‘mutual field’ performance environment created through the separation of the elements, then, works not only as a plane for combined action that resists the psychological rooting of Graham’s expressionist space, but also as a levelling of the hierarchical visual logic of the classical model. Cunningham’s first method might be viewed as creating both a macro-environment and a compositional diagram for the continued practice of coexistence and flexibility in his following three methods of spatial production.

Chance choreography

Echoing the decision to disassociate the music and the dance, Cunningham introduced chance operations to his practice from the early 1950s as a means of forging further routes away from the dance forms to which he had been apprenticed. The employment of chance was designed so that he could circumvent the expressionist reliance upon the artist’s personal instinct and avoid the movement habits built up in his own training as a dancer. Indeed, he has said of his initial attraction to composing by chance that he was led by the desire “to find the utmost freedom from [his] own feelings” and “to break the patterns of personal remembered physical coordinations” in the choreographic process (Cunningham, 1997a: 101; 1999: 46). However, in conjunction with his evolving choreographic practice, Cunningham developed a non-chance-dependent movement technique that was drawn extensively from Graham and classical ballet, and did so in a way that continued to problematise their respective spatial models.

In keeping with the mutual field aesthetic described above, Cunningham's vocabulary is made up, in part, of a coexistence of Graham and classical tropes – for which he composited postures, shapes, and steps from each system. He also appropriated elements from each that most clearly accommodate a 'flexible' articulation of space, borrowing an elastic spine from Graham and a capacity for mercurial foot-work and joint motility from the SAB 'version' of the *danse d'école*.⁹² The exclusions made from each technique in the development of his own training system further underline Cunningham's aesthetic priorities in this respect. In contrast to Graham technique, a Cunningham class begins 'on the feet', lifting the dancer from the earthbound rootedness of Graham's movement grammar and preparing for the limb-dexterity (facilitated also in the vertical carriage borrowed from classical technique) with which they might transport themselves rapidly through space. By the same token, the opening spinal 'bounces' of a Cunningham class demonstrate a technical departure from the spatial stability enshrined in classical ballet. The five spinal shapes that form the basis of Cunningham's technique – upright, curve, arch, twist, and tilt – depose the fixed orientation and static clarity of the five classical positions, in that the Cunningham 'five' imply both the multidirectionality and the kinetic possibility of the spine. Moreover, by isolating his combined and tensile vocabulary into a database of sorts to be fed through chance-ordering processes, Cunningham further removed the contextual spatial imperatives of these two forms of his technical parentage. Indeed, the senses of speed, multidirectionality, and anatomical juxtaposition cultivated in Cunningham technique exist in a reciprocal relationship with his development of chance operations into a formalised choreographic method.

The inception of chance in Cunningham's practice was similar to that of collaborative autonomy in that it followed a precedent set independently by Cage. The latter had formalised the use of chance in his own musical compositions after adopting the

divination system prescribed in the *I Ching*, a new English translation of which he had been given by the young musician Christian Wolff late in 1950 (Fetterman, 1996: 18). However, where the music/dance disassociation was evolved in Cunningham's own practice through a direct (albeit autonomous) collaboration with Cage, his appropriation of chance operations was taken directly into his own field, where it was "related", in Cunningham's words, "explicitly to the choreography" (Cunningham, 1997b: 276). Cunningham made nascent experiments with chance in 1951 before presenting, the following year, his first work in which the movement continuity was determined fully by chance operations.⁹³ *Suite By Chance* was performed by an ensemble of five dancers in coexistence with Wolff's *Music for Magnetic Tape*, and was first shown in an informal preview in the winter of 1952 in New York, before receiving its official premiere at the Festival of Contemporary Arts in Urbana, Illinois in March 1953 (Vaughn, 1997: 69).

In a process that matched how Cage was currently working with chance and sound, Cunningham created information charts for this work that specified individual segments of movement (devised within the terms of his vocabulary), in addition to a variety of time durations and spatial orientations. He then threw coins to determine how the choreographic variants specified in the charts would be grouped, establishing not only the order, duration, and orientation of each movement segment, but also, as recalled by cast-member Charlip, "the number of dancers on stage, exits and entrances [and whether each segment would be performed in] unison or [by an] individual" (Charlip, 1998: 41). This method of composition removed Cunningham's dual reliance upon a determining 'idea' for the development of the choreography, and the habits of movement native to his training as a dancer and personal kinetic 'instinct'. With this method the choreographer was presented with a new means by which he might "short-circuit... the logic of traditional phrasing" contained in his two technical dance antecedents, in that he was able

to build his choreography as a coexistence of autonomous movement units, configured in neither a temporally- nor a spatially- totalising framework (Banes, 1993b: 27). This approach to building a dance work is, in turn, directly related to the choreographic formalisation of Cunningham's spatial model.

A particular audience seating plan was devised during the development of *Suite By Chance*: one that broke from the frontal presentation as maintained in the viewing scheme of both the classical and Graham models. This plan was adopted in earnest during the inaugural performances of Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Black Mountain, when the first two movements of the work were performed by Cunningham, Brown, Charlip, Viola Farber, and Jo Anne Melsher on 22 August 1953 in the dining hall described by Cunningham in the previous chapter.⁹⁴ Taking a spatial configuration not unlike Cage's 1952 event, which had been performed the previous summer in the very same room, the audience was placed on all four sides of the dance action, producing a space in which Cunningham's coexistent and flexible organising logic entered the choreographic structure. In discussing the origins of this seating-plan, Cunningham has underlined the correspondence between his use of chance and his treatment of space:

In applying chance to space I saw the possibility of multidirection. Rather than thinking in one direction i.e. to the audience in a proscenium frame, direction could be four-sided and up and down. [...] The dancer is at a given point in the dancing area. That point in space and or that particular moment in time concurrently is the center for him and he stays or moves to the next point to the next center. Each dancer had this possibility. So, from moment to moment and from point to point, the dancers moved separately.

(Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated [28-37])

Cunningham's employment of chance operations for *Suite By Chance* led his dancers to perform choreography that both demanded flexibility in their spatial orientation ('the possibility of multidirection') and placed them in a state of coexistence with one another ('the dancers moved separately'). This is because he was able to organise the space

through a decision-making process that neither favoured a pre-determined, centralising orientation (such as that implied in the classical proscenium frame) nor worked in service of a spatially rooting expressional content (as in Graham's work with narrative, character archetypes, or psychological states). Through the employment of chance, then, Cunningham produced a movement continuity that configured space as a series of equally central and equally shifting locations, each of which could be viewed from any angle. This facilitated the embodiment of a 'no fixed points' ideal in the choreographic structure itself.

The compositional method for *Suite By Chance* had ultimately transposed the diagram of collaborative autonomy discussed above to Cunningham's organisation of movement, producing a microcosm of the mutual field performance environment. In so doing, it restated the kind of space explored by Cage in that same Black Mountain location one year previously. It is through its spatial congruity with Cage's earlier event that Cunningham's practice might be situated within the contextualising framework of the present study. In the very nature of its repudiation of both absolutist and expressionist organising logics, Cunningham's choreographic space can be viewed as exhibiting a relational model already identified in the institutional credo of Black Mountain College. By considering the type of bodily configuration produced through his chance-generated choreography in the light of the theory underpinning the Black Mountain community ideal, a politically pronounced concept of space might be understood as pervading his ideal of 'no fixed points'.

During a passage of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey offers a definition of a democratic social space that reads as a fairly accurate topography of Cunningham's performance environment. He states: "A society which makes provision for participation

in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic” (Dewey, 1997: 99). The paradigm outlined here specifies a collection of participants who come together not in hierarchical stratification of value nor in ossification of position, but rather in a mobile and alterable configuration in which everybody’s agency is equal. A formal embodiment of this model can be observed in the mutual field performance environment as already defined in relation to Cunningham’s first method. It also appears quite acutely in the type of bodily organisation produced through Cunningham’s chance operations, and especially so when viewed in contradistinction to the corporeal logic of the classical-absolutist and Graham’s expressionist models.

The displacement of the spatial wholeness that is characteristic of both the hierarchical classical model and the rooted Graham model can be seen in the kinespheric arrangement of an early work Cunningham made on himself. *Solo* (later renamed *Untitled Solo*) also received its premiere at Black Mountain on 22 August 1953 and was performed by Cunningham with David Tudor’s performance of Wolff’s *For Piano I* (Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 80). Cunningham employed a chance process similar to that used for the composition of *Suite By Chance*. However, instead of designating entire segments of movement that could be ordered into a spatiotemporal continuity, he applied this process to localised areas of the body. Isolating anatomical zones (‘head’, ‘arms’, ‘torso’, ‘legs’) and devising a gamut of movements and positions for each, he threw coins to determine not only the continuity of these movements in time and space, but also if and how the discrete movement units might be layered on top of one another. Cunningham has explained of this process, which almost resulted in a non-realizable work:

The separate movements were arranged in continuity by random means, allowing for the super-imposition (addition) of one or more, each having its own rhythm and

time-length. But each succeeded in becoming continuous if I could wear it long enough, like a suit of clothes. Learning how to wear one was another thing. [...] I was trying to practice it on one of those hot, muggy days, rehearsing in the steamy dining-hall with David Tudor at the piano, I had stopped in fatigue and despair and he said ‘this is clearly impossible, but we’re going right ahead and do it anyway’.

(Cunningham, 1968: unpaginated [140])

The reason why this work was so extraordinarily difficult to perform, even for a technically gifted dancer such as Cunningham, was that its means of composition required, in his words, a “reorder[ing] of the whole coordinating system”(Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 80). To sufficiently ‘wear’ this dance Cunningham had to learn how to composite autonomously devised positions, transition-steps, rhythms, durations, and orientations – none of which shared a unifying spatiotemporal referent – within a singular movement phrase.

The poly-coordination system cultivated in the development of this early work demonstrates Cunningham’s sharpest departure from the kinespheric space of the classical model and, by extension, from the political worldview that this model embodies. In contrast to *Untitled Solo*, the coordination system proper to classical ballet requires that the entire body works in concord, a feat that is made possible, in a technical sense, because each anatomical zone shares a singular structural referent: the centrally determined orientation implied in the proscenium frame. This total sense of space can be seen, for example, in the heightened *épaulement* of Aurora’s wedding variation, as discussed in Chapter One. While Aurora’s alternation of leg, torso, shoulder, arm, and head alignments requires a complex articulation of classical directionality, it nevertheless refers each anatomical zone to a central axis of orientation, preserving this figure within the geometry of Cunningham’s aforementioned ‘Renaissance perspective in stage thought’. When Aurora articulates the geometry of the classical square, furthermore, she carries in her kinesphere a politico-historical conception of space, as expressed with

clarity in Bossuet's seventeenth-century theorisation of the Sun King's absolutist rule.

Under this rubric, which is sustained in Aurora's signification of the 'dawn' of Imperial stability in the late-nineteenth-century Petersburg context, the body politic is unified under a central and pinnacle point of power, according to whose totalising authority 'everything happens in concert'.

In the very nature of its departure from the coordination system of the classical model, Cunningham's chance-generated kinesphere for *Untitled Solo* suggests an alignment with the Deweyan democratic ideal. Because of his use of chance composition, the centre was fundamentally displaced from Cunningham's choreographic space. Fracturing the total concord held in the classical body, this kinesphere is made up of multiple, simultaneous centres of action that can be viewed from any angle. As Cunningham has explained of this aspect of his spatial practice more broadly:

The space could be constantly fluid, instead of being a fixed space in which movements relate. We've grown up with ideas about a fixed space in theater to which spectator and dancer refer. But if you abandon that idea you discover another way of looking. You can see a person not just from the front but from any side with equal interest.

(Cunningham and Lesschaeve, 1985: 18)

This feature of Cunningham's practice is illustrated in the fluency with which his dances have been placed into environments that accommodate an all-round and mobile viewing aspect. In particular his *Events* – a format of production in which sections of repertory are extracted from their original contexts and performed as coexisting choreographic units – have been presented in a variety of multi-aspect spaces. They have been presented, for instance, in gymnasia, where the audience has sat on bleachers running along two sides of the performance area, and in museum and gallery spaces, where the audience is mobile and might explore different 'pockets' of dance action occurring simultaneously in separate zones of the exhibition room. *Events* have also been performed in open-air and

structurally 'open' public spaces, where the perimeters of the space are set by an amorphous and fluctuating crowd. Even in his frequent presentation of *Events* on the proscenium stage Cunningham's dancers continue to move as if the audience were on all sides, so that each and every direction they face during the course of a movement phrase becomes the front and centre for that very instant in the dance.⁹⁵

Cunningham's displacement of a central and static point of focus for both dancer and spectator presents an advanced choreographic statement of the visual scheme expressed in Cage's 1952 event, where all viewing positions were held to be 'equally good since from every seat you would see something different'. In allowing for the equal centrality and the fluid arrangement of its constituent parts, this type of space exhibits the particular relational model that underpins Dewey's progressive delineation of the democratic social space. Owing to its arrangement of movement according to a chance decision-making process that refutes the permanent and centralising aesthetic of classical ballet, Cunningham's practice presents an image of mutual action in which all parts participate 'on equal terms' and move through a constant 'flexible readjustment' in their mutual space. In the same way that the classical corporeal logic expresses the political metaphors of its foundational social space, Cunningham's chance-generated organisation of the moving body, which was developed initially in *Suite by Chance* and *Untitled Solo* at Black Mountain College, produced a space correspondent with a social ideal that pervaded this incipient working environment.

While Cunningham's departure from Graham's kinespheric space does not suggest a deep-structural displacement of a political paradigm as does his fragmentation and mobilisation of the classical model, it suggests a further way in which his aesthetic might be understood as embedded in the political culture theorised by Dewey and aspired to at

Black Mountain. In Graham's technical system movement is coordinated through a harnessing of breath rhythms and most distinctively so in the contraction/release dyad that roots her choreography in the internal processes of the body. This presentation of movement as an exteriorisation of deeply set interior transitions provided the technical lynchpin of Graham's expressionist aesthetic. In the same way that Rauschenberg's set for *ÆON* enacted a collapse of the kind of space modelled in the Graham/Noguchi performance environment, Cunningham's disconnected kinesphere as typified in *Untitled Solo* removed the holistic, expressional imperative of Graham's movement grammar and presented a body made up of autonomous and collectively non-expressive parts. This departure from Graham's model emphasises the alignment of Cunningham's choreographic space with the Deweyan democratic ideal outlined in the previous chapter, in that it enabled a choreographic pronunciation of the individual.

Because Cunningham's choreography was not rooted in any expressive idea or impulse – composed, as it was, of isolated spatiotemporal manipulations arranged by 'indifferent' chance decisions – his work has been characterised as exhibiting a form of extreme impersonality, thus cultivating the object status of the human beings that perform it.⁹⁶ Cunningham's discussion of his chance choreography indicates that he was certainly aware of such a charge. However, he claimed, conversely, that his use of chance actually allowed the individual person to become apparent in the work:

This method might lead one to suspect the result as being possibly geometric and 'abstract', unreal and non-human. On the contrary... it is no more abstract than any human being is... and moreover allows each dancer to be just as human as he is. [...] My own experience while working with the dancers was how strongly [chance] let the individual quality of each of them appear, naked, powerful and unashamed.
(Cunningham 1997d: 8; 1968: unpaginated [21])

Speaking to his well-known anti-expressionist aphorism, "they are rather than being someone, doing something", Cunningham's chance procedures removed any expressive

imperative imposed from without, calling, instead, upon each of his dancers to perform the disconnected and carefully neutralized movement material simply ‘as’ themselves (Brockway, 1974). In displacing Graham’s expressionist bodily coordination, Cunningham’s chance choreography enabled the individuality of each of his dancers to be featured as a robust aspect of their performance of his work, allowing each to display personal autonomy in their performance simply *of* spatial and temporal transitions and not *as* a vehicle for a remotely determined expressional content.

The broader spatial ramification of Cunningham’s concern with his dancers’ ‘individuality’ is made especially clear in his choreography for the ensemble, where the dancing group is presented as a coexistence of autonomous soloists who are, nevertheless, associated through the chance interpenetration of their respective movement patterns. Vernon Shetley has characterised the work of Cunningham as “an attempt to imagine a form of human society that reconciles individuality and community”, and a pronunciation of the individual within the group is especially clear in Cunningham’s employment of unison dancing (Shetley, 1989: 73). Cunningham’s unison phrases in performance often exhibit discrepancies in the dancers’ respective plotting of space and time, representing a sharp contrast to the uniform spatial articulation required from the classical *corps de ballet*. This effect might be accounted for by turning to company dancer Daniel Madoff, who explains “this work allows you to be exactly who you are, [you’re just being told] what the step is, how much time it takes [...] and everything else is up to you” (Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation, 2009a). Even in a phrase where the dancers move according to an identical choreographic design, Cunningham’s commitment to the difference of each is clear. In this type of ensemble dancing, each person may perform as a distinct individual and not, as is the case with the classical *corps*, as a duplicate of their co-dancers. Indeed, Cunningham himself has indicated that he is interested in “not the

sameness of one person to another, but the difference, not a *corps de ballet*, but a group of individuals acting together” (Cunningham, 1999: 42). The presentation of his company as a group of individuals, all of whom have the creative agency to determine the way in which they perform their prescribed movement phrase, endorses a firmer placement of Cunningham’s space in relation to the democratic ideal articulated in Dewey’s thought.

Cunningham’s presentation of the unison group ultimately offers a reconciliation of communality and individuality, in that the dancers execute a shared movement vocabulary but do so in a way that asserts their difference and agency as autonomous artists. However, like Dewey’s organic union of individuals and much like Rice’s emphasis on ‘individuals rather than individualists’ in the Black Mountain context, Cunningham’s ensemble is not presented as an atomisation of the whole whereby the pronunciation of the individual is achieved at the expense of communality. His work does not consist simply of solos, nor does his use of ensemble work consist strictly of kinetic counterpoint, in which each dancer would perform something always structurally different from the rest. Rather Cunningham’s regularly employed unison phrases show individual autonomy to be absolute but nevertheless define it as such through action which is fundamentally common to the group. This practical manifestation of a ‘group of individuals acting together’, accentuated by the freedom with which each dancer may interpret their identical, chance-generated material, exhibits a principle of communal action that was cultivated at Black Mountain College, as articulated in Rice’s Deweyan aspirations to an education ‘for and in democracy’.

It is important to emphasise at this stage that, given its lack of generative, consistent, and functional proximity to an institutionalised societal programme, Cunningham’s spatial aesthetic should not be thought of as the instrument of a political worldview in the same

way that the classical model was characterised in the first chapter of this thesis.

Nonetheless, the formative role played, at a crucial juncture in his career, by an institution that became as much a testing ground for a social ideal as it did an educational facility, suggests a pretext for contextualising his spatial model in relation to a compatible strand of political thought. In a statement made four years after the founding of his company at Black Mountain, Cunningham described his work as speaking to a ‘democratic’ social order. After a public demonstration of *Untitled Solo* in 1957 he stated:

My own feeling about dance continuity came from the view that life is constantly changing and shifting, that we live in a democratic society, and that people and things in nature are mutually independent of, and related to each other.

(Cunningham, 1997a: 101)

The point of particular importance here is that Cunningham’s depiction of a ‘democratic’ society dovetails with the one provided by Dewey in that both emphasise the fundamental independence of the individual in conjunction with their integral relationship to others.

As with Dewey’s elaboration of the democratic ideal, Cunningham’s vision of a choreographic practice germane to a democratic social space rests upon an endowment of independence to each individual. However, again like Dewey’s ‘ethics’ of democracy, in which ‘men’ are understood as such “only when in intrinsic relations to men”, Cunningham’s spatial practice is democratically formulated not because it is atomised, but because each individual unit – be it a human collaborator, a member of the dancing ensemble, a choreographic segment, or an anatomical zone – exists as an autonomous participant of common work (Dewey, 1969: 231). For this reason, the Black Mountain ideal of a democratic community might be identified as offering an institutional ancestry for Cunningham’s practice. This institution provided not only a material site for the nascent formalisation of his spatial model but also aspired towards a societal diagram which, like this choreographer’s organisation of bodies in space, expresses a distinctive conception of democracy. Cunningham’s explicit address of his work to a ‘democratic

society' in the years following his company's inauguration can be situated concretely and specifically in this light. In presenting a kinetic space in which individuated and equally important points are cooperative in their respective flexibility, Cunningham imagined a relational model that existed both in Cage's prototypical event and in the form of human association theorised by Dewey. Likewise, observing the institutional ancestry of Cunningham's spatial model provides a basis from which to re-route Copeland's contextualisation of what he terms Cunningham's "collage" aesthetic (Copeland, 2004: 166). Assessing the political significance of Cunningham's practice, Copeland identifies its engagement in a "politics of perception" because of its circumvention of spatial centrality, expressional singularity, and, by extension, aesthetic didacticism (ibid.: 16-17, 247-262). However, rather than locating the political resonances of this spatial model in an aesthetically plural paradigm of postmodernist multiplicity, its coexistent and flexible properties can be more decisively situated in relation to the individualist ideal of democracy that was formulated by Dewey and practised in the site that fostered the foundation of the Cunningham company.

The twin principles of coexistence and flexibility continued to be manifested in Cunningham's collaborative and chance practice up until the end of his career, formalising a distinctive model of space. However, this same model was amplified after he discovered two new methods of composition and began to work, from the mid-1970s onwards, with technological devices for the presentation and devising of his choreography. Cunningham's production of dance for the camera and his later use of computers offered him new ways to realise his ideal of 'no fixed points in space'. As Chris Salter has suggested, Cunningham's turn to video, film, and software is directly related to his spatial aesthetic:

Given Cunningham's propensity for the separation of artistic elements and his interest in decentering the spectator's perception through processes of simultaneity

and chance, it is not surprising that he was soon drawn to the possibilities that electronic and, later, computational systems could provide.

(Salter, 2010: 236)

Salter's identification of the compatibility of these systems with the hallmarks of Cunningham's spatial model – as well as with the first two choreographic methods that enabled it – can certainly be corroborated through an analysis of the space produced through his technological practice. Additionally, Cunningham's aforementioned association of his work with 'the electronic system where they cut things so fine' is certainly useful in explaining his attraction to working with such technologies. However, these statements also offer a pretext for viewing Cunningham's production of space more broadly in the light of the electronic paradigm already discussed in relation to the 1952 event and Cage's devotion to McLuhan. As such, McLuhan's thought is employed here for contextualising Cunningham's technological practice because it supports a broader trajectory of this thesis. While Cunningham worked with mechanical, electronic, and digital devices during the latter half of his career, his spatial aesthetic remained largely equivalent to McLuhan's description of the electronic paradigm. This aspect of his spatial production provides, in turn, a comparative frame for the analysis of Forsythe's own work with digital media in the following and final chapter.

Video and film

From the early 1960s, Cunningham began to make dances for the screen, a presentational device understood here through Lev Manovich's definition of it as a "rectangular surface that frames a virtual world and that exists within the physical world of a viewer without completely blocking her visual field" (Manovich, 2001: 16). Cunningham's choreography for the screen evolved through three stages. The first represents a period in which he was commissioned to create works for television, starting in 1961 with *Suite de danses* – filmed and broadcast by Société Radio-Canada – and peaking in 1974 when Merrill

Brockway invited him to create *A Video Event* for the CBS series *Camera Three*. This work expanded the variety of ways his choreography could be displayed to its audience, as was emphasised by Cunningham in his address to camera at the very beginning of that 1974 broadcast. He explained: “For me dancing is movement in time and space and any space is possible. A theatre, church, outdoors, a gymnasium, a museum or a television studio” (Brockway, 1974). This early broadcast represents the transition to the second stage of Cunningham’s choreography for the screen and the first time in which he would work on a recording with Atlas.

Since the early 1970s, Atlas provided stage management and design for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. In the autumn of 1974 he collaborated with Cunningham in the production of their first ever video-dance work, *Westbeth*, filmed in and named for the Manhattan studio that had been the company’s permanent home since 1971.⁹⁷

Through the medium of video – a technology for the capture, storage, manipulation, and distribution of images, made commercially available from the mid-1960s – Cunningham found a new means of expanding his choreography of space through a variety of techniques related to the capture of visual material and its treatment in post-production. He collaborated with Atlas in the exploration of this medium for over a decade, although video was not the only screen medium with which these two artists jointly worked. The third stage of Cunningham’s choreography for the screen is represented in his work with film, an older recording technology dating from the late nineteenth century. In 1979 Cunningham and Atlas co-directed *Locale*, their first dance for film, and after Atlas’s departure from the company in the mid-1980s, Cunningham went on to make more film-dances with his first resident filmmaker’s one-time assistant, Elliot Caplan.⁹⁸

In his statement of 1994 Cunningham identified this discovery of video and film as forming the third major ‘event’ of his career. He has similarly expressed the considerable impact that this discovery had on his production of space. In 1984 he stated that

putting dance in camera is different from placing dance on the stage. The proscenium stage is a fixed space and all movement can relate to it. With the moving camera, the space itself can change, not only the dancers in it.⁹⁹

The prospect of being able to ‘change’ the space in which dancers move, as they move, was the important new possibility that Cunningham was able to explore through his work with video and film. Through these media he changed the ‘space itself’ in a way that heightened the principles of coexistence and flexibility developed in his earlier practice. Through his use of film, which he came to employ in his work only after his experiments with video, Cunningham made pronounced use of ‘the moving camera’ mentioned above and an editing style in which the spatial continuity of the moving image was interrupted through ‘cuts’ made between different camera angles and distances. Both of these camera-specific techniques enabled a presentation of the space within a frame that was itself mobile. This frame-mobility introduced a heightened sense of ‘flexibility’ to Cunningham’s choreographic space as it is presented to the viewer, an effect that will be discussed in relation to Cunningham and Caplan’s 35mm film of 1992, *Beach Birds for Camera*. Through his use of video, on the other hand, Cunningham was able to make use of a different kind of post-production technique. Compositing, which is difficult to execute in work with celluloid, allows for images drawn from different material-spatial contexts to be layered over the top of each other within a singular virtual frame. The superimposition of images within a static frame introduced a heightened sense of ‘coexistence’ to Cunningham’s choreographic space, as will be discussed in relation to his second video-dance made with Atlas, *Blue Studio: Five Segments* (1975–6).

Cunningham's use of these technologies not only accentuated the principles of coexistence and flexibility in his work but also demonstrates how they equate to the logic of organisation delineated in McLuhan's electronic paradigm. As outlined in the previous chapter, McLuhan's identification of a spatiotemporal shift enacted by the ubiquity of electronic media in the mid-twentieth century rests upon two kinds of dimensional plurality: 'plurality-of-times succeed[ing] uniformity-of-time', and a 'pluralism of centers' succeeding 'a centralist structure'. Cunningham's 'coexistence', as developed in his use of video, is commensurate with McLuhan's electronic hallmark of temporal simultaneity in that it created a composite of multiple spatial layers existing 'at once' within a single frame. Likewise, although film might be considered emblematic of an older mode of technological production (mechanisation), Cunningham's employment of it to create a flexible space through the mobilisation of the camera frame equates to McLuhan's electronic 'pluralism of centers' in that it enacts a decentralisation of a static-frame orientation.¹⁰⁰

Before moving on to a fuller analysis of Cunningham's production of space in video and film it remains important to situate the correspondence of his spatial model with McLuhan's electronic paradigm in the technological-historical trajectory of the present study. As has been established, both Schlemmer and Cunningham made very definite use of abstraction in that both employed a spatial logic through which constituent parts were separated from the whole. However, each did so in a way that reflects their individual apprehension of a specific mode of technological production. Schlemmer, for instance, perceived the 'miracle of abstraction' in mechanised industry and borrowed this logic for a treatment of space, which he arranged in a sequential and centralised manner as would correspond, for example, to a Taylorist production of the human body. Cunningham, on the other hand, witnessed a similar process of abstraction occurring in the 'electronic

system where they cut things so fine', and borrowed this logic for his choreographic space, which exhibits a coexistent and flexible aesthetic commensurate with McLuhan's electronic hallmarks of simultaneity and decentralisation. Through a comparison of Cunningham's work for video and film with the type of abstracted space produced in Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*, the importance for the former of a technologically derived spatial logic can be highlighted. Furthermore, the affinity that has been identified by scholars between these two artists might be refined through understanding their differing forms of abstraction as pertaining to their respective historical proximities to differing modes of technological production.¹⁰¹

Blue Studio: Five Segments was Cunningham and Atlas's second collaborative project for videotape, and was produced for WNET/TV New York in October of 1975 (Vaughan, 1997: 194). As was the case with each of their works for screen, Cunningham and Atlas took this project as an opportunity to explore "a particular point about movement and camera possibilities", selecting, in this case, a post-production technique known as chroma key compositing.¹⁰² This technique had been introduced to editing processes after the introduction of electronic recording technologies in the 1950s and has been defined by Manovich thus:

One of the most basic techniques used today in any video and television production, keying refers to combining two different image sources together. Any area of uniform color in one video image can be cut out and substituted with another source.
(Manovich, 2001: 150)

The title of *Blue Studio* is a direct reference to the process of chroma keying, this technique becoming not only the method but also the subject of the work. A small studio, which had been covered from wall to floor in blue pigment, was used as the physical location for the capture of the work's dance content, which itself was composed entirely of solos performed by Cunningham. The uniform colour of the original, 'material' context for the dance action enabled the cut and substitution process Manovich describes above so

that a variety of different backdrops could be layered behind the dance action as presented on screen. These backdrops introduced movement to the fixed-frame environment and varied from tracking shots of urban side streets and a coastal scene, to an earlier black and white film of Cunningham's company performing.

However, the culmination of *Blue Studio*'s exploration of chroma key compositing occurs in the final section of the video, where six separate 'layers' of action are superimposed within the same short sequence. Five of these layers are made up of a recording of Cunningham dancing a solo (a different recording and different movement content for each) and the sixth is an inserted stationary background: the same 'blue studio' in which the dance action had originally been captured and which would have ordinarily been 'keyed out' to make way for a different virtual backdrop. The result of this medium-referential trick is to organise the on-screen environment as a space not dissimilar to the mutual field created in Cunningham's stage productions. Not only does the dance action consist of multiple, autonomous solos (five 'Merce Cunninghams', dancing simultaneously), but also the virtual environment that makes up the screen image is, itself, constituted of "disjointed spaces", each of which form an autonomous layer of the image (Manovich, 2001: 153). While, in one sense, the chroma key technique executes a pronounced melding of six different spatial contexts, the simultaneous appearance of multiple Merce Cunninghams (an effect which is impossible to create, of course, without the employment of a virtual environment of some sort) draws attention to the very separateness of these layers and their disassociation from one another. Furthermore, this use of compositing for the dissociative layering of bodies within a single frame provides an amplification of the anatomical compositing technique developed by Cunningham with chance operations. The sense of separate spatial contexts coexisting simultaneously in one location has been observed in relation to *Untitled Solo* by Copeland who, having seen the

revival of this work in 1968 commented that Cunningham's "head, arms, and legs appeared so oblivious to one another that they could have been grafted together from three different bodies" (Copeland, 2004: 31). With his use of video and its enhanced compositing capacity, Cunningham was able, by the mid-1970s, to create a disjointed space in which the visual content was indeed constituted of five different 'versions' of his own body, each layered over the other in a discrete coexistence within the same (virtual) location.

The significance of this accented coexistence for understanding Cunningham's work in the light of McLuhan's electronic paradigm can be made clear through its comparison with Schlemmer's earlier strand of bodily abstraction. At first glance, the type of composited kinesphere Cunningham made for earlier works such as *Untitled Solo* appears to match precisely the kind of abstraction Schlemmer had previously defined as being emblematic of his mechanical age, where components are 'disconnected from an existing whole'. However, when viewed as part of a continuum in Cunningham's work that is carried through his later appropriation of video compositing, this spatial coexistence might be understood as representing a distinct departure from Schlemmer's mechanically informed mode of abstraction. As discussed in Chapter Three, Schlemmer's diary entry of 1915 and the final variation of the *Triadic Ballet* present an image of anatomical abstraction. In both of these contexts, Schlemmer's disconnected components were conceived as existing in sequence and were presented in a serial form that ultimately reconstituted the entirety of the existing whole. In both *Untitled Solo* and *Blue Studio*, Cunningham, like Schlemmer, disconnected spatial components from the whole, doing so through a disassociation of anatomical zones from the dancing body and of differing spatial contexts within the singular frame of the screen. However, he subsequently arranged these components through a technique of superimposition, producing a

coexistence of discrete spatial elements that replaced Schlemmer's mechanically informed, sequential taxonomy with a layered simultaneity characteristic of McLuhan's 'pluralism of times'.

Where Cunningham's early work with video enabled him to 'change the space' in which dancers move by introducing the coexistence of multiple spatial contexts to a static camera frame, his later work with film introduced movement to the frame itself. *Beach Birds for Camera* was directed by Caplan, who had collaborated with Cunningham on works for video since 1985 (Vaughan, 1997: 226). Towards the end of 1992, Cunningham and Caplan began to create a work for film and adapted the recent stage production *Beach Birds* (1991) for this purpose. They maintained its costume design by Marsha Skinner and its score, *FOUR*³, by Cage, and relocated its choreographic performance to two separate film studios based in New York (ibid.: 262). *Beach Birds for Camera* exemplifies Cunningham's use of film (as distinct from video) for playing with frame mobility.

The first way in which the frame is rendered mobile in this film is through the introduction of a roaming camera that follows dancers in and out of the performance area; Cunningham and Caplan made pronounced use of this technique in the second, colour section of the film. Essentially joining the dance itself, the camera is engaged in a tour of the space and dance action, both of which are subsequently presented from a constantly varying aspect. The effect of this technique is to displace a singular, central point to which the dance refers. In this respect, Cunningham reiterated his Einsteinian conception of space in relation to his work with film:

When the individual dancers are moving in different directions and the camera is also moving in its own different way, there is to my eye that sense of 'no fixed points in space' that Einstein spoke of.¹⁰³

The mobile camera in *Beach Birds for Camera* supports this observation, because the ‘centre’ of the space presented to the viewer remains always *relative* to the frame as it moves. As regards the original, physical space of the studio in which the film was captured, this ‘centre’ is always changing. Here, the spatial flexibility that was built into the multi-aspect viewing scheme of Cunningham’s *Events* in ‘material’ spaces was transposed for screen, in that the camera itself could now transport the viewing aspect in and around the space.

Beach Birds for Camera additionally demonstrates a flexible production of space in its post-production edit. While film follows the sequential logic of mechanisation in that it presents a ‘moving’ image through the serial projection of multiple ‘still’ frames, Cunningham and Caplan’s employment of an editing style that is disruptive of the continuity implied in the filmic succession of images produces a decentralist variation typical, instead, of McLuhan’s electronic paradigm. This might be discerned especially in the sequence of edits that opens the film. The opening shot fades from black into a close up of two white-clad torsos and three black-clad arms, one arm extending from each of the torsos into the middle of the frame and the third appearing out of focus in the distance, ‘detached’ from a body that remains out of shot [Image 11]. The first shot is followed by two dissolves showing this same partial space at different distances, neither of which establishes the spatial relationship that the bodies have to one another nor to their broader environment. A third dissolve recedes to a distanced wide angle to reveal the full performance space. Here we are shown eleven dancers in a white room with windows overlooking an urban landscape. Each dancer stands in *plié* in sixth position, swaying slightly while their arms extend diagonally downwards to the floor. No visual indication is given of whose arms and torsos we were first shown, nor from which ‘side’ of the space the previous shots were captured. This is partly owing to the fact that the dancers

each take a different orientation in the space, stating eleven different directions within the frame and producing a spatial configuration which – in a manner typical of Cunningham’s individuated ensemble as discussed earlier in this chapter – resists a static ‘front’ or central point of reference [Image 12].

The presence in this space of multiple centres is produced not only through the organisation of dancers within the frame but also by the movement of the frame itself. This final shot was not revealed by a ‘zoom out’, as would be required to situate the partial spaces shown previously within the wider scope of the whole performance environment. Rather, the dissolve serves to present an entirely new space that circumvents the establishment of any totalised and coherent territory in relation to the entire sequence of edits. While none of the dancers was shown to have travelled from their location during this sequence, the spatial discontinuity introduced through the edit produces an environment that has been flexibly established through a shifting frame and scale of reference. This production of screen space echoes the constant variation effect produced later in this film by the roaming camera, and can be aligned with McLuhan’s ‘electronic age’ by its contrast again with a feature of Schlemmer’s *Triadic Ballet*.

While Schlemmer abstracted space by using classical ballet, like Cunningham did, as a stockpile of components that could be isolated from the whole, he did so in a way that nevertheless preserved ‘the centre’ by maintaining what McLuhan has termed a “fragmentary and centralist” structure, “the essence of machine technology” (McLuhan, 1966: 8). As discussed previously, the six-by-six grid floor plan used in Series I, variation 3 of the *Triadic Ballet* accented the perspectival design of the classical model, visualising a fully perpendicular space and providing a totalising map of the performance environment. Rooting the ‘fragmentary’ effects of abstraction in a ‘centralist’ scheme,

Schlemmer presented a mechanically formulated version of classical space and maintained a singular and static point of organisation. Cunningham's *Beach Birds for Camera*, on the other hand, magnified the decentralisation of space pioneered in his earlier chance compositions in that it created multiple, shifting frames through which to visualise the performance environment. Just as chroma key compositing had enabled a heightened experience of simultaneity, displacing a serial strand of formal abstraction, so a disorientating filmic capture and edit enabled a flexible framing of the performance space, displacing a centralist structure. It is in this sense that Cunningham's touring visual frame and spatially discontinuous edit aligns with the organising logic of McLuhan's electronic paradigm. Even in his employment of a recording medium emblematic of mechanisation, Cunningham's organisation of space enacts a "decentralizing, pluralistic force" on the centralist, sequential scheme of the mechanical paradigm, resulting in "the utmost discontinuity and diversity in spatial organization" that was characteristic, for McLuhan, of spatial experience in the electronic age (McLuhan, 1966: 306; 36).

As a work for screen, *Beach Birds for Camera* is uniquely placed in Cunningham's chronology and especially so when viewed in the light of the broader technological trajectory of this thesis. Made in 1991, the choreography for the original stage production was the product of Cunningham's early work with *LifeForms*, a piece of software he had been using for two years and with the help of which he choreographed the majority of his subsequent dances. *Beach Birds for Camera*, then, represents the meeting place of the three strands of Cunningham's technological practice: his use of a mechanical recording medium (film), an 'electronic' organising logic (hinging on simultaneity and decentralisation), and a digital compositional device (the computer). The crucial point here is that each of the media central to these strands, and their correspondent mode of technological production, was employed by Cunningham in a way that amplified the

consistency of his existing spatial model with McLuhan's electronic paradigm. Through an analysis of Cunningham's fourth and final compositional technology – the computer – the maintenance in his late work of a coexistent and flexible model of space can be located as a comparative basis from which to elucidate Forsythe's later engagement with digital media.

The computer

Cunningham's work with computers is represented by his employment, since the early 1990s, of two digital applications for the composition and presentation of his choreography. The first of these applications is the choreographic software *LifeForms*, which had been developed from 1986 by a team of academics and artists working under the direction of Thomas Calvert, based within the Computer Graphics and Multi Media Research Lab at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver. In 1989 Cunningham was invited by the *LifeForms* team to begin making his own explorations with this application and, by 1991, he had created his first work choreographed, in part, on the computer (Schiphorst, 1997: 79). *Trackers* was named for the space 'tracking' function available in the *LifeForms* program, in a medium-referential designation of the dance's 'subject' not unlike his naming of *Blue Studio* sixteen years previously (Vaughan, 1997: 256).

Cunningham worked with this software application, which is now called *Danceforms*, throughout its technical development in the 1990s, and used it for choreographing almost all of his subsequent works.¹⁰⁴ In the *LifeForms* program three on-screen windows are used to plot the choreographic variables of a dance: one 'sequence editor' window for the creation of kinespheric phrases using a three-dimensional wireframe figure intended to reproduce the movement capacity of the human form; one 'spatial' window for the situation of that movement phrase in general space with or without other figures; and one 'timeline' window, for the plotting of the movement phrase in a particular duration and

rhythmic division (ibid.: 84). In using this application Cunningham was able to choreograph through the manipulation of virtual, anthropomorphic figures within a virtual environment before teaching the movement to his dancers in the rehearsal studio.

LifeForms both allowed Cunningham (who was by the early 1990s suffering from severe arthritis) to devise and test movement with greater ease, and introduced a tool for accentuating his aesthetic of coexistence and flexibility.

The second digital application embraced by Cunningham is motion capture technology, as used in his collaborations in the late 1990s with Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar of the digital art collective The OpenEnded Group. In 1997 Kaiser and Eshkar invited Cunningham to work with them on a virtual dance installation, *Hand Drawn Spaces* (1998) (Kaiser, no date, a.). This work was created through the provision of a choreographic content (composed by Cunningham and performed initially by Jared Philips and Jeannie Steele) and the computational manipulation of this content once it had been visually recorded (by Eshkar and Kaiser) for subsequent display in a screen-based installation (Copeland, 2004: 191). Copeland has described the motion-capture process that enabled the transference of the physical movement to a virtual environment:

In the initial stage of the process... [the dancers] performed in front of a digital video camera while wearing light-sensitive disks called 'motion capture sensors' attached to key joints of their bodies. The movement of these sensors was optically recorded as 'points in space' and then converted into digital 3D files. These data files capture the position and rotation of the body-in-motion without preserving its mass or musculature. Movement is thereby 'extracted' (i.e. captured)... from the performer's body.

(ibid.: 191-2)

Once the movement had been captured from Philips's and Steele's performances, it was translated into digital information that was expressed graphically on the computer-screen interface – and in the final digital projections – as animated line drawings of human-like figures. While the virtual dancers had been generated by Eshkar, the movement phrases

were the product of an editing process executed by Cunningham, who had used the computer to “re-sequence and re-combine” the digitally captured action (Kaiser, no date, b.). This particular engagement with digital technology represents, in one sense, the technical reverse of Cunningham’s earlier work with *LifeForms*. While that first process consisted in generating movement through the computer and then translating it to the dancers who would perform it in a material performance environment, the second process consisted in first capturing movement from the dancers and then translating it to digital graphic figures, which would then execute the kinetic transitions in a virtual environment. However, what both of these applications shared was their capacity to introduce to Cunningham’s practice a combination of physical and virtual space, which in turn created a new platform from which he could embellish his existing spatial model.

In 1999 Cunningham made *BIPED*, a work for the stage that employs both of these technologies to showcase movement simultaneously in a physical and a virtual environment. The ‘material’ environment of *BIPED* consists of an empty stage flanked on three sides by black curtains containing hidden openings, giving the impression of a surrounding void from which the dancers enter and into which they exit. Fourteen dancers populate this environment, moving through a shifting configuration of solos, duets, and small and large ensemble phrases. The movement content of *BIPED* was devised using *LifeForms* and the spatiotemporal continuity of the choreography was determined by a chance function built into that program. The ‘virtual’ environment consists of movement sequences executed by computer-animated figures projected onto a transparent scrim positioned at the very front of the stage. Employing a motion-capture process, this animation had been generated by Kaiser and Eshkar through the sampling of five minutes of the *BIPED* choreography performed by two dancers during the rehearsal period. The movement was then rendered as graphic figure-transitions to produce twenty-five minutes

of virtual dance, which was subsequently arranged into a temporal continuity (different each time) through chance procedures for projection during the performance. Because of the frontal placement of the scrim, the front-projection onto it, and its transparency, the effect of this particular adjacency of the material and virtual environments of *BIPED* is to produce an interpenetration of the two movement scores, displayed within a kinetically complex mutual space as delineated by the proscenium frame.¹⁰⁵

While *BIPED*'s spatially complex environment was facilitated through Cunningham's work with computation, the ways in which the digital applications were employed remained consistent with his apprehension of an earlier mode of technological production. Indeed, the choreography was informed through his preoccupation with a device emblematic of McLuhan's electronic age. Cunningham gave indications to his *BIPED* collaborators that, during the choreographic process, he had in mind the sensation of television channel-hopping. He wrote to *BIPED*'s composer Gavin Bryars that "my feeling often is that this switching of channels has become the way many people see continuity".¹⁰⁶ Although Cunningham had been working with motion-capture technology for the past two years and with *LifeForms* for the past decade, the technological paradigm that he placed at the heart of this work was the same one with which he had characterised the performance environment of Cage's 1952 event, which took place nearly half a century earlier. *BIPED* was informed by the same spatiotemporal experience as that which Cunningham perceived in the continuity of Cage's mixed-media event, with its similarity to 'contemporary society' where 'there are all the things that you hear instantly over the television [which] even though they are separate, they're happening at the same time'. The equivalent 'plurality of times' and 'pluralism of centres' with which McLuhan distinguished the electronic revolution contemporary to the commercial ubiquity of

television might, in turn, be observed in *BIPED*'s computer-generated accentuation of, but not deviation from, Cunningham's existing spatial model.

Copeland has characterised *BIPED* as concerning both the "reciprocity between the physical and the virtual" and "the porous, spatially indeterminate nature of computer space, [with] its absence of fixed boundaries" (Copeland, 2004: 193; 195). This characterisation might be problematised, however, by observing that *BIPED* actually maintains a fixed partition between its material and virtual environments, demonstrating an alignment not with the 'porous' space of digital technologies, but with the simultaneous, separate spaces described in McLuhan's electronic paradigm. This can be observed especially in the lack of mutual integration, during the performance, of the work's two spatial contexts. The scrim upon which the virtual figures are projected in *BIPED* exists as a separate partition-layer placed in front of the dance action, enabling a superimposition of the virtual environment in front of the material environment so that the digital and physical dancers are perceived as coexisting within the same visual frame. Although the chance encounters of their respective actions introduce a kinetic counterpoint and visual complexity to the performance environment as a whole, the two are not mutually determining in any way. If the virtual 'layer' of activity were to be removed, for instance, it would alter the physical layer of dance activity in much the same way as the removal of a scenographic backdrop, that is, perceptually, but not integrally. This provides an important point of comparison with Forsythe's fundamentally integrated employment of virtual activity during a live stage show, as will be explored in the following chapter.

The approach to negotiating material and virtual spaces exhibited in *BIPED* essentially reproduces the 'separate yet interdependent' organising logic that shaped Cunningham's

performance environments since his work of the mid-1940s. Like his non-digital collaborations situated within a ‘mutual field’ for performance, each ‘layer’ of the material/virtual environment behaves autonomously, with the employment of virtual dance ultimately composing a common environment from an adjacency of separate spaces. Furthermore, the placement of two different spatial contexts in a relationship of mutually-non-determining coexistence echoes the chroma key compositing technique that Cunningham had employed for the creation of *Blue Studio* two decades earlier. The important point here is that both the earlier work for video and the later work devised and performed with digital devices emphasise the phenomenon of temporal simultaneity with which McLuhan and Cunningham characterise the mid-century ‘electronic system’. The configuration of the performance environment of *BIPED*, then, borrowed the organising logic of an electronic medium for the employment of a digital one.

The second way that *BIPED*’s computational origins exhibit the hallmarks of McLuhan’s electronic paradigm is at the level of movement organisation. Cunningham’s use of *LifeForms* introduced him to a set of choreographic possibilities not readily apparent, or possible, in his work with human bodies in physical spaces. As Cunningham has explained in a conversation with Kent de Spain:

It added a speed to my technique, to my company, I think, and a clarity about doing, say, one thing with the legs and something else with the arms; [this was something] which I had gone at in other ways, but *LifeForms* opened up other possibilities.

(de Spain, 2000: 9)

These technical developments might be observed at work, for example, in the advanced poly-coordination system employed during a short solo phrase in the first half of *BIPED*. Located at the upstage left corner of the stage and facing the diagonal, a solo female dancer performs a high-speed *grand battement*, extending her right leg behind her into a high *attitude en arrière*. This step is executed on a deep *foudu*, breaking the linear axis that would otherwise state a central point of organisation for the lower half of the body.

While her head remains focused straight onto the floor, her torso is thrown into a twist away from the supporting leg, propelling the right arm around the back and enacting a contortion of the spine at the neck and the area between the shoulder blades. This new bodily micro-contortion, which entered Cunningham's work in the 1990s, has been accounted for by Copeland through reference to a function of the *LifeForms* program. He suggests that "the arms... appear wildly dissociated from the torso [as a result of] the 'cut and paste' fragmentation that the computer implicitly encourages" (Copeland, 1999: 51-2). However, what appears to be a new turn in Cunningham's work – impelled by his employment of this digital tool – might be better understood as a continued alignment of his choreographic space with his perception of an electronic system 'where they cut things so fine'.

This becomes especially clear in the way that Cunningham handled the increased anatomical complexity afforded him in his use of *LifeForms*. He has explained in this respect:

In LIFEFORMS [...] the amount of complexity that I have used has been almost overwhelming. How could I figure to get all of this together in my head and take it to the dancers? I have had to take one layer at a time: what the feet do ... what the torso does...

(Cunningham and Roseman, 2001: 55)

Cunningham dealt with the unprecedented degree of spatial possibility created in his computer choreography by abstracting each of the movement elements and treating them separately. He did this both in the virtual compositional process and in his physical translation of the choreography in the studio with his dancers. Indeed, as might be gleaned from documentary rehearsal footage of *CRWDSPCR* (1993), an earlier work made using the *LifeForms* software, Cunningham devised the virtual movement by layering separately conceived actions for each anatomical zone and maintained this structure when teaching the movement to his dancers. He asked them to learn, for

example, the ‘torso’ layer of one phrase and the ‘legs’ layer of another, before having them superimpose the two layers within a singular phrase (Caplan, 1996). This process reveals an additional point of comparison with the way that Forsythe works with computational ‘language’, especially as regards the algorithmic studio tasks he sets his dancers. This contrast is made especially clear by the recognition that Cunningham’s work with *LifeForms* demonstrates a computational treatment of space entirely consistent with his earlier employment of non-digital methods. The anatomical superimposition described above can be observed, for instance, in his earliest work with chance (*Untitled Solo* being a case in point) and his later work with electronic technologies (especially the employment of chroma key). Cunningham’s ‘cutting’, ‘pasting’, and ‘layering’ of computer-generated movement, then, employed a mode of coexistent abstraction commensurate with McLuhan’s electronic hallmark of simultaneity, and performs an extension of the spatial compositing process tested in his choreography since the early 1950s.

Enabling the fourth and final compositional method with which he would work, the computer had provided Cunningham with a new tool with which he could explore the technological expansion of his existing spatial model. His use of digital applications in the production of a space shaped through simultaneity and decentralisation, however, reiterated his earlier work with pre-digital technologies and underscores a broader continuum in his spatial practice reaching back to the first method listed in his chronology of 1994. In allowing for material and virtual elements to be treated as separate and interdependent components of a pluralistically conceived whole, Cunningham’s work with computers reasserted the principle of ‘no fixed points’ that had been developed reciprocally with his separation of the theatrical elements, with his chance-generated choreography, and with his use of screen technologies. If Cunningham’s work with the

computer rested upon a concept of space that had been modelled through a comprehensive set of methods since the mid-twentieth century, however, then the interception of Forsythe's work with digital media is based on an aesthetic evolved, from the 1980s onwards, contemporaneously with the commercial development of those very media. By extension, if, for Cunningham, the computer provided an instrument of aesthetic intensification, then for Forsythe it provides a basic logic of organisation.

Chapter Six: William Forsythe and a ‘Space of Flows’

When in 1984 Forsythe took up the directorship of the Ballett Frankfurt, he inherited one of the largest proscenium stages in Europe. The opera stage of Frankfurt’s Städtische Bühnen – the company’s major playing space between 1984 and 2004 – measures 40 metres by 40 metres, and Forsythe has affirmed that, when he accepted this appointment as a thirty-five-year-old freelance choreographer, he did so precisely so that he might work within and with the dimensions of this performance environment (Forsythe and Siegmund, 2001: 73).¹⁰⁷ For the next two decades, Forsythe used this stage as well as the institutional apparatus of this municipal ballet company as a platform for the examination of the twin architectural prescriptions of the classical-balletic body and the proscenium frame. As will become clear through the following analysis, architecture, in both of these senses, is always, for Forsythe, a matter of “incumbent ideologies” (Boenisch, 2007: 22).¹⁰⁸ With the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt in 2004 came Forsythe’s departure from the proscenium as the environment in which he and his company created their work. When in 2005 the smaller-scale, private-public venture The Forsythe Company gave its first performances as Forsythe’s new troupe, it did so within a new home: the Bockenheimer Depot, a 1900m² disused tram depot, which accommodates various configurations as a performance and installation space.¹⁰⁹ Details of the relocation of Forsythe’s practice from a municipal opera house to a partly independent warehouse will be expanded upon later in this chapter. However, the immediate significance of this relocation lies in its provision of a scheme for measuring his choreography of space.

From his earliest stage works with the Ballett Frankfurt to the productions that accompanied his departure from the opera house, Forsythe’s aesthetic project might be thought of as one that seeks paths away from the structural permanence implied in the

proscenium frame. This project is carried in two approaches to organisation that together characterise his treatment of space: the creation of an environment configured as a set of multiple, interconnected centres; and of an environment that becomes self-generating in form. These two means by which Forsythe questions the hierarchical and monolithic prescriptions of classical space exhibit intersections with Cunningham's spatial innovation as discussed in the previous chapter. However, there also exist fundamental and, on occasion, diametrical differences in the ways these two artists organise space, and it is instructive to refine the above proposition of Forsythe's spatial model in the initial light of Cunningham's 'no fixed points' spatiality. While both artists dethrone the classificatory system of perspectival space, one does so according to techniques of spatial discontinuity and the other through the induction of an essentially continuous space.

Like Cunningham, Forsythe expands the possibilities of classical space by favouring multiple and equally important centres of movement activity. However, unlike Cunningham's, Forsythe's multiple centres do not exist discretely, thereby creating a deeply individuated performance environment, but in a state of fundamental interactivity, creating, in Forsythe's words, an inherently "connective space" (Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 70). Furthermore, Forsythe finds a way out of the organising logic of classical phrasing by employing, like Cunningham, compositional techniques that displace the choreographer's 'intention'. However, where Cunningham pre-set his choreography through chance operations that heighten the disjunctive composition of his bodies, stages, and events, Forsythe establishes the conditions for a unpredetermined choreography that can self-generate according to a continuous flow of information that feeds across the performance environment. Forsythe has defined this kind of situation as producing an "architectural space that emerges entirely from itself" (ibid.: 69). Resulting from a extemporized form of choreography – initially, the use of improvisation techniques – this

kind of 'emergent' space exists as an ever-changing set of configurations that evolve internally out of its existing, environmental structures. The connective and emergent properties of Forsythe's choreographic space are manifested reciprocally across his productions and offer his most robust answer to the structural permanence of the proscenium and of the classical model it materialises.

It is important to note at this juncture that Forsythe has neither engaged in a rejection of the classical model nor in a 'deconstruction' of it.¹¹⁰ His project is orientated towards addressing the 'incumbent ideologies' of the form by tapping its inherent potential to transgress its own rooting in an absolutist mode of organisation. He has stated to this effect: "Ballet is very absolutist, and incredibly indefinite at the same time. Although most people refuse to admit that it's indefinite" (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2004: 49).

'Indefinite', as it is presented in Forsythe's practice, essentially describes a form that is unfixed and continuously changing. In the case of classical ballet, and for this choreographer, this notion reveals a means by which the aesthetic of permanence that was developed in the classical model, and that enabled its historical idealisation of absolute power, could be transmuted into an aesthetic of impermanence. By finding in ballet an existing, complex spatial connectivity that could allow a fluid and unpredetermined movement to emerge, Forsythe untethered the classical model from those principles – hierarchy, centrality, and stability – that retain its incumbent ideologies. It is from this recognition of the classical model's facility for indefiniteness that Forsythe's choreography of space proceeds.

Forsythe's background in ballet provides him with a fully embodied working knowledge of the form, which is carried throughout his choreographic practice. He commenced his training in ballet in the late 1960s with the former Balanchine dancer Nola Dingman,

while pursuing his undergraduate degree in Drama and Humanities at Jacksonville University, Florida. From 1969 he trained professionally at the Joffrey Ballet School before moving to the former West Germany in 1973 as one of the final dancers hired under John Cranko to Stuttgart Ballet. In the mid-1970s, Forsythe began to focus his energies on choreography, first at Stuttgart and then as a freelance practitioner, creating works for several companies (including the Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris for Nureyev) from 1980 until his appointment at the Ballett Frankfurt (Driver, 2000: 10-11; Sulcas, 1995: 52-5). While the trajectory of his career has exhibited an increasing departure from movement forms, compositional methods, and performance environments that are definitively classical-balletic, it is a contention of this thesis that Forsythe continually uses, rather than at any point abandons, the organising logic of classical ballet in his choreography of space.

In an interview of 2003 Forsythe described his relationship to classical ballet:

It's in my body, so I live with it, it's very contemporary [to me]. [...] Ballet was my mother tongue in dance... you can't erase it... from your consciousness. [...] You carry it around with you and if you are going through changes as a person in this civilisation that we're in then... it changes according to what influences or effects you've experienced.

(Forsythe and Tusa, 2003)

In the light of this statement, this chapter seeks to account for Forsythe's particular transformation of the classical model into something 'indefinite' that configures space as both a networked environment and a self-producing entity and to do so by looking to three aspects of his specific context as an artist. The first is represented in the artistic influences he has incorporated in his practice; the second in the (shifting) material-professional situation in which he has worked in Frankfurt; and the third in the notion of a spatial paradigm emblematic of a late-twentieth-century mode of technological production through which to periodise his practice more broadly. These three contexts

offer, in conjunction, a basis for understanding Forsythe's treatment of formal space. They suggest how it has evolved from a starting place of classical ballet and why its departure from structural permanence as well as its aesthetic difference from Cunningham's model belies a historical shift in the way space is conceived of and practised at the close of the last millennium.

An immediate explanation for Forsythe's space can be located in his technical treatment of ballet, which is filtered through an appropriation of the spatial models of Balanchine and Laban. His first practical exposure to classical ballet was his training in the 'Balanchine school', taught to him in his late teens by Dingman as

a very complex series of tortions... based upon... *épaulement*, which is the relationship between the head, the hand and the foot, and the very prescribed turnings and counter-turnings and counter-twistings [implied in this relationship].

(Forsythe and Tusa, 2003)

Épaulement became a preoccupation of Forsythe's and he has used it as a geometrical-inscriptive frame through which to mobilise the classical model. During his training in New York, Forsythe continued his schooling in Balanchine's "craftsmanship" while frequenting performances of the New York City Ballet over the period 1969–1973 (I. Brown et al., 2009). He is very clear about the impact that Balanchine had on him as a young choreographer, revealing that his early ballets represented attempts to "imitate" his predecessor and that his maturing choreographic practice was the result of a decision to move not away from, but "through" Balanchine's classicism (Forsythe and Tusa, 2003). Likewise, he has acknowledged the "importance" of Laban's theory as offering a "foundation" for his practice (Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 35). Having read *Choreutics* in 1971 while recovering, "totally unable to move", from a knee operation, Forsythe initially borrowed Laban's notion of the kinesphere and its crystalline orientation system for his early examinations of ballet (Sulcas, 1995: 56). The significance of his interest in Balanchine's and Laban's models is that they allowed him to mine the presence in the

classical model of a kind of connective logic and this, in turn, engendered his development of emergent choreographic methods.

The development of Forsythe's spatial model is also dependent on the practical conditions under which he has worked in Frankfurt. When he moved to the city in the mid-1980s, this financial centre was enjoying an economic boom and its wealth nurtured a prospering cultural sector under the progressive policies of Hilmar Hoffman, a "lover of the arts" and Frankfurt's SDP Minister for Culture (Midgette, 2000: 14). These conditions were bolstered by existing protection of arts subsidies at the municipal and state level – itself a legacy of the nationally embedded, post-war *kulturstaat* that formed part of West Germany's social market economy established during the Adenauer-Erhard period. Together, these conditions guaranteed Forsythe a ballet company that was both generously funded and tied bureaucratically to the economic health of the city.¹¹¹ Indeed, with the collapse in the mid-1990s of "the Frankfurt financial scene", owing in part to the economic restructuring that followed German reunification, the budget allocated to the Städtische Bühnen had to be seriously revised (Salter, 2004: 5). The shift in economic conditions, accompanied by a shift in cultural policy under changing political parties, precipitated the events leading to Forsythe's resignation in 2002 (to take effect in 2004) as Intendant of the Ballett Frankfurt.¹¹²

The shifting situation in Frankfurt offers a material context for charting Forsythe's literal departure from the proscenium stage in 2004. However, it also contextualises some aesthetic properties of his oeuvre as a whole. The infrastructure of the municipal theatre both conferred freedoms and imposed limitations on the Ballett Frankfurt. The company was, on the one hand, able to orientate its practice towards "artistic rather than box-office necessity", enabling Forsythe to engage classical ballet in the kind of theatrical innovation

which, according to Steven Valk, came “right out of the state theatres” in Germany at this time (Sulcas, 1995: 56; Valk, 1995: 91). Furthermore, generous public subsidies gave Forsythe access to a large theatrical “machinery”, facilitating a spatial practice expansive in scale, lavishly lit, and that could engage technologically enabled systems of on-stage interactivity (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2011). On the other hand, the municipal theatre’s budget was also subject to bureaucratically entrenched restrictions, especially as regards scheduling. According to Forsythe, this, in effect, “determined” the way he worked over these decades, with limitations on rehearsal time leading him to transform the company into a self-responsible ‘choreographic ensemble’ and to seek out methods for a ‘realtime’ choreographic practice that could unfold during performance (Midgette, 2000: 17). In these respects, Forsythe’s work grew concretely out of the material conditions of his early practice, and the techniques he developed for working in this theatrical environment formed key components of his exploration in spatial connectivity and emergence.

Forsythe’s acknowledgement that the working conditions in Frankfurt “enable[d] a certain kind of work to transpire” is accompanied by his denial that his work, as a North American artist based in Germany, exhibits anything like a fixed “national identity” either before or after his transatlantic relocation (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2011; Forsythe et al., 2006: 40). Indeed, his spatial aesthetic is commensurate with a socio-spatial paradigm that describes the substitution of discrete nationhood with a globally extended network of informational flows, which are essentially un-delimited by national boundaries. The formal space that Forsythe produces choreographically can be described, using the words of Manuel Castells, not as a “space of places” but a “space of flows” (Castells, 2000: 406). In *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), Castells defines the ‘space of flows’ as a globally integrated paradigm, characteristic of the socioeconomic transformations “organised around information technologies”, which took place in the last three decades

of the twentieth century (ibid.: 28). Shaped since the diffusion of computers in the 1970s and fortified with the emergence of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, the network society, with its “emphasis on interactivity between places, breaks up spatial patterns of behaviour into a fluid network of exchanges that underlies the emergence of a new kind of space” (ibid.: 429). In its emphasis on connectivity and a continuous exchange of information around a networked whole, Castells’s conceptualisation of the network society provides a diagram for the kind of space Forsythe creates choreographically. Just as the hallmarks of McLuhan’s electronic era were useful in the previous chapter to contextualise Cunningham’s mid-century work with decentralisation and simultaneity, so the organising logic with which Castells characterises ‘the information age’ provides appropriate ideas for discussing Forsythe’s practice as it constitutes, from the 1980s onwards, a space of flows.

While the foundations for Forsythe’s spatial practice were laid during his ballets for the opera stage of the Städtische Bühnen, his fluent model found a destination of sorts in the Bockenheimer Depot as it became a home at the inauguration of Forsythe’s new group in 2005.¹¹³ This venue trajectory charts the movement away from a permanent, visually stable, and absolutist choreographic environment to one characterised by a temporary, fluid, and modulating nature, but which is, of course, no less spatial for being ‘unfixed’. By tracing the twin organising principles of ‘connectivity’ and ‘emergence’ across three productions that plot Forsythe’s movement away from the architectural prescriptions of the proscenium stage, this chapter explores his increasing choreographic departure from spatial permanence. The first production, *Steptext* (1985), represents a departure from the spatial fixity that pervades classical ballet, as observed here through an analysis of this work’s spatially fluctuating choreographic content. The second, *ALIE/NA(C)TION* (1992), represents a departure from a fixed choreographic content itself, as observed

through an analysis of the performers' collective and improvisatory compositional process. The third, Forsythe's transformation in 2003 of the Bockenheimer Depot in collaboration with architects Nikolaus Hirsch and Michael Müller, represents a synthesis of the two routes towards spatial impermanence taken in *Steptext* and *ALIE/N* respectively. This public installation project both undoes the fixity of architectural form and uses the Depot space as a resource for generating an undetermined movement and, in so doing, represents a distillation of Forsythe's aesthetic of flows.

Moving through classical space

Steptext is a one act ballet for one woman and three men consisting of a collection of *pas de deux* and solos set within a stage design by Forsythe and to a reorganised recording of the Chaconne of Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor. The piece was created for Aterballetto and was premiered by that company in Reggio Emilia, Italy on 11 January 1985. Its derivation, however, can be traced to Forsythe's incipient choreographies for the opera stage in the Frankfurt Städtische Bühnen. *Steptext* is itself 'distilled' from Act II of the four-part, narrative work *Artifact* (1984), Forsythe's first evening-length ballet as director of the Ballett Frankfurt (Sulcas, 2008). He has explained that *Artifact* was shaped around "a simultaneous homage and critique" of the "universe of ballet", and *Steptext* clarifies this logic in an examination of classical conventions of theatrical presentation, with a sustained focus on the geometrical inscriptions of classical space (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2004: 49).

Classical space, for Forsythe, is not simply a matter of form, and he has discussed his fascination with the ideological specificity of space in relation to theatre architecture:

I've got something against theater architecture... ideologies with portals and proscenia are anachronistic elements [and] these ways of seeing are very political issues. My work is based on the political history of observation and awareness [...]

Every kind of space is given meaning according to what frames it... every time you enter a theatre, you are always dealing with theatrical history. There is no way to avoid it. In principle, this is the project with which I am preoccupied since *Artifact*.
(Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 34; Forsythe and Siegmund, 2001: 73)

The undertaking of this project is emblematised in *Artifact* – a ballet devised within the proscenium arch – by the safety curtain that crashes to the stage floor at intervals throughout the production. The crashing curtain dates originally to an accident that occurred during an early stage rehearsal, and was incorporated as a punctuating feature of the performance (Shevtsova, 2003: 11). Here Forsythe uses an aspect of the proscenium machinery to draw attention to its very ‘politics of viewing’.¹¹⁴ As it is lowered on the ‘apotheosis’ scene of *The Sleeping Beauty*, for example, the opera house curtain serves to seal off the final tableaux of newly-wed monarchs and their courtiers in an enduring image of Imperial stability. In this ballet, the proscenium offers a portal to a late nineteenth-century Russian Imperialist vision of a Sun King-style political absolutism. When Forsythe deploys the curtain in *Artifact* he invokes this history, appropriating the opened/closed, teleological logic of the classical portal to destabilise the visual permanence of the ‘universe of ballet’.

The harnessing of a classical-balletic trope to unsettle this form’s historic schemes of viewing might appear, in one sense, to work through techniques of spatial disruption. Indeed, scholarly assessments of the late 1990s perceived in Forsythe’s productions a “grammar of discontinuity” as well as “deconstructed, fragmented and discontinuous bodies and spaces” (Brandstetter, 1998: 45; Briginshaw, 2001: 204). However, in her memories of viewing *Artifact*, critic Roslyn Sulcas indicates how this same ‘interrupting’ trope led to a heightened cyclical continuity. She recalls “the uninterrupted flow of the gorgeous, melancholy violin, and the renewed vision, flooded with golden light, that the ballet offers each time the curtain goes back up to reveal the dancers, still moving” (Sulcas, 2011: 8). Where those earlier analyses of Forsythe’s work, which were orientated

through the same post-structuralist theories that he was reading in the 1980s, perceive discontinuity in his organisation of space, this study takes seriously Sulcas's observation by perceiving in Forsythe's examination of classical architecture a continuity commensurate with a 'space of flows'.¹¹⁵ In this sense, *Steptext* does not deconstruct but moves through the absolutist prescriptions of the classical model towards a space that is 'indefinite' because it exists in a state of constant perceptual fluctuation. In this ballet's choreographic, general-spatial, and kinespheric structure, the 'fragmentation' of classical space belies a new form of networking holism and the 'disappearance' of stable images works in dialogue with a form of spatial emergence.

Forsythe introduces indefiniteness to the shape of *Steptext* by removing absolute boundaries and a teleological progression from the ballet's choreographic structure. The version of the work analysed here was performed by The Royal Ballet at London's Royal Opera House in July 1997 (MacGibbon, 2000). Based on the ballet as this company acquired it in April 1995, the performance of *Steptext* begins before the audience, in its entirety, has entered the auditorium and before the house lights are lowered (Jackson, 1999: 105). While audience members find their seats the curtain is raised to reveal a dimly lit stage, empty but for a square 'back-plate' positioned upstage centre and bearing a minimal geometrical design. As the audience continues to settle, three dancers take it in turn to walk to the stage edge and complete a series of improvised, semaphoric gestures while traces of Bach's score seep through the space. Two of the men enter from and exit into a darkened volume of space extending behind the back-plate, revealing the limit of the stage to be beyond sight. The woman then enters from the stage-left wing and, at the close of her improvised solo, is joined by the fourth dancer who emerges from the darkness behind her. Together they assume the partnered position that announces the second 'opening' of this ballet. The house lights lower, Bach's score commences in its

fullness, and the stage is illuminated in a bright white light before the dancing begins again.

The effect of this first section of *Steptext* is to blur the boundaries delimiting not only a fixed time, but also a fixed place for the performance, with the stage extending beyond a discernible border and vanishing into an expanse of shadows. This sense of an indefinite, or, indeed, infinite floor space is sustained at the blackout that closes the ballet, when the dancers resume in pairs their semaphoric sequence while walking backwards away from their partners before disappearing into the darkness. Two of the dancers walk directly downstage towards the edge of the proscenium, and the house reaches blackout while they are still moving, suggesting the continuation of their trajectory beyond the front of the stage itself. This extension of space downstage mirrors the visual absence of the upstage ‘limit’ from which the two men emerged at the very start. In contrast to the curtain that lowers on the closing tableaux of *The Sleeping Beauty*, which preserves an image of spatial (and social) permanence, the swift blackout at the end of *Steptext* presumes a fluctuating environment that extends and shifts beyond the parameters of what is shown. Kate Mattingly has, conversely, drawn attention to the structural solidity of *Steptext*, describing it as “compositionally sound: built, like an architectural plan, with symmetry, progression and differentiation” (Mattingly, 1999: 22-23). While the ballet is built on such structures that would be excluded from later works such as *ALIE/N*, its plan is, nevertheless, permeated by a kind of non-linear continuity that sustains a promise of spatial non-absolutism. This is especially clear in the deployment of ‘symmetry, progression and differentiation’ in an early phrase, which reproduces, internally, the emergence/disappearance phrasing that frames the work as a whole.

At the start of this phrase, the woman runs from the downstage left corner towards one of the men who is standing at upstage right, breaking between the other two dancers who stand, facing her, at centre stage. She is caught when her right arm interlocks with her partner's; they then execute a lift in an extreme-tilt *attitude écarté* before moving directly downstage in a series of slow *battements tendus* on a deep *foundu*, while the pair of men walk towards the corner from which the woman had originally run. The woman suddenly breaks from her partner, changing focus and energy to walk 'civilian style' across the front of the stage to exit stage left; at this point the music cuts and the lights abruptly change, revealing a darkened space lit from a single light at the downstage left corner. The two men then begin a slow *pas de deux*, moving in silence through a fluid series of weight transferences, travelling in profile across the front of the stage. They return to their point of origin at downstage left, before the woman runs out behind them, initiating a 'reboot' of the entire sequence (movement, sound, and light) and a continuation of the female-male *pas de deux* beyond the point of its earlier break. To draw from Mattingly's structuralist schema, this sequence does exhibit symmetry (in its concentration of action around two *pas de deux* balanced at opposite sides of the stage), progression, and differentiation (in its use of repetition and variation to advance the choreographic trajectory of the phrase). It also appears to do so by using the same 'grammar of discontinuity' with which Gabriele Brandstetter characterises Forsythe's interruption of classical teleology. However, this sequence might also be understood as using a different kind of continuity neither linear (as a hallmark of the classical model) nor fragmented (as a hallmark of the 'deconstruction' of this model) but cyclical, presenting movement sequences that disappear and emerge from themselves.

While the sequence is interrupted from its linear progression, it does not resume from the point at which it left off, but reloads entirely, beginning anew by recycling the original

phrase. This recalls the ‘renewed vision’ of *Artifact* that Sulcas received every time the fire curtain fell and rose, and suggests Forsythe’s diversion of classical linearity to be made not through techniques of disruption, but through the employment of a kind of looping logic. It is helpful here to return to the periodising frame raised in relation to Castells’s network society, because this logic of continuity is evocative of a fundamental structure of information technologies. The loop is paradigmatic of the digital era, according to Manovich, who asks: “Can the loop be the new narrative form appropriate for the computer age?” (Manovich, 2001: 317). He describes the function of the loop in computer programming, which “involves altering the linear flow of data through control structures, such as ‘if/then’ and ‘repeat/while’; the loop is the most elementary of these control structures” (ibid.). The notion of the ‘feedback loop’ is taken up explicitly by Forsythe in *ALIE/N* in his modelling of a feedback-based performance environment. However, in its cyclical method for ‘altering the linear flow’ of the choreography, this phrase of *Steptext* presents a nascent version of the loop structure in Forsythe’s early examination of ballet. Just as Cunningham’s reformulation of classical linearity is achieved through spatial coexistence in his presentation of simultaneous and disjointed spaces commensurate with McLuhan’s electronic paradigm, so Forsythe’s is achieved through spatial emergence in his presentation of a looping and continuous logic commensurate with the information technologies in which Castells roots his network society.

Steptext is not only structured around the principles of disappearance and emergence, but is also set within a volume of space that is rendered mutable through lighting. Forsythe deploys light as a central choreographic element of his productions, and this can be traced to the practice fostered within the huge opera stage at the Städtische Bühnen. When asked in 2003 how firm his ideas were for the Ballett Frankfurt, when he inherited it in the early 1980s, Forsythe answered:

I had less ideas about the company and more ideas about the space. The Frankfurt Opera stage is perhaps one of the most beautiful theatres in the world. [...] One has the feeling on the stage that one is rather in a landscape – it's so large. And this influenced very much my thinking about space and making things in space. [...] And because the space itself is so beautiful, I didn't want to fill it with anything but light. So I... left the majority of scenic elements out, and tried to build a repertoire of light... to create unique visual situations for this stage.

(Forsythe and Tusa, 2003)

Forsythe's 'repertoire of light' was built as a result not only of his curiosity in this field (he taught himself lighting design, constructing his own instruments for this space), but also of the technical resources available in Frankfurt (ibid.). His temptation to shape this vast and 'beautiful' stage largely through shading was supported in the provision of a "fabulous" technical crew and of access to this stage as a rehearsal space (Driver et al., 2000: 43). In a conversation of 1997 with collaborator and lighting designer Jennifer Tipton, Forsythe revealed: "I get twenty-five stage rehearsals with light [in Frankfurt] [...] so you develop the work in the light it's going to happen in" (ibid.). The effect of this pragmatic facility for Forsythe's practice is that, very early on in his oeuvre, lighting design became embedded in the texture of his productions, ultimately assuming the function of a choreographic instrument. Where, for example, the rigorous touring agenda that transported Cunningham's early work to its aesthetic consolidation actually depended on his separation of the theatrical elements, which removed the need for mutual rehearsal time and a consistent technical set-up, Forsythe's consistent use of the Frankfurt opera stage enabled the development of a holistic theatrical practice, where light works inseparably with dance to shape an integrated performance environment.¹¹⁶

The first way in which the lighting design of *Steptext* works inseparably with the structural logic of the ballet, is its transformation of the proscenium stage into a shifting territory. Forsythe has discussed the dynamism of his stage space and explained how he works "quite deliberately with lighting effects [...so that] the space metamorphoses in

split seconds before your very eyes” (Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 33). Such an effect can be seen in the choreographic sequence described above. As the woman breaks from her *pas de deux* and walks off stage, the blunt shift in light, in effect, transforms the stage into an entirely new ‘place’. The full performance area, previously shown in white light concentrated at centre stage, is now replaced with a partial territory, marked by a horizontally extending spot that tracks the male *pas de deux* as the rest of the space remains off-limits, hidden in darkness. While the proscenium frame continues to designate a fixed volume of space, the lights set the internal configurations of this volume into flux, creating multiple, modulating territories out of a single location. Likewise, the visual permanence implied in the proscenium ‘portal’ as it is used in the late nineteenth-century Imperial canon, is called into question by a space that uses its own architectural fixity to project a fluid environment.

The lighting design of *Steptext* further supports Forsythe’s mining of the ‘indefinite’ in classical ballet by diminishing the visual clarity of his choreographic content. As was bemoaned by some critics of *Artifact* when it was performed in New York in the late 1980s, phrases of *Steptext* often unfold in semi-darkness, casting the dancers in outline or causing them to ‘disappear’ completely (Driver et al., 2000: 70). Even in sections where the stage is illuminated by the white light described above, shadows continue to permeate, with light catching only the contours of the dancers’ bodies in a chiaroscuro environment. Such visual obscurity is not made to the same effect, however, as Rauschenberg’s improvised spotlight scheme for *Winterbranch*, which heightened the collaborative disjuncture of Cunningham’s individuated performance environments. Forsythe’s careful preparation of a disorientating lighting scheme that works organically with the dance reproduces, instead, the kind of all-over harmony that historically coordinates the classical stage, but does so in tandem with a demotion of ‘the visual’ as a cardinal sense

in the perception of classical space. Forsythe has described the experience of watching classical ballet as “the joy of the evident”, and his employment of visual obscurity ultimately forges a route away from the evidential firmness of the classical image towards its inherent mutability (Figgis, 1996).

The aforementioned conversation between Forsythe and Tipton touched on the problem of ‘over lighting’ dance. Balanchine’s lighting scheme (“so *flat* and bright”) was invoked as an example, and Forsythe revealed his own concern as a choreographer and lighter of dance: “Put too much light on someone and you really can’t see them” (Driver et al., 2000: 70). This paradoxical pitfall is avoided in ballets like *Steptext* by removing light to such a degree that it accentuates not the ‘objects’ on the stage, but the movement. In this way, Forsythe lights not so much for a sense of the visual but of the kinetic. As such, the images that *Steptext* presents always appear in a fundamental state of movement. In a slow-motion *pas de deux* where the woman moves in profile through a series of off-balance *développés devant* and *arabesques penchés*, the poses that she reaches and holds are rendered dynamic through the play of silhouetted light on the articulated contours of her bare arms and legs. Here Forsythe literally highlights the intricate muscularity of ballet dancers, in a presentation of their capacity for movement even as they rest in position.

This deployment of light exhibits Forsythe’s tendency to introduce an explicitly temporal dimension to his organisation of space. He has suggested a sense of time to be already heightened in the classical model:

Our work is about moving between positions and passing through positions, not maintaining positions. This is actually a fact of ballet in general, new and old. [...] It’s more about time than it is about position.

(Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 70)

This statement contextualises the importance of ‘flows’ to Forsythe’s spatial aesthetic. The classical model becomes, in this deployment of it, a spatial system that is characterised not by stability and permanence, but by an ever-present induction of movement. Balletic vocabulary, likewise, becomes a series of metamorphosing forms that accent the passing of time. By understanding Forsythe’s employment of lighting in this sense, it becomes clear that his departure from classical permanence is achieved by staging not a finite ‘architecture of disappearance’, as some scholars have it, but a cyclical disappearance and emergence of images, which figure the proscenium as an environment in flux.¹¹⁷

A final feature of *Steptext* that materialises spatial indefiniteness on the classical stage is its configuration through a kind of connective, or networking logic. This can be seen especially in Forsythe’s treatment of the classical kinesphere, which he reformulates through an appropriation of Laban’s and Balanchine’s models of space. Both of these models are used to complicate the geometrical prescriptions of ballet and, like Forsythe’s appropriation of the proscenium machinery, this process has been characterised as producing a discontinuous space. Brandstetter, for example, understands Forsythe’s “operations of de- and refiguration” on classical geometry to “direct our gaze towards the basic disconnectedness, toward the gaps in the unity of the figure” as it is preserved in the absolute spaces of classical ballet (Brandstetter, 1998: 45). However, as with Forsythe’s all-over stage design, his treatment of the classical kinesphere can be thought of as producing a new kind of unity, one which is not hierarchically coordinated but based in a multidirectional connectivity. That Forsythe’s transformation of ballet resides in a kind of unifying harmony, which some would have him ‘deconstruct’, is expressed by his long-standing collaborator Dana Caspersen. She has remarked of her two decades of co-creating and performing in Forsythe’s productions:

I saw that the experience of fragmentation was a form of the experience of unity; the apparent breakdown of continuity was actually a glimpse into the interior workings of integration. My body showed me that a dive into detailed fragmentation can allow for an understanding of a richly counterpointed whole.

(Caspersen, 2011: 93)

The idea that fragmentation might lead to spatial holism can be accounted for in Forsythe's extrapolations from Laban and Balanchine of a crystalline orientation system and a counterpointed coordination technique, respectively.

The importance of Forsythe's 'reading' of Laban is that the geometrical model proposed in *Choreutics* offered a template for displacing the centralising imperative of classical space. In an interview of 1995, Forsythe explained to Sulcas how he began using Laban's kinespheric template to expand the classical model in *Artifact*:

What I began to do [...] was imagine a kind of serial movement and, maintaining certain arm positions from ballet, move through this model, orienting the body toward the imaginary external points. It's like ballet, which also orients steps toward exterior points (*croisé, effacé...*), but equal importance is given to all points, nonlinear movements can be incorporated, and different body parts can move toward the points at varied rates in time.

(Sulcas, 1995: 56)

Forsythe's appropriation of the *icosahedron* scaffolding introduced multiple locations around the kinesphere towards which the body could orientate its movement. However, it went further than Laban's practice in displacing a centralising point of movement initiation. This is because Forsythe's use of the *icosahedron* also increased the number of anatomical zones that could lead in the exercise of this multi-pointed orientation. This intensification of Laban's model accounts for the disequilibrium featured in Forsythe's ballets, in that it accommodates a loss of balance as the dancers displace their centred 'core' – moving any part of the body in any direction – and give themselves over to the pull of gravity. This reformulation of the classical kinesphere, achieved by using the expanded orientation system prepared for by Laban, can be observed in the first moments

of the central *pas de deux* of *Steptext*. Here, the dancers move through and beyond the geometrical prescriptions of classical-balletic partnering into a complex volume of interconnected pathways.

The phrase begins as the woman springs onto a *relevé en pointe*, shifting orientation from stage right to the downstage left corner as her left leg swoops upwards in a high *grand battement* on the *effacé* alignment. Her partner, who stands behind her, catches her at both wrists, extending her right arm directly above their heads and her left directly sideways to rest behind her extended leg. This diagonally aligned elevation *devant* initially recalls the stable geometry of the opening moments of Aurora and Désiré's wedding *pas de deux*, but the pose in *Steptext* continues to move and bend into a series of rippling counter-alignments, passing through the classical 'square' into a complex geometry around the shared kinespheres of the dancers. As the woman reaches the height of her *battement*, she begins to push out at her right hip and leans away from her partner. He, in turn, moves into a sideways lunge, providing a counterweight for her to tip off-balance, as her arm extensions are pulled into steep diagonals. While holding the left leg in place, the woman continues to adjust her body weight through her right hip, making use of the tip of her pointe shoe to tip further off centre. This torsion enacts a shift in the pelvis, which accommodates a rotation in the torso that is, in turn, carried further in a twisting of both shoulders to face the audience. By the time the off-balance *battement* reaches its depth, both her legs state deep diagonal lines pointing downstage left, as do the extensions of her arms. However, her shoulders and hips have twisted on their axes to rest *en face*, and her head is directed *de côté* in an intense gaze held with her partner. Before this position is relinquished, the woman hinges her elevated leg in a 90° angle at the knee, breaking its linear extension and bringing her toe to mark yet another point in this distended kinesphere.

In these brief moments of *Steptext*, Forsythe sustains classical directionality as his spatial frame of reference. However, he also employs Laban's vision of a crystalline kinesphere, asking his dancers to press through their classical positioning towards multiple, simultaneous orientations clustered within the same figure. There exists here an important distinction between Forsythe's departure from the perspectival scheme of classical space and Cunningham's. While the multiple, equally important orientations that Cunningham introduced to the kinesphere were each grafted from different spatial contexts and remained discrete in their relationship to one another (as with his *Untitled Solo*), those which Forsythe introduces to the classical figure refer to a common kinespheric scaffolding. The shifting planes and points that make up this modulating kinesphere behave, much like his all-over stage design, in a fundamental state of interrelation, as can be seen in the counter-rotation rippling from the woman's pelvis to her torso and up to her shoulders. Laban's *icosahedron*, then, not only provides an expanded palette of orientations for Forsythe, but also integrates these orientations into a mutually coordinated environment. The fundamental 'communication' that exists between Forsythe's connective points, is facilitated not only by Laban's crystallography, but also by another of Forsythe's choreographic borrowings, as poached from the geometrical inscription of ballet itself.

Forsythe's treatment of space in *Steptext* demonstrates a stylistic appropriation of Balanchine's New York *danse d'école*, both in its adrenalin-steeped *pas de deux* and, more precisely, in its adoption of *épaulement* as a kinespheric-organising technique. As was noted earlier, Forsythe was schooled in an advanced articulation of *épaulement* during his early training in the Balanchine style, which he learnt as a 'complex series of torsions' that placed dislocated points around the body into conversation [Image 13]. In

this sense, the flowing counter-rotations emphasised in the phrase from *Steptext* might be understood as moving through this classical-stylistic phenomenon towards a kind of connective spatiality. As the woman's legs, pelvis, torso, shoulders, arms, and head each twist in counter alignment to one another, their micro-contortions do not belie a 'separation' of anatomical zones, as did Cunningham's composited kinesphere. Nor do they affect a fragmentation of the harmonious classical figure, as with Brandstetter's perception of 'disconnectedness' in Forsythe's work. Rather, they demonstrate the all-over spatial design carried in the classical counter-tensions of *épaulement*, where each part of the body is set in reference to every other. Forsythe's appropriation of this harmonising aspect of classical space is that which allows the body to move – borrowing Caspersen's words – as 'a richly counterpointed whole'.

As with his organisation of the proscenium stage, Forsythe is acutely aware of the historical specificity of classical kinespheric form and has described Balanchine's use of *épaulement* as "the logical extension of the Leningrad style", ultimately demonstrating his self-identification as a legatee of the Russian Imperial system (Anon, 2005). However, the subtle differences between Petipa's, Balanchine's, and Forsythe's respective employments of *épaulement* underline the socio-historical specificity and, indeed, the 'incumbent ideologies', of each. Petipa's neat and sophisticated statement of *épaulement*, as implied in the opening sequence of Aurora's solo discussed in Chapter One, serves to emphasise the immaculate geometry of a centrally calibrated kinesphere. This, in turn, produces a microcosm of the perfectly harmonised body politic, as it was idealised on the stage of this most classical of Imperial productions. Balanchine's extended statement of *épaulement*, as instructed in the technical innovations discussed in Chapter Two, produces a spatial expansion of the classical kinesphere. This, in turn, maps on to his vision of how 'American ballet' should be danced; that is, in a manner which matches the 'love of

bigness' with which Balanchine defined the American-national sense of space. However, Forsythe's embedding of *épaulement* within the crystalline scaffolding of Laban's *icosahedron* neither sustains the socio-spatial stability implied in Petipa's classical harmonics nor the national essentialism carried in Balanchine's amplified spatial counterpoint. Forsythe makes use of this balletic trope to shape the kinesphere as a space of proliferation, and to do so according to a connective geometry of networked locations. Steven Spier has, similarly, suggested that Forsythe's relationship to Laban lies in his exploration of the latter's "geometric construct but not his metaphysics" (Spier, 2005: 354). Indeed, while Laban's crystallography of human movement is couched in the romantic *Lebensreform* aspirations of his pre-war, German-speaking context, Forsythe's adoption of this model might be contextualised in relation to "the new social morphology" of Castells's network society (Castells, 2000: 500).

Castells argues that, since the diffusion of micro-computers and their increasing interactivity in the mid-1980s (as catalysed by the arrival of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s), the "material basis of society" has transformed, shaping itself around distributed networks supporting a global flow of information (Castells, 2000: 1). Castells is primarily concerned with the network and its attendant spatial paradigm of 'flows' as it works dialectically, in the late twentieth century, with advanced capitalism as a global economic order (ibid.: 502). However, his assertion that "since our societies are undergoing structural transformation, it is a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that new spatial forms and processes are currently emerging", offers a pretext for contextualising Forsythe's choreography of connective space in relation to 'the network' as it is figured around information technologies (ibid.: 441). Alexander R. Galloway offers a concise definition of the network as it exists in diagrammatic form: "Networks are understood as systems of interconnectivity. More than simply an aggregation of parts, they must hold

those parts in constant relation” (Galloway, 2010: 283).¹¹⁸ The notion of multiple points in space, which are not aggregated in a state of discrete coexistence but harnessed into a mutually related system of interconnectivity, is useful for mapping Forsythe’s spatial model. The particular use that Forsythe made in the mid-1980s of the richly furnished technical environment in Frankfurt and the connective geometrical models of Balanchine and Laban demonstrates a spatial practice orientated towards an integrated, networking logic of organisation. This is the same logic which, by Castells’s argument, engendered an informatically articulated ‘space of flows’ at the same time as this choreographer’s nascent explorations in classical space. This compatibility of Forsythe’s early work in classical form and a spatial model paradigmatic of the information age provides a basis for understanding a subsequent development in this choreographer’s practice. His later productions continued to mine the connective and emergent facility of classical space, but began to do so through a deliberate appropriation of information-technological processes themselves.

Choreography and computation

The Ballett Frankfurt’s productions of the late 1980s and 1990s sustained the aesthetic project of *Steptext* in producing an indefinite space out of a proscenium environment. However, they did so not through a focused mobilisation of classical architectures but through a ‘making indefinite’ of choreographic structure itself. With and since the 1987 production of *The Loss of Small Detail*, Forsythe moved “away from recontextualizing classical dance and toward[s] finding new ways of generating movement”, and did so by channelling his examination of classical geometry into the invention of techniques later named ‘Improvisation Technologies’ (Sulcas, 1995: 58). This shift in method facilitated an increased choreographic agency for the Frankfurt dancers, led to the possibility of an extemporised form of composition, and created productions that would change, integrally,

from performance to performance. *ALIE/NA(C)TION* is such a production, and just as the choreographic content of *Steptext* enacts a destabilisation of the firmness of classical space, so the improvisatory systems established through this production enact a destabilisation of the choreographic fixity of Forsythe's early ballets.

ALIE/N premiered in Frankfurt on 19 December 1992, and was choreographed by Forsythe in collaboration with the dancers of the company. While the production shifted shape and content over its runs in Frankfurt and on tour, its basic components remained the same. It unfolds as a work of three parts with music by Thom Willems and Arnold Schönberg; stage and lighting design are provided by Forsythe, and a number of media devices are incorporated into its composition and performance. Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986), for example, are screened through monitors facing the dancers as they perform. Hidden from the audience but guiding the semi-improvised performance, these films also provide a clue to the scattered dramaturgical sources of this work. As implied in the title's orthography, *ALIE/NA(C)TION* explores issues of xenophobia, a concern impelled by the extreme, racist violence that had spread across Germany in the early 1990s (and especially as directed, in November 1992, against Turkish residents of the town of Mölln), and by Forsythe's own perception of the "xenophobic premise" contained in Hollywood-produced films of the (recently dissolving) Cold War era (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2004: 47). Indeed, the act of "making things strange, making things foreign" became central to *ALIE/N*'s creative logic and is facilitated, in a technical sense, by the films, which shape the dancers' performances by feeding an unfamiliar input into a realtime choreographic process (ibid.). These films, then, act as information sources for *ALIE/N* in three ways: in their provision of a thematic instigation, of an organising principle, and of a technical device, all of which explore how established systems respond to the presence of an 'alien' other.

The technological set-up for *ALIE/N* illustrates an observation made by Salter that Forsythe's work with machines is "more about processes made possible by complex systems rather than a strict emphasis on the integration of new devices directly into the performance" (Salter, 2010: 261). While such a 'complex system' is, in fact, directly facilitated by the integration of a technical device in *ALIE/N*, the essence of Salter's proposition remains important for contextualising Forsythe's pursuit of spatial impermanence. The ever-modulating structure of productions like *ALIE/N* depends on a choreographic process that borrows not just tools, but also methods from digital technology. In his *Improvisation Technologies*, for example, Forsythe adopts the approach of a computer programmer by setting conditions for an automated choreography that lays its own path according to a varying set of inputs. Forsythe's appropriation, since the late 1980s, of computational process can be helpfully measured, in this respect, alongside Cunningham's use of information technologies.

In a conversation with *BIPED* collaborator Kaiser, Forsythe reflected upon his interest in the relationship between dance and computation:

My thinking has mysteriously or surprisingly coincided with developments in computer programming. [...] All of us seem to be posing the same kinds of questions about how to organize kinetic events. [...] My own dances reflect the body's experiences in space, which I try to connect through algorithms. So there's this fascinating overlap with computer programming.

(Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 70)

This statement reveals that for Forsythe, as for Cunningham, a major choreographic preoccupation lies in finding formal – including technological – methods for plotting spatial experience. However, where Cunningham related his model of organisation to 'the electronic system where they cut things so fine', Forsythe's configuration of space-experience is, to his understanding, contiguous with processes of computer programming.

This might explain, by extension, why Cunningham's later engagement with the computer only served to sustain his creation of a composited and disjoined environment ('where they cut things so fine'), in that this digital device was used to amplify a spatial model conceived much earlier, in the mid-twentieth century. For Forsythe, however, who began consolidating his spatial aesthetic around thirty years later – at the time the computer was achieving commercial ubiquity – this same device provided first, a logic of organisation, and only second, a practical instrument. In this sense, Forsythe's heightened exploration of spatial impermanence in the early 1990s can be accounted for in his concurrent formalisation of a mode of composition modelled explicitly on computation.

In discussing the logic by which computer programming organises information, Manovich provides a framework for assessing Forsythe's turn to choreographic automation. According to Manovich, in the logic of computer programming

the world is reduced to two kinds of software objects that are complementary to each other – data structures and algorithms. Any process or task is reduced to an algorithm, a final sequence of simple operations that a computer can execute to accomplish a given task. And any object in the world... is modelled as a data structure, that is, data organized in a particular way for efficient search and retrieval. [...] Algorithms and data structures have a symbiotic relationship. [...] Together, [they] are two halves of the ontology of the world according to the computer.

(Manovich, 2001: 223)

The symbiotic relationship of an efficiently organised set of information (data structure) and the repeatable set of operations performed on this information in the execution of a given task (algorithm) can be used to characterise Forsythe's choreographic methodology since the late 1980s. In Part 1 of *ALIE/N*, for example, the symbiosis of information-operation or data-algorithm was used to generate content in the rehearsal process and during performance. By exploring the rehearsal and realtime compositional processes of this first section of the work, we might observe how Forsythe's practice in this period

adopted a computational logic (as he suggests in his conversation with Kaiser), which, in turn, heightened his production of an ‘indefinite’ form of space.

Forsythe has described Part 1 of *ALIE/N* as being “completely systematic” and it was rendered so through his provision not of a predetermined choreography (as with *Steptext*), but of a set of inputs and processes sufficient for the dancers to generate the work themselves (Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 36). Caspersen has remarked of Forsythe’s role in this piece:

[Forsythe] developed the key parameters of the event: the methods of creating movement through iteration... the methods that would determine the spatial configurations in the piece and the methods that would determine its temporal structure. Within this framework, the dancers... developed the movement.

(Caspersen, 2004: 29)

Caspersen’s summary suggests a basis for characterising the Ballett Frankfurt as a “choreographic ensemble” (ibid.: 27). Forsythe began working collaboratively with his dancers as early as 1982, where, for *Gänge, ein Stück über Ballett* (his first work with the Ballett Frankfurt), he established the choreography by “processing” information gathered from research tasks set for the dancers (Sulcas, 1995: 55). The collaborative relationship that evolved through later works such as *ALIE/N*, however, demonstrates a kind of reversal of this input/output relationship in that the Frankfurt dancers choreographed their own movement by ‘processing’ information Forsythe provided, and they did so according to techniques he devised and taught as part of their daily practice.¹¹⁹ Forsythe has accounted for this choreographic culture by referring to the constraints imposed on the company’s production schedule at this time, stating to this effect that “rehearsal time is so relatively limited that basically, I taught everyone how to choreograph” (Midgette, 2000: 17). Indeed, the effects of the economic restructuring that supported German reunification had, by the early 1990s, filtered into municipal budgets belonging to the cities of the former West Germany, with an emerging financial crisis in Frankfurt placing constraints

on the city's theatre allocations at this time. As a result, the liberties previously enjoyed by the Ballett Frankfurt in their creation of large-scale productions were increasingly curtailed over this decade, and the pressure to create a number of ballets very quickly necessitated the economising of rehearsal time in this way (ibid.; Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 37).

However, Forsythe's transformation of the company into an efficiently working choreographic ensemble can also be understood as a turn towards a process emblematic of computer programming. The Frankfurt ensemble worked 'systematically' from this period onwards because its members generated their own material according to information and operations prepared by Forsythe. In this sense, Forsythe began acting as a kind of programmer, setting conditions for an as-yet unknown output, which would write itself only through the symbiosis of data and algorithm as processed in the choreographic action of his dancers. He has stated of this situation:

I give the dancers all my thoughts and not the result of them. I never tell anyone what they should do; I only say how they should do it. I've only worked out the appropriate conditions, but the movements are manifested in the dancers themselves.

(Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 36)

The emphasis placed on the substitution of a fixed result with an emergent process sustains the non-teleological principle already tested in the looping structures of *Steptext*. It also describes a departure from this earlier ballet in that it replaces *Steptext*'s structurally fixed design with resources by which a communally generated and fluctuating work can emerge. This kind of collective working culture can be brought into focus through its distinctiveness in relation to Cunningham's individuated ensemble.

Forsythe's above statement describes, in a sense, the exact reverse of Cunningham's studio process. Cunningham told his dancers precisely *what* to do but not precisely *how* they should do it, giving them the freedom to perform his pre-set material in an individual

manner. Forsythe, conversely, told his dancers *how* they might produce something that he does not yet know, giving them the means to generate choreography dependent entirely on a collective process. In this respect, Forsythe's development of an automated method reproduces the same distinction that was detected earlier between his and Cunningham's kinespheric structures. Where Cunningham's ensemble was organised as an aggregation of discrete participants who plot a kind of individuated space, Forsythe's is organised as a cooperation of producers who generate an integrated performance environment. The interdependence of Forsythe's turn to an automated method and his distribution of creative agency across the performing group, reveals a political subtext to his work with choreographic and spatial emergence. This subtext, in turn, exhibits a conception of 'democratic' practice quite different from Cunningham's, as will be explored in relation to Forsythe's unsettling of choreographic authorship in his later creation of 'choreographic environments'. However, the production of an integrally connective space that emerges 'from itself' was prepared for in *ALIE/N* Part 1 well before the work reached performance, and lies primarily in the data-algorithm relationships that permeated the rehearsal process.

Two main stages of the rehearsal period emulate computational procedure. The first involved the production of a map for navigating the stage space, and the second, the generation of movement material by which this map is traversed. As recalled by Caspersen, the process was begun with the provision of a series of documents:

We took sheets of transparent paper, drew shapes on them, and cut geometric forms into them which we folded back to create a 3D surface that could reveal surfaces underneath. We layered this on top of the book page [pre-selected by each dancer from Raymond Roussel's *Impressions of Africa*], a flattened projection of the Laban [*icosahedron*], and a computer-generated list of times organized into geometric shapes... Then we photocopied it. We then drew simple geometric forms into these copies and repeated the whole process until we had [...] a document rich in layers and information.

(Caspersen, 2000: 28)

This process is already shaped around a data structure-algorithm relationship, whereby a set of inputs (the book page, the *icosahedron*, and the time-list) are transformed through a series of repeatable operations (the drawing, cutting, and folding of geometric forms, and the photocopying) in the execution of a task (creating a map). The final document was then used by each dancer as an integrated data structure, which they used as a framework for their individual navigation of the piece. Words that appear through the layers of the map were used, for example, to initiate movement, with each letter of the alphabet triggering a pre-learnt movement phrase devised by Forsythe. Geometrical shapes that intersect words on the map were used to trace imaginary floor-patterns along which the dancers would travel. 3D shapes created in the folds of the document were used to trace imaginary pathways in the volume of the stage space – a means for orientation. The effect of this map was to project into the performance environment a complex scaffolding according to which the dancers would find their way through the piece as it unfolded.

Forsythe has characterised the process of map-guided exploration in computational terms, stating that dancing *ALIE/N* Part 1 is like “navigating levels on a computer” in that the dancers move through an artificial space by selecting options delimited in their diagrams-as-data-structures (Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999:68). The process is additionally computational, then, in that it introduces a kind of automated logic to the choreographic process, with Forsythe asserting to this effect that “it was [devised] to see what would happen if you made up a completely abstract methodology. What would evolve?” (Burrows et al., 1999: 23). Unlike Cunningham’s chance procedures, the ‘abstract methodology’ represented in Forsythe’s mapping process does not produce a completed structure. It sets conditions from which something unknown may ‘evolve’, and this indicates the significance of the map-making process to a discussion of Forsythe’s impermanent spatiality.

The adoption of computational procedure, at this stage in the rehearsal period, created an environment neither definite nor fixed, and that cannot pre-exist the dancers' movement through it. By processing a set of inputs, the dancers were responsible for actualising but one of many potential 'architectures', formalised only in the process of its own navigation. Forsythe has described this phenomenon in terms of an emergent spatiality:

[The dancers] are trying to find their way in an unknown architecture... using a diagram. The dance diagram, however, does not depict any concrete or existing space, but rather a potential space – as the piece forms, an architecture emerges.

(Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 67)

In its adoption of an automated methodology, the Frankfurt ensemble produced here an inherently indefinite environment. This space was not predetermined, nor did it retain any permanence during the rehearsal period; it was conceived in the very instant of its navigation, and, as such, modulated into a newly unknown territory each and every time it was plotted. The sense of a space that emerges 'from itself' in action, was only heightened in Forsythe's movement-devising process.

The second stage of the rehearsal period continued to use the map as a data structure for the dancers' generation of movement phrases. As outlined above, the words contained in the document triggered gestural phrases contained in a 'Movement Alphabet', and were orientated by the planimetric and stereometric pathways implied in the document.

Caspersen describes the choreographic process that followed:

I began what we call an iterative process. I examined my original gestural phrase and [...] re-described that event by applying an operation to it. For example, I imagined watching myself in space doing the original movement, and tried... to draw with my knees the path that my hands had made when I originally did the movement... I continued expanding on the movement phrases using this iterative algorithm: examining... what I did, re-describing it, and folding the results back into the original material, lengthening the phrases with these inserts and repeating the process several times.

(Caspersen, 2004: 29)

Where the map had been used as a data structure to generate a movement phrase, this phrase, which drew from an additional ‘database’ in Forsythe’s Movement Alphabet, was now used as a set of inputs for Caspersen’s algorithmic operations. Forsythe has stated that *ALIE/N* was his first work to use “recursive algorithms” (Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 67). However, the operations performed by Caspersen demonstrate an extension of the looping logic tested in *Steptext* and are based on the Improvisation Technologies developed by the company since the late 1980s. This body of techniques – to borrow Boenisch’s summation – “essentially train[s] the performers to analyse any input in terms of lines, points, areas, surfaces, or planes in order to create movement from this analysis” (Boenisch, 2007: 24-5). The procedural logic of this type of improvisation is facilitated, in a technical sense, by an advanced capacity for ‘proprioception’ – identified by Forsythe as a sense acquired by classically trained dancers.

Forsythe understands proprioception as the body’s sense of itself in space, and has described the rigorous spatial awareness built into classical ballet technique as enabling dancers to “blindly observe themselves... without [their] visual system” (I. Brown et al., 2009). This capacity is demonstrated in Caspersen’s algorithmic process for *ALIE/N* Part 1, where she was able to envision and ‘lift’ spatial components from her original phrase and reiterate them in modulated form. The product of Forsythe’s joining of a classical-technical ability (proprioception) and a computational process (algorithm) is the projection of an ‘imaginary’ architecture for spatial navigation, much like that produced in the indefinite maps discussed above. Caspersen has described the function of proprioception in a similar way:

The proprioceptive field seems to expand to include a space that my body does not actually occupy. This ability to imagine multiple versions of the self, a proliferating, projective equation that moves out from where the body is to where the body might be, creates a situation where space seems to be inhabited by a complex, fluid matrix

of potential motion and form, of which the body is part.

(Caspersen, 2011: 96)

In Caspersen's experience, the proprioceptive sense enables her to project a series of potential movement pathways into space, evoking Laban's conception of trace forms. The algorithmic procedure facilitated by this space-envisioning leads, in turn, to the selection of pathways for the actual performance of her dance. In this way, she and the other dancers of *ALIE/N* Part 1 were able to plot a dance architecture that shifted each time it was produced. The pathways envisioned by the dancers did not describe a predetermined and fixed choreographic space, but existed, invisibly, as a 'complex, fluid matrix' of potential spaces, waiting to be selected and actualised in the moment of performance. The facilitation of a data-algorithm process through the use of proprioception did not, however, introduce a brand new aesthetic to Forsythe's oeuvre, but sustained the spatial fluctuation of his earlier lighting design. Both choreographic techniques (Improvisation Technologies and lighting design) support the creation of an indefinite environment by replacing 'the visual' with the 'the kinetic' as a cardinal perceptive faculty in classical dancing. Like the earlier *Steptext*, the space articulated in a performance of *ALIE/N* Part 1 is characterised not by the arrival at set positions, but by the movement through a field of connective possibilities.

That Forsythe's choreographic methods in *ALIE/N* Part 1 sustained the unfixed spatiality tested in his earlier productions suggests that his departure from a fixed choreographic content is not based in a departure from classical ballet. Indeed, the kind of emergent environments generated in this piece rest upon an automated method that is dependent on two prescriptions of classical space. The first, as suggested in the discussion of proprioception, is the classical model's faculty for spatial precision. Forsythe has stated to this effect:

One of our ideas is to imitate a computer application... This is another reason why I've stuck with ballet. It defines a very precise spatial environment, which I've transformed through a series of distorting operations.

(Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 66)

In this sense, the classical model provides a perfect starting point for Forsythe's computational logic in that it produces spatial information precise enough for the 'efficient search and retrieval' characteristic of Manovich's digital data structures.

The second classical prescription underpinning Forsythe's automated method can be found in the 'mechanics' of *épaulement*, again suggesting the importance of Balanchine's style to Forsythe's production of space. Forsythe has explained that his Improvisation Technologies depend on an advanced intra-bodily counterpoint:

We use the reflexes that we've learned in classical ballet to maintain a kind of residual coordination, which allows the body to acquire elastic surfaces that bounce off one another. This elasticity is derived from the mechanics of torsion inherent in *épaulement*.

(Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 65)

The "complex chain of events" sensed by a dancer who has embodied the relational torsions of *épaulement* is not only expressed in the rippling contortions of Forsythe's balletic *pas de deux*, but also supports the flow of movement iterated (and reiterated) across the body during his algorithmic operations (Caspersen, 2011: 99). These two, classical underpinnings of Forsythe's data-algorithm method suggest that his treatment of balletic form is not one of rejection, nor of deconstruction, where the absolute unity of this model would be fractured to reveal 'gaps' in its figure. It is one which, conversely, makes use of a specific logic of organisation (located in the computer) to activate the inherently emergent potential of classical space. The classical model's cultivation of spatial precision and its advanced, all-over connectivity actually enables Forsythe to employ a sophisticated computational process in the development of a space-in-flux.

A final manner in which the spatial production of *ALIE/N* Part 1 was modelled on computational logic is the feedback of information that shaped the performance environment. Caspersen explains that, once the basic structure of the production was outlined in rehearsal, Forsythe “created a stage environment with a variety of informational sources for the dancers to react to improvisationally” (Caspersen, 2004: 30). Each dancer brought a loose architecture to the performance of *ALIE/N* Part 1, based on their maps and earlier improvisation exercises. However, they were asked, in performance, to process additional inputs into their existing sequences as they danced them. These included: movement performed by other dancers (they simultaneously danced and “read each other” for spatiotemporal cues); visual triggers contained in the *Alien* films screened on overhead, upstage-facing monitors (from these they picked up indicators of direction and location as well as triggers for further ‘Movement Alphabet’ sequences); and cues from the filmic soundtrack, which had been “recorded separately and is played at various times throughout the piece” (ibid.). The piece in performance became, then, a highly complex affair. Information was fed from multiple sources across the stage to (and from) the dancers, who processed it, algorithmically, but now in ‘realtime’, as they performed it to an audience. The spatial effects of this complex system are twofold, and can be contextualised, again, by turning to the organising logic implied in information-technological process.

The first spatial property of this environment is its generation of an unknown architecture that emerges ‘from itself’. This refers back to the original premise of the production, which concerns the presence of an unknown, or alien, entity in an established system.

Forsythe explains:

The program we develop makes it impossible for the dancers to know where they’re going, how long for, where they stand still, what they do, what level of intensity it has. You’re in a situation that you watch a piece that isn’t yours. I called it *ALIE/N*, I

created a piece that's a stranger to me. I don't know the choreography.

(Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 36)

While Forsythe certainly watches a piece unfold that is not entirely 'his' (as are none of the productions he has created collectively with the company), the dancers also exist in a situation unknown to them. Even if the navigation system and gestural phrases created during rehearsal are brought intact to the performance, their experience onstage is set collectively, in response to each other's actions, and spontaneously, in response to the unfamiliar inputs they process in order to proceed with their performance. This situation can be accounted for, on the one hand, in the self-reflexive dramaturgical impetus of this work. Forsythe reveals: "I was interested in taking a certain kind of text – a Hollywood film with a xenophobic premise" and using this "cultural event... as a host in order to create something entirely different (Forsythe and Sulcas, 2004: 47; Forsythe and Kaiser, 1999: 69). However, the pursuit of a situation that produces something 'unknown' to its instigators can also be accounted for in Forsythe's turn, in this period, to an automated mode of organisation. In that it takes shape only through information fed into and processed on stage, a performance environment emerges that is not pre-known but that self-generates in continual modulation. If, then, as Manovich suggests, "the overall trajectory of the computerization of culture [is represented in] the automation of all cultural operations", then Forsythe's practice intersects with this trajectory in its induction of a self-organising performance space (Manovich, 2001: 85).

The space produced in the performance of *ALIE/N* Part 1 is also highly connective, and is configured as such through the interactivity of its nodes of information. This aspect of *ALIE/N* can be highlighted through comparison with the technologically enabled environment Cunningham created for *BIPED*, seven years later. Both of these works used visual technologies in the performance. However, where, in *BIPED*, the incorporation of motion-capture animation is design-led, creating a layering of autonomous 'material' and

‘virtual’ environments, the use of a pre-existing cinematic work in *ALIE/N* Part 1 is generative, creating a continuous feed from the action of the film to the action of the dancers. That the screens are hidden from the view of the audience underlines Forsythe’s continued departure from the visually evident in his presentation of dance. It also accentuates the integral role of the filmic device, which behaves not as scenography, but as an input source joining the multiple flows of information feeding across this environment. In the light of this distinction between Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s respective technological practice, the socio-historical specificity of each might be inferred.

While *ALIE/N* predated *BIPED* and employed an older form of technology, both bear the spatial hallmarks of the two technological paradigms used thus far to periodise their creators’ respective practices. To borrow the words of Manovich: “Where old media relied on montage, new media substitutes the aesthetics of continuity” (Manovich, 2001: 143). Likewise, where *BIPED* relies on a spatial coexistence characteristic of McLuhan’s electronic era, *ALIE/N* subsists on an inherent connectivity emblematic of Castells’s digital age. In this way, Forsythe created a performance environment that behaves as a macro-model of the networking kinesphere he had extrapolated (via Laban and Balanchine) from ballet. Indeed, Caspersen has commented that, in performing Forsythe’s productions, she feels as if she were “part of a flow that was bigger than my own body” (Caspersen, 2011: 98). In its construction around a multidirectional network of informational exchange, the performance environment of *ALIE/N* Part 1 embodied Castells’s image of a late twentieth-century, technologically enabled ‘space of flows’.

Choreographic environments

Both productions examined thus far employ the organising principles of connectivity and emergence in their transformation of the proscenium environment into a fluctuating space. *Steptext* does so by mobilising the architectural prescriptions of the classical stage and the classical balletic body, while *ALIE/N* does so through the cultivation of an automated method in the removal of a fixed choreographic content. The final project of interest here – Forsythe’s transformation of the Bockenheimer Depot in 2003 – represents a synthesis of these two strategies for spatial impermanence, facilitated by the location of choreographic production outside of the proscenium frame. For this project, Forsythe collaborated with Hirsch and Müller in the creation of a temporary choreographic environment within the Depot venue, which problematised the fixity of architectural space and predetermined movement. The synthesis of these two concerns was enacted through the transformation of the Depot interior into a malleable architectural space, and the subsequent use of this space as a resource for generating movement. In this respect, the Depot transformation is representative of a body of productions Forsythe began making from the late 1990s, which take place not as performances in theatre buildings but as installations that transform public locations into contexts for the observation of movement. Forsythe’s turn to the creation of choreographic environments demonstrates his boldest departure from the proscenium and the distillation in his practice of a kind of fluctuating spatiality, and can be understood as a product of both pragmatic necessity and conceptual refinement.

Forsythe’s production of choreographic environments is directly related to the shifting economic-institutional situation in Frankfurt. His first ‘installation piece’ was created in 1989 as a contribution to Daniel Libeskind’s *The Books of Groningen* project. However, he began producing installations on a more regular basis from 1997 onwards, and an

interview dating just prior to this period suggests a context for understanding this new direction. As was suggested earlier, by the mid-1990s Frankfurt was no longer the wealthy city it had been in the 1980s, with its municipal deficit reaching eight billion marks in 1994 (Midgette, 2000: 13). The subsidies made available to the Ballett Frankfurt were subsequently reduced, and in the same year as the deficit peak, Forsythe communicated his wish to

contribute to some economic solutions inasmuch as we can't construct settings as we have done up to now, or we shouldn't. We can make small-scale things: objects that work in large theaters, in art galleries, on ships and in aircraft. In any case they must function within more than one context. [...] We're working within a particular economic frame of reference, but I think it's very important to invest in a thrifty and effective development process which has lots of solutions to offer us.

(Forsythe and Odenthal, 1994: 37)

Here Forsythe reveals an acute awareness of the need to work within a set of contracting economic parameters. The solution he presents resides in the pursuit of choreographies that work on a smaller, temporary, and movable basis and that may even travel outside of the theatre building. While not all of the installations Forsythe went on to create were cheaply producible in a material sense, the above sentiment suggests the intensification, from this time, of an economy of production. The replacement of performers and a rehearsal period with objects and an installation process accommodated such an economy and additionally allowed Forsythe to situate his practice outside of the opera house.

In 1998 Forsythe was given the use of the Bockenheimer Depot, which, at that time, housed the experimental Theater am Turm (TAT). Forsythe would programme seasons of international theatre in this venue and use it (alongside the formalised theatre spaces of the Städtische Bühnen) to present work by the Ballett Frankfurt (Siegmond, 2002: 14; Sulcas, 2011: 12). The company's first production for this space, *Endless House* (1999), was performed in two locations: the first half took place on the opera stage of the Städtische Bühnen before the audience were asked to relocate, for the second half, to an

open-structure performance environment created in the rectangular expanse of the Depot. That Forsythe has characterised this production as being preoccupied with a “politics of viewing”, suggests a second, politically motivated basis for his increasing placement of choreography outside of designated theatre buildings (Forsythe and Siegmund, 2001: 74). Indeed, he has described his installation pieces in terms that speak to his fascination with the ideologies embodied in theatre architecture:

That’s precisely why I did something like [*White*] *Bouncy Castle* [1997] together with Dana Caspersen or *City of Abstracts* [2000] because I feel the project of a democratic dance is perhaps almost impossible to achieve within a theatre. It seems that only by ambushing amateurs can you arrive at a truly democratic way of organising dance.

(ibid.: 73)

The shifting institutional situation in Frankfurt was joined, then, by Forsythe’s commitment to resolving his aversion to the political configurations of theatre buildings. In his installations for public spaces, Forsythe discovered the prospect of a dance space that might escape the hierarchical organisation used in opera house architecture. The transcendence of an ‘absolutist’ way of organising dance in pursuit of something ‘democratic’ is represented, in these installation pieces, by the creation of a space that does not determine fixed modes of behaviour for those who use it, but that facilitates a flow of unpredetermined movement. This is precisely the kind of space aspired to in Forsythe’s transformation of the Bockenheimer Depot in 2003, when the building was prepared as a resource for the self-authored movement of the public who used it.

As director of the Depot venue, Forsythe was responsible for programming TAT’s final season in the spring of 2003.¹²⁰ As part of this season, which lasted from January to April, Forsythe, Hirsch, and Müller created an installation that would accommodate performance works and the daily activities of the general public, who could use the venue as a kind of community or leisure space. The installation was structured around two spaces: a ‘formal’ space in which scheduled performances would take place and an

‘informal’ space open to the public between Wednesdays and Sundays from 2pm–9pm.¹²¹ So that these two spaces could operate simultaneously without the activities of one prohibiting those of the other, the floor was lined with a grey felt (to “deaden the space acoustically”), and a moveable and permeable curtain of the same material was hung across the shorter axis of the building in a visual separation of the events on either side (Spier, 2011: 146) [Image 14]. The flexible macro-structuring of the Depot interior demonstrates a departure from the material permanence of the opera house environment. The curtain boundary separating ‘front of house’ from the performance space/auditorium was both moveable (allowing either side to shrink or expand accordingly) and accommodated ‘spillages’ of activity from one side to the other. It was characterised, in this respect, by Hirsch as sitting somewhere “between creating autonomy and providing exchange” (Forsythe and Hirsch, 2004: 25). This, in turn, produced an architectural realisation of the spatiotemporal boundary-blurring already tested in the ‘double opening’ of *Steptext* in that the Depot did not delimit a fixed place for performance.

Another explicit departure from the spatial culture of the opera house was made in the socioeconomic configurations of the informal area, or ‘foyer’, which served as the public’s point of entry into the building. This space was filled with a furniture suite of grey felt chairs, benches, tables, and mats of assorted shapes and sizes. Becoming a lounging area for anyone who happened to wander in, the foyer was also populated with children’s toys, a library, and, for those who didn’t bring their own picnic meals, “waiters with mobile phones” who were on hand to order food from “neighbourhood take-away places” (Forsythe in Spier, 2011: 147). Forsythe was clear about wanting to create a space in which no one would “tell you... how to behave, [and] where you don’t have to spend any money” (ibid.: 146). Indeed, Spier has commented that this installation “made explicit [Forsythe’s] previously subtle critiques of the privatisation of public space”, and

the artist's stipulation that all logos be removed from objects in the foyer communicates his desire that this space should function outside of a commercial apparatus (Spier, 2011: 147).¹²²

The political underpinnings of the Depot foyer reside not only in Forsythe's figuration of it as a space 'outside' of the corporate sphere, but also in its material capacity to engender choreographic action. By considering the conditions for movement generation established in this informal leisure zone, the synthesis of Forsythe's two existing routes to spatial non-absolutism can be discerned. In the first instance, the installation heightened Forsythe's cultivation of an emergent choreographic practice, as located in his attempt to fully 'democratise' the kinetic possibilities of this space. During a dialogue first published in 2003, Forsythe and Hirsch discussed the conceptual origins of the Depot transformation, and revealed their interest in the possibility that an unplanned movement might emerge from the foyer. Forsythe asked in this respect:

How are people usually constructed by public space? They are standardized. Their movements are determined. The challenge for us was to say, 'this should be a non-standardized room,' because visitors do not come in one, standard, bodily state.

(Forsythe and Hirsch, 2004: 21-22)

In one sense, the Depot transformation sustained a concern already examined in *ALIE/N*. It attempted to create an environment that does not guide people's movement in a fixed and predetermined way, but that provides conditions for multiple, potential navigations to evolve; as many different navigations, in fact, as there are different people who enter the room.

However, the conditions for an emergent movement in the Depot foyer went beyond those produced for Forsythe's stage works because they resulted not in the performance of dance by dancers for an audience, but of movement performed (to borrow Forsythe's word) by 'amateurs' as they organised themselves around a particular environment. This

shift of focus, from choreographic action in a designated artistic space to action elicited in non-professionals in a public arena, heightened Forsythe's work with non-hierarchical organisation in that it attempted to remove a pre-established choreographic authority from the space. Forsythe and Hirsch questioned the level to which they determined the activities of the Depot foyer:

Hirsch: I am still not quite sure how to describe our role: Did we design the space, in a literal sense of predetermining or designating?

Forsythe: If anything, we designed opportunities for people.

(Forsythe and Hirsch, 2004: 21)

It is here that Forsythe's politics of organisation most clearly enter the transformation of the Bockenheimer Depot. This installation went further than the improvisatory techniques developed in *ALIE/N* in creating a non-hierarchical, collective spatial practice. While it provided 'inputs' for action (the material furniture units), as did Forsythe's use of data structures, it did not designate 'procedures' for processing these inputs, as with the Ballett Frankfurt's use of algorithms. In providing opportunities, as opposed to instructions, the informal zone of the Depot installation was designed to create a heightened choreographic agency in those who moved through it. The movement material was not generated by a singularly designated 'author' (Forsythe's role in *Steptext*), nor by a 'programmer' who instructs a self-organising practice in a group of performers (his role in *ALIE/N*). It was generated by each person's interaction with the space itself. Furthermore, while the material configurations of the space were conceived by a team of artists, it was designed as a place that could itself be 'authored' by those who used it.

The Depot foyer was designed to be materially malleable, so that it could exist in a state of constant reconfiguration according to its use. For example, Hirsch described the moveable furniture objects as shaping themselves around multiple forms of use:

It was very much about finding spatial proportions and sizes that do not determine specific positions, but which allow for unpredictable positions of the body. [...] The

edges of the modular elements tend to disappear through use: they become soft. They are rearranged in unpredictable configurations ... [so that] what one may call 'architecture' is permanently in process.

(Forsythe and Hirsch, 2004: 22- 23)

Like the volume of space presented onstage in *Steptext*, the Depot transformation created a space 'in process', which existed in a constant state of flux. However, unlike this earlier ballet – where the fixed proscenium was used to frame an unfixed image – an environment was created that could be materially changed by the movement passing through it. Forsythe suggested of this environment and its inhabitants: "They do not arrange their bodies according to a situation, but... they arrange the situation according to their bodies" (ibid.: 23). In this sense, this temporary choreographic environment carried a clear statement of Forsythe's notion of a democratic spatiality in that the space itself – its material structure – was co-authored by the people who used it. For this reason, the transformation of the Depot foyer shows a distillation in Forsythe's spatial practice of a non-absolutist mode of organisation.

Of the three productions examined in this chapter, the Depot transformation most clearly underlines the politicised motivations of Forsythe's pursuit of spatial indefiniteness. Existing less as a 'choreographed' environment than a 'choreographic' one, the foyer installation was designed to avoid structural fixity (both in creative-choreographic and material-architectural terms) precisely so as to award agency to those who used it. It is this kind of spatial practice that, ultimately, underpins Forsythe's conviction that 'only by ambushing amateurs can you arrive at a truly democratic way of organising dance'. As a spatial idealisation of 'democracy', Forsythe's choreographic environments function very differently to Cunningham's individuated spaces. Forsythe's environments are democratically configured not because they embody a diagram of society in which equally important individuals 'act together', but because they give themselves over to the collective, creative processes of those individuals. The Depot foyer space, for example,

was designed to facilitate a self-authored bodily organisation in the people who passed through it, but also to exist ‘in process’ – becoming itself a product of their collective movement. For this reason, its design pursues a democratisation of the choreography of space by staging a focussed version of the image borrowed from Lefebvre for the opening of this thesis. In this choreographic environment, Forsythe sought to provide a situation in which ‘the body, with its capacity for action, and its various energies’ produces space.

As has been suggested throughout this chapter, Forsythe’s departure from spatial permanence does not equate to his abandonment of the classical model. Indeed, the emphasis he placed on transforming the Bockenheimer Depot into an environment ‘in process’ realises the earlier potential he identified in classical ballet for a spatial practice ‘more about time’ than position. It is in this conceptual intersection of his early work with classical ballet and his later work with public installations that the definitive feature of Forsythe’s space can be inferred, as well as its socio-historical specificity. His borrowings from Balanchine and Laban, his use of the Frankfurt theatrical apparatus, and his development of automated methodologies are all directed towards the creation of a constantly changing space. The description he has offered of the Depot transformation sustains this trajectory by phrasing his fascination with space in time-cognisant terms:

The aim was to create a space of unregulated time. The body is not only physical, it is also temporal. What we choose to do with our body – what we do with it in time – is a very important subject. And that is perhaps very choreographic.

(Forsythe and Hirsch, 2004: 24)

The definition of ‘choreography’ implied in this statement is one of a practice that organises spatial phenomena so that they remain sensitive to and active in time. That Forsythe introduces an explicitly temporal dimension to his spatial practice – to an extent not seen in the previous models considered in this thesis – is suggestive of the periodising frame used thus far to contextualise his choreography of space. Forsythe’s is not a space of permanent structures and absolute stability but one sent into deliberate flux by a

continuous movement that courses through it. It is in this sense that his choreography embodies the spatial paradigm figured by Castells for a late-twentieth-century network society: in its displacement of fixed positions to stress the passage of time, it substitutes a space of places with a space of flows.

Conclusion

At the end of the Introduction to this thesis, three intertwined areas were identified as forming the heart of this work: the development of a methodology that highlights the social quality of choreographic aesthetics; the elaboration of this methodology through selected studies of spatial practice in the fields of dance and performance; and the coordination of these studies into a focussed socio-historical context for discussing Cunningham's and Forsythe's choreographies of space. The very intertwining of these areas was facilitated, in large part, by commencing the analysis with a study of the spatial model of classical ballet. Because the classical model, as it is defined in Chapter One, provides an especially clear instance of the way in which socially produced ideals can be embodied in the formal characteristics of artistic space, it has provided an analytical key to the entire thesis.

It has done so, firstly, by showing how an aesthetic order of space can consist in principles of organisation conceived and valued in specific social spaces. In so doing, it exemplifies the central methodological conviction of this thesis. As embodied in the classical model of space, the interwoven principles of an all-over harmony of parts, of hierarchy, centrality, and stability, speak very clearly of the political ideals that were produced in and productive of the social spaces in which this art form was fostered. From the 'well-balanced' bodies of the fifteenth-century Italian nobility, to the 'concordant' kingdom of the late Valois monarchs, to the 'absolutist' body politic under Louis XIV, the court ballet of the Western European Renaissance served to exhibit much more than an image pleasing to the eye. It served, primarily, to express the socio-spatial order idealised and aspired to by its series of powerful patrons, and did so precisely by keeping

‘beauty’ as its guiding aesthetic rubric, creating a space of harmoniously and hierarchically ordered parts.

The codification of this model in the pedagogical activities of the eighteenth century also forms an essential moment in the history of the classical model as it serves its purpose in this thesis. This is because it demonstrates how the systematisation of the spatial principles discussed above into an enduring movement technique – one that pervaded the work of even the boldest of balletic reformers – meant that the politicised ideals of the court ballet continued to shape balletic spaces well beyond the form’s use as an instrument for ideological tribute. Representing the pinnacle of ballet’s continued production as an institution of the court in Imperial Russia, and heightening the absolutist rhetoric codified in the spatial structures of the *danse d’école*, Petipa’s choreography for the Imperial Ballet crystallised and canonised the classical model of space. The spatial hallmarks of the choreographic style he developed, especially in *The Sleeping Beauty*, have been especially useful in sustaining the methodological project of this thesis across subsequent chapters. This is because the images, phrases, and modes of organising the stage that Petipa left to his artistic legatees and dissenters carry a pristine spatial aesthetic that clearly embodies the harmonious social order idealised by classical ballet’s elite historical patrons.

Because of its aesthetic legibility and its embodiment of a set of political ideals, the classical model has provided a solid comparative frame for emphasising how societal contexts appear ‘in’ the formal spaces of the other practices explored in this thesis, and so it has enabled the second area of contribution listed above. It has provided, initially, a basis for highlighting the formal principles of space that define these various projects, as they prepare for a discussion of Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s work. As read against the

ordering logic of the classical model, the principles of ‘expanse’ and ‘depth’ in the choreographies of Balanchine and Graham, of ‘natural harmony’ and ‘synthetic abstraction’ in the theories of Laban and Schlemmer, and of ‘coexistence’ in Cage’s 1952 event, are clearly pronounced. Furthermore, the methodological orientation introduced in Chapter One prepared for an identification of how these spatial principles are, themselves, situated in specific chronotopic contexts. While Chapters Two and Three each dealt with two practitioners who exhibit contradistinctive spatial aesthetics, a consideration of the social spaces shared by each made their analytical ‘pairing’ both feasible and enlightening. While Balanchine augmented some of the spatial hallmarks of the classical model and Graham problematised them, both did so in pursuit of a spatial practice proportionate to that described in the American ‘geographical imagination’. Likewise, while Laban sought ways to ameliorate the societal effects of industrialisation and Schlemmer borrowed a technological mode of organisation from this same process, both did so in pursuit of a form of ‘unity’ characteristic of cultural regenerationist yearnings in Germany after 1871. Finally, the location of Cage’s 1952 event in the local social space of its production enabled the identification of a political discourse (through Dewey) and a periodising frame (through McLuhan) apt for contextualising his partner’s later practice. While Cage did not engage directly with the structures of classical ballet – as did every other practitioner considered in this study – the ‘coexistent’ model tested in the 1952 event has provided an essential basis for understanding Cunningham’s engagement with classical-balletic space.

Moving on to the third area of contribution listed above: the classical model, as it was established in Chapter One and recalled throughout the argument, has served to stabilise this broadly reaching analysis because it speaks directly to Cunningham’s and Forsythe’s spatial radicalisms. Both of these artists hold the classical model very close to their

innovations in choreographic space. For this reason, whether emphasising Cunningham's displacement of 'the centre' or Forsythe's adoption of 'total' coordination, this model has provided an important point of reference for discussing their spatial aesthetics. Moreover, because of its use for delineating the spatial practices discussed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, the classical model has also provided an analytical touchstone around which to coordinate these varying spatial legacies into a coherent dance-historical context for Cunningham and Forsythe. For example, the spatial effects of Cunningham's adoption of Cage's collaborative 'coexistence' was brought into relief by a comparison of the former's individuated performance environment and the hierarchical one produced in Petipa's Imperial ballet. The extent and nature of Cunningham's inheritance from Cage, his departure from Graham, and his relationship to Schlemmer have all been calibrated through the consistent frame of reference the classical model provides. Likewise, in both Forsythe's ballets and his apparently 'non-balletic' productions, this same model has provided a standard for measuring his borrowings from Balanchine, Laban, and computation in his creation of networked and emergent spaces.

Ultimately, it is the weaving of these three areas that has led to a novel reading of Cunningham's and Forsythe's choreographies of space. Because the methodological thread of this thesis stipulates that 'the aesthetic' and 'the social' qualities of space are mutually embedded, and that a dance-historical context is, at one and the same time, a socio-historical context, the social character of these artists' spatial models has been brought to the fore. More specifically, because each of the historical principles of space identified here is thought of as being a product of societal conditions and processes, the aesthetic treatment of these principles by Cunningham and Forsythe is necessarily thought of as being, itself, socially situated. This means that – to take selected examples – their respective treatments of centrality and coexistence, or permanence and connectivity,

reveal a socio-historically specific engagement with equally specific conceptions of space.

Where previous studies of Cunningham's practice have made fine readings of his aesthetic innovations in the light of artistically circumscribed paradigms (Copeland's discussion of his 'collage' aesthetic in relation to "the worldview of postmodernism" being the best example), this study has looked further into the specific contexts of his practice and showed how Cunningham's is a peculiarly North American and mid-twentieth-century conception of space (Copeland, 2004: 238). Likewise, while existing studies of Forsythe's practice have made detailed evaluations of his spatial practice as a form of artistic 'deconstruction' (for example, Briginshaw's account of how he "deconstructs classical ballet" and "fragments space") this study recognises Forsythe's constant *use* of classical ballet and its inherently connective logic, for the creation of continuous spaces tuned to the spatial configurations and processes of the digital era (Briginshaw, 2001: 185, 191). In sum, this is an analysis that pays focussed attention to the contexts in which choreographies are made, and which finds these contexts embedded in the aesthetics of choreographic space. In so doing, and to borrow from Forsythe as he was cited in the Introduction to this thesis, it seeks to ask after 'the why, not just the what' of dance.

It is this sentiment that characterises the broader motivations of this thesis as it attempts to lay the groundwork for a sociology of dance conducted through the aesthetic analysis of choreographic space. However, this groundwork has deliberately not been laid in the form of a programmatic theory for diagnosing the social significance of every choreographic (or artistic) space. Indeed, while Lefebvre's thesis on the production of space was used as an instigation to conceive of spatial practice in a way that foregrounds its essentially

social quality, Lefebvre's more specific, and restricted, schemas of spatial analysis have not been transposed as a framework for analysis throughout the body of this thesis. This is because the overriding objective here is to create a model for the socio-spatial analysis of choreographic production – based in the gradated analytical movement between 'social space' and 'kinesphere' – that is sensitive to and that can be flexibly modulated across the particularities of the cases in which it is employed. The five integrated spheres of spatial environment introduced at the beginning of this thesis have appeared as categories of analysis in each subsequent chapter, but have done so in different combinations, intensities, and orderings for each – as is necessitated by the very real differences in the case studies selected for analysis. The analytical groundwork laid in this thesis, then, is not intended to be used as a systematic formula for identifying and categorising the presence of societal contexts in choreographic spaces considered *in general*. It is offered, rather, as a flexible methodology for foregrounding the social specificity of choreography that is necessarily responsive to the formal/social specificity of the practices/contexts it is used to explore. The development of this methodology in this thesis in relation to the social specificity of Cunningham's and Forsythe's choreographic spaces is intended to foreground the politicised reformulations of classicism in two contemporary choreographies that make a very deep, technical engagement with the spatial structures of the classical model. However, it presents, ultimately, just one permutation of this methodology as it can be developed as a basis for a new sociology of dance driven by an exploration of spatial aesthetics.

¹ The concept of ‘time’ haunts the substance of this thesis. This is firstly because, from at least 1905 onwards, scientific and philosophical enquiries into space have not excluded time from the equation, preferring to direct analysis through the unitary concept of ‘spacetime’ introduced with the publication of Albert Einstein’s paper on his special theory of relativity in that year. (In a paper of 1908, Einstein’s former teacher Hermann Minkowski wrote: “Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality”). Minkowski [1952] ‘Space and Time’ in *The Principle of Relativity*, trans. W. Perrett and G. B. Jeffery, New York: Dover Publications, pp. 75-91, p.75.) However, considerations of ‘time’ necessarily pervade the present study also because dance is an activity that pays special attention to the body’s movement in both time and space. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to perform a focussed analysis of the interplay of time and space in the choreographic projects considered here, and my study follows Lefebvre’s lead by focussing primarily on ‘space’ while not presupposing its isolation from ‘time’. Nevertheless, notions of temporality are brought to the fore of parts of this analysis because it takes its first cue from the artistic works in question, some of which, as will be shown, draw special attention to the temporal nature of space.

² For an explication of an occasion in which the performance of dance occurs at the same time as the choreographic process, see Anna Pakes’s discussion of improvisation, as embedded in her broader investigation of ‘mental causation’ in dance and the need for a reformulation of the ‘mind-body problem’ as it enters this artistic field. Pakes’s analysis is also suggestive of how a dancer’s performance (be it of improvised or ‘pre-set’ material) is, in itself, always a form of choreography. Pakes (2006) ‘Dance’s Mind-Body Problem’, *Dance Research* 24: 2, (Winter) pp. 87-104, p. 91. For a discussion of the shifting definition of the term ‘choreography’, beginning with its use by Raoul Auger Feuillet in his systemisation of a form of dance notation at the turn of the eighteenth century, see Susan Leigh Foster (2009) ‘Choreographies and Choreographers’ in *Worlding Dance: Studies in International Performance*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 98-118.

³ The use of these interrogative constructions is borrowed from Maria Shevtsova’s discussion of a sociocultural semiotics for the study of theatre and performance. Working with Mikhail Bakhtin’s critique of Saussurean linguistics, Shevtsova draws attention to the socially produced nature of signs by stating that signs “can no longer be conceived as pre-given [like Lefebvre’s ‘space’] and ‘natural’, for in being social their sense, meaning, and communicability all depend on how they are made, where, and to whom for which precise purposes”. Shevtsova (2009) *Sociology of Theatre and Performance*, Verona: QuiEdit, p. 70. The larger analytical framework of this thesis is guided by Shevtsova’s readings and appropriations of theorists such as Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu in her establishment of a sociological method for studying theatre.

⁴ ‘Classical’ is used here in a specific sense to denote a particular form of theatrical dance conceived in the Western European Renaissance, as will be explored fully in Chapter One. ‘Contemporary’ is used to denote (much more loosely) forms of theatrical dance that grew, from around the middle of the twentieth century, out of traditions of the dance classicism defined above and the ‘modern dance’ practice that was developed, in preceding decades, to counter it, and that include a broad variety of techniques, styles, and aesthetics. Cunningham’s practice, while drawing extensively from classical ballet and the institutions of American modern dance, might be most accurately defined as a pioneering form of contemporary dance. Forsythe, meanwhile, because of the very direct use he makes of classical ballet and its institutions, might be rightly defined as both a classical and a contemporary choreographer.

⁵ In his discussion of the concept of ‘production’ as it was fleshed out in the thought of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Lefebvre writes: “‘Nature’ itself, as apprehended in social life by the sense organs, has been modified and therefore produced”. While Lefebvre goes on to refine this position by drawing a distinction between ‘natural’ space that is *created* and social space that is *produced* (“nature’s space is not staged”), he, nevertheless, suggests that a more direct production (or reproduction) of ‘natural’ space is taking place under processes of capitalism, which is “killing” nature “by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse, as also by labour and its products” Lefebvre (1991) *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, London: Blackwell, pp. 70-71.

⁶ For an example of his critique (and sociological analysis) of such a tendency, see Bourdieu (1996) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Stanford: University of California Press, pp. 285-312. See also Shevtsova (2002) “Appropriating Pierre Bourdieu’s *Champ* and *Habitus* for a Sociology of Stage Productions”, *Contemporary Theatre Review* 12: 3, *The Sociology of the Theatre*, ed. Maria Shevtsova and Dan Urian, pp. 35-66, p. 36.

⁷ For an analysis of a decision concerning venue, which takes into account the whole network of conditions (bureaucratic and financial as well as aesthetic) that inform it, see Shevtsova’s discussion of Peter Stein’s departure from the Berlin Schaubühne in 1985 and his subsequent presentation of work in new kinds of spaces. Shevtsova notes that “culture, whatever its form, is shaped in the material sphere and also by such

material conditions as management teams and purse strings. Stein's art [and his aesthetic decisions... were] certainly not above daily business". 'Appropriating Pierre Bourdieu's *Champ* and *Habitus*', p. 43.

⁸ For an elaboration of the concept of 'chronotope' see Bakhtin, (1981) 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics' in *The Dialogical Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 84-258. For an indication of the way it is used here as an analytical device, see Shevtsova (2001) 'Sociocultural Performance Analysis' in *New Approaches to Theatre Studies and Performance Analysis*, ed. Günter Berghaus, Tübingen: Max Neimeyer Verlag, pp. 45-60, pp. 58-9.

⁹ These three dates are significant as they are the years in which *Le ballet de la nuit*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Artifact* were respectively premiered. The way in which each of these ballets makes use of the proscenium arch as an architectural and 'ideological' structure will be discussed in the following analysis. Bourdieu discusses 'venue' as it carries symbolic weight in the field of theatre in *The Rules of Art*. He does so especially in his comparison of 'experimental theatre' and 'boulevard theatre' in Paris, genres which he aligns, geographically and culturally, with 'left bank' and 'right bank' venues respectively, and which he coordinates with his topography of 'the literary field at the end of the nineteenth century' (pp. 161-162, 122).

¹⁰ The *Lettres patentes du roy pour l'establissement de l'Academie royale de danse en la ville de Paris* were composed, signed, and delivered to Parliament by Louis XIV in March 1661, ratified by Parliament on 30 March 1662, and published in 1663. Mark Franko includes the text of the 1663 publication and provides an English translation of it in Franko (1993) *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 166-185. See also pp. 108-111 for an analytical discussion of the *Lettres Patentes* that has informed the historical account of the present study.

¹¹ Louis explained of the 'divine' extraction of his personal power, and the licence to absolute rule that it was deemed to give him: "He who has given kings to men has wanted them to be respected as His lieutenants, reserving to Himself alone the right to examine their conduct. His will is that whoever is born a subject must obey without qualification; and this law [is] explicit and universal". Louis XIV (1970) *Memoirs for the Instruction of the Dauphin*, trans. Paul Sonnino, New York: Free Press, pp. 244-5.

¹² For details of the Christian underpinnings of Louis XIV's absolutism, see Ernst Heinrich Kossmann (1976) 'The Singularity of Absolutism' in *Louis XIV and Absolutism*, ed. Ragnhild Hatton, London: Macmillan, pp. 3-17, p. 11.

¹³ For details of the locations in which the dancing masters worked, and their various employers, see A. William Smith (ed.) (1995) *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza, Volume I: Treatises and Music*, trans. and annotated by A. William Smith, *Dance and Music Series 4*, Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press.

¹⁴ For further information on the conditions under which dance was produced by the elite social groups of fifteenth-century Italy, see Barbara Sparti (1996) 'The Function and Status of Dance in the Fifteenth-Century Italian Courts', *Dance Research* 14: 1, (Summer), pp. 42-61; Jennifer Nevile (2008b) 'Dance in Europe: 1250-1750' in *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politic, 1250-1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 7-64, and (2004) *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 5-20.

¹⁵ At around the same time that he wrote his treatise, Guglielmo converted from Judaism to Christianity, taking the name Giovanni Ambrosio. This is the name to which the published treatise is attributed. See William Smith's digest of autobiographical details in *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, pp. 109-114.

¹⁶ For a primary example of the humanists' inheritance of a Platonic discourse on beauty, see Marsilio Ficino (1985) *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Jane Sears, Dallas: Spring Publications. For the Roman, Neoplatonic interventions into this legacy, which also provided a basis for Ficino's writings, see Plotinus (1991) *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna, London: Penguin, especially pp. 45-54 for the First Ennead, Sixth Tractate, 'On Beauty', which is based on Diotima's speech in *The Symposium*.

¹⁷ For an explication of how Italian humanist doctrine was inherited in the mid-sixteenth-century French academies, especially in Jean-Antoine de Baïff's *Académie de musique et de poésie*, which exerted influence on Beaujoyeux's practice, see Frances A. Yates, (1988) *French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, London and New York: Routledge, [1947], pp. 1-13.

¹⁸ Louis XIV performed as the Sun King in four different ballets: *Le ballet de la nuit*, (1653); *Les Noces de Pélée et de Thétis*, (1654), presented by Mazarin at the Petit-Bourbon; *Ercole Amante*, (1662), an opera produced at the opening of the Tuileries Theatre; and *Le Ballet de Flore*, (1669), the last ballet in which the king danced. For further details of these ballets see Régine Astier (1992) 'Louis XIV, "Premier Danseur"' in *Sun King: The Ascendancy of French Culture During the Reign of Louis XIV*, ed. David Lee Rubin, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, pp. 73-102.

¹⁹ Rameau's assertion is supported in research conducted by Nevile, who writes: "Just as in the second half of the sixteenth century it was the Italian dance masters who taught at the courts of Europe, one hundred

years later it was the turn of the French. French dance style and French dance teachers were highly fashionable and much sought after throughout Europe". Nevile 'Dance in Europe: 1250–1750' p. 22.

²⁰ For information on the development of the school at the Paris Opéra, see John V. Chapman (1989) 'The Paris Opéra Ballet School, 1798–1827', *Dance Chronicle* 12: 2, pp. 196-220, and Sandra Noll Hammond (2007) 'The Rise of Ballet Technique and Training: The Professionalisation of an Art Form' in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, ed. Marion Kant, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-77.

²¹ See, for an overview: Edward Nye (2001) *Mime, Music and Drama and the Eighteenth-Century Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; John Chapman (1987) 'Auguste Vestris and the Expansion of Technique', *Dance Research Journal* 19: 1 (Summer), pp. 11-18; Judith Chazin-Bennahum (1988) *Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press; Lynn Garafola (ed.) (1997) *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, Hanover, N.H., and London: Wesleyan University Press; and Marian Smith (2000) *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

²² For a discussion, and biographical contextualisation, of Blasis's commitment to the classical prescriptions of the *danse d'école*, even as he trained the dancers who would become the great stylists of the Romantic era, see Giannandrea Poesio (1993b) *The Language of Gesture in Italian Dance From Commedia Dell'Arte to Blasis*, unpublished thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Dance Studies, University of Surrey, pp. 78-80.

²³ Noverre trained under Louis Dupré (1697–1774), 'Le Dieu de la Danse', who represented what Chapman terms the "paradigm" of dancing of the late Ancien Régime. See Chapman's 'The Paris Opéra Ballet School', p. 196. Blasis trained under Pierre Gardel (1758–1840), a long-serving ballet master of the Paris Opéra. See Poesio's *The Language of Gesture*, pp. 77-8. For further details of these training backgrounds see also: Poesio (1994) 'Enrico Cecchetti: The Influence of Tradition' in *Dance History: An Introduction*, Second Edition, ed. Janet Adshead-Lansdale and June Layson, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 117-131, p. 121; and Dorion Weickmann (2007) 'The *ballet d'action* of the eighteenth century' in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, pp. 53-64, p. 56.

²⁴ Petipa trained under Auguste Vestris (1760–1842), enrolling, in 1840, in the class of the eighty-year-old ballet master so that he might "perfect" his technique. Marius Petipa (1958) *The Memoirs of Marius Petipa: Russian Ballet Master*, ed. Lillian Moore, trans. Helen Whittaker, London: A. C. & Black, p. 10. Vestris was a celebrated dancer of the Paris Opéra who inherited Dupré's epithet 'Le Dieu de la Danse' and became, as a teacher, a "strict custodian of the academic tradition". Garafola (2007) 'Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa' in *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet*, pp. 151-163, p. 153.

²⁵ For an overview of the 'myth' of Europe as it was produced and utilised in the formation of the Russian state, see Richard S. Wortman (1995) *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, Volume One*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 13-21.

²⁶ For details of the administrative restructuring of Russian governance initiated under Peter the Great, its 'rationalisation' of political absolutism, and its intersections with the Westernisation of the cultural life of the Russian nobility, see Alexander Chubarov (1999) *The Fragile Empire: A History of Imperial Russia*, New York: Continuum, pp. 23-6.

²⁷ St. Petersburg was founded in 1703 and built on the banks of the river Neva as a Russian military stronghold for the Gulf of Finland. Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond and Domenico Trezzi were hired as central architects for its early development as an imperial capital. William Craft Brumfield (1993) *A History of Russian Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 205-8.

²⁸ Chubarov has discussed the broader parallels between the Petrine restructuring in the early eighteenth century and Catherine's later reforms, which, while shaped by the Empress's personal readings of French Enlightenment thought, nevertheless sustained the administrative exercise of autocratic power that had characterised Peter's earlier absolutism. See *The Fragile Empire*, pp. 36-46.

²⁹ For details of the development of the *grand ballet* across the 75 productions staged by Petipa for the Russian Imperial Theatres, see Tim Scholl (1994) *From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the Modernization of Ballet*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 4-9.

³⁰ The review in question was written by Dmitiry D. Korovyakov for the *Peterburgsky listok*, was titled 'Theater and Music: A New Ballet', and is reproduced in Scholl (2004) *Sleeping Beauty, A Legend in Progress*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 179-182. The citation appears on p. 182 of Scholl's text.

³¹ All three scholars debate the extent to which *The Sleeping Beauty* entered into a diplomatic discourse concerning the Franco-Russian alliance (drafted in 1892), with Scholl ultimately suggesting this political association to be anachronistic, given the ballet's origins in the late 1880s. See: Sally Banes (1998) *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 42-3; Poesio (1993a) 'The Awakened Beauty', *The Dancing Times*, (October), pp. 37-43, p. 38; and Scholl's *Sleeping Beauty*, p. 32.

³² The vulnerability of the tsarist regime had been of concern to the court since the mid-nineteenth century, and Abbott Gleason offers an overview of the burgeoning political culture that provoked the conservatism of Alexander III and that would, ultimately, precipitate the collapse of Imperial Russia. He describes the

“new radicalism that developed during the 1860s and 1870s” as demonstrating “the commitment to an egalitarian and socialist future, which necessitated major social-political change, if not revolution”. Gleason (1998) ‘Ideological Structures’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, ed. Nicholas Rzhevsky, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 103-124, p. 112.

³³ Ivor Guest has described the social composition of the Mariinsky audience of the late nineteenth century: “Most of the seats were reserved for the Court, the diplomatic corps, and members of exclusive clubs, less than a third – and most of those in the gallery and balcony – being available for the public”. Guest (1977) *The Dancer’s Heritage: A Short History of the Ballet*, London: Adam and Charles Black, p.55.

³⁴ The technical parentage of Petipa’s choreography was, in fact, marked by a confluence of balletic cultures, including that carried by touring students of the Milanese school (one of whom, Carlotta Brianza, would create the role of Aurora). However, the late-nineteenth-century Mariinsky technique was couched in the Danish influence of Christian Johansson, who was appointed lead teacher in the same year as Petipa’s directorship began and whose pedagogical lineage led, with Petipa’s, back to Vestris. Johansson’s insistence that “the Russian school of dancing... was the French school which the French themselves had forgotten” suggests that the Petersburg pedagogical culture was one that transmitted the teachings of the *danse d’école*. See Guest’s *The Dancer’s Heritage*, pp. 61-2.

³⁵ For details of the nationalist movement in Russian musical composition and its intersections with, on the one hand, a burgeoning socialist outlook and, on the other, the conservative and imperialist doctrines of official nationality and Russification, see: Harlow Robinson, (1998) ‘Music’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, pp. 236-263, pp. 244-5; Francis Maes (2002) *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 12-14; and Halina Goldberg (2005) ‘Appropriating Poland: Glinka, Polish Dance and Russian National Identity’ in *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity*, ed. David L. Ransel and Bozena Shallcross, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 74-88.

³⁶ In his study of the Vaganova Ballet Academy (the Petersburg academy that had its origins in the Imperial Ballet School), John Gregory proposes that “the rigidity of the classical concept has been softened by the... *épaulement*”, which had been learnt from the folk dances of “Russia and its neighbouring countries”. Gregory (1990) *Leningrad’s Ballet, Maryinsky to Kirov*, Croesor: Zena Publications, p. 99. Likewise, Lisa C. Arkin and Marian Smith ask a question that could be equally posed towards Petipa’s use of *épaulement*: “Anecdotal evidence suggests that folk dances were ‘balleticized’ [in ballets of the Romantic period]; could the *danse d’école* have remained utterly unaffected by the various approaches to nationally-styled *épaulement* and *ports de bras* that dancers and choreographers knew so well?”. Arkin and Smith (1997) ‘National Dance in the Romantic Ballet’ in *Rethinking the Sylph*, pp. 11-68, p. 55.

³⁷ A study of the unique and uneasy position occupied by Poland, for example, as regards the Russian appropriation of Polish dance music (including the mazurka form) in the nineteenth century, is made in Goldberg’s ‘Appropriating Poland’.

³⁸ The primary version of the ballet taken for analysis is that performed by The Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, London on 5 December 2006. The role of Aurora was danced by Alina Cojocaru. The 2006 production was produced by Monica Mason after Ninette de Valois and Nicholas Sergeyev, and is a reconstruction of the Sadler’s Wells Ballet’s *The Sleeping Beauty* of 1946. Sergeyev had first mounted the ballet on The Royal Ballet’s incipient company, The Vic-Wells Ballet, in 1939. This earlier staging was titled *The Sleeping Princess*, and was based choreographically on Sergeyev’s notations (made in the Stepanov system) of the ballet as it was staged originally under Petipa at the Imperial Theatres, where and at which point Sergeyev worked as the company’s *régisseur*. See Scholl’s *Sleeping Beauty*, pp. viii, 103. A second version of the ballet used comparatively for analysis is that performed by The Mariinsky Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, in 1999. The role of Aurora is danced by Eugenia Obraztsova. This 1999 production was produced by Sergei Vikharev and is a reconstruction of Petipa’s original choreography based on Sergeyev’s notation. See Ismene Brown (2010) ‘Reconstructing Ballet’s Past 2: Master Restorer Sergei Vikharev’, *theartsdesk.com*, online article, available from: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/dance/reconstructing-ballets-past-2-master-restorer-sergei-vikharev> [Accessed 27/03/13]. The Mariinsky’s 1999 production shows a slightly different version, in terms of vocabulary, of Aurora’s Act III variation to the one described here (where analysis is based primarily on the Royal Ballet’s 2006 production). However, both Auroras open their respective solos with the taxonomy of alignments and advanced *épaulement* emphasised in my analysis. For details of the recordings used for performance analysis, see the Appendix.

³⁹ Balanchine had left the Ballets Russes after Diaghilev’s death in 1929. He was subsequently engaged at the Paris Opéra, the Royal Danish Ballet, and René Blum’s Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, before becoming artistic director of Les Ballets 1933, whose first, and only, London season placed him for a meeting with Kirstein in July of 1933. See the entry on Balanchine in Horst Koegler (1982) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet*, Second Edition, London: Oxford University Press, p. 30; and Kirstein (1973) *The New York City Ballet*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 16.

⁴⁰ For details of Kirstein's and Balanchine's respective American ventures before founding Ballet Society in 1946, which would become the NYCB in 1948, see Kirstein's *The New York City Ballet*, pp. 21-97, and Garafola (2005a) *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 239-42. Garafola also provides an overview of Kirstein's fundraising efforts and society connections at this time in (2005b) 'Lincoln Kirstein, Modern Dance, and the Left: The Genesis of an American Ballet' *Dance Research*, 23: 1, (Summer), pp. 18-35. I am broadly indebted to Garafola's careful archival work for information of the economic-bureaucratic framework that supported the NYCB.

⁴¹ Nelson Rockefeller wrote personal cheques to SAB and the NYCB in 1934 and 1948 respectively. See Garafola (2002) 'Dollars for Dance: Lincoln Kirstein, City Center, and the Rockefeller Foundation' *Dance Chronicle* 25:1, pp. 101-114, pp. 102-103. In 1953, the Rockefeller Foundation donated a total of \$200,000 to New York's City Center; a sum split evenly between its resident ballet and opera companies for the creation of new works over a three-year period (*ibid.*: 101). In 1959, the Ford Foundation supported the new scholarship programme of SAB and, in 1963, it awarded "the lion's share a \$7.7 million grant" to the NYCB (*ibid.*: 110).

⁴² For an explication of how philanthropy in the North American context, and, especially in the cultural space of New York City, came to function as "a mark of class status that contributes to defining and maintaining the cultural and organizational boundaries of elite life", see Francie Ostrower (1995) *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (citation p. 6). For a case study specific to New York of the mid-twentieth century (concerning the construction of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts), see Wesley Janz (1984) 'Theaters of Power: Architectural and Cultural Productions', *Journal of Architectural Education* 50: 4, (May), pp. 230-243.

⁴³ After the October Revolution of 1917, the Imperial Ballet was renamed as the ballet company of the State Academic Theatre of Petrograd and renamed again, in 1935, for Sergey Kirov, the assassinated leader of the Leningrad Communist Party. For an overview of Soviet ballet in the early period of 1917–1927, see Elizabeth Souritz (1990) *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson, ed., with additional translation by Sally Banes, London: Dance Books, as well as Banes's introduction to this volume (pp. 1-19).

⁴⁴ Bourdieu's broader discussion of the 'artistic freedom' afforded by the differing economic constitutions of a given artistic field is, of course, more broadly nuanced. Accordingly, he accounts for the notion that an infrastructure based on resources limited by private interest and commercial success brings its own aesthetic restrictions. For a focussed exposition of this, see *The Rules of Art* pp. 141-173 and pp. 214-249. In the case of Balanchine's productions for the NYCB, this same nuance is illustrated in an interview of 1972. Upon being asked who made decisions for the set designs of his ballets, whether it was he, the choreographer, Balanchine answered: "No. Money. It depends on how much you have to spend". Balanchine (1992) 'Work in Progress' in *Dance as Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present*, Second Edition, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, Hightstown: Dance Horizons/ Princeton Book Company, pp. 187-192, p. 189.

⁴⁵ For details of what Garafola has categorised as Fokine's 'liberating aesthetic', Nijinsky's 'vanguard poetic', and Massine's futurist inflected modernism, see Garafola (1989) *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, New York: Da Capo Press, pp. 3-49, 50-75, and 76-97.

⁴⁶ Balanchine enrolled in the Imperial Ballet School in 1914 and graduated in 1921, by which time the school had been renamed the Leningrad State Choreographic School. His teachers included Pavel Gerdt, who had studied under Petipa and Johansson, and had originated the role of Désiré in *The Sleeping Beauty*. See Koegler's entries for Balanchine and Gerdt in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet*, pp. 30 and 172. See also Arlene Croce (1998) 'George Balanchine' in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 255-272, p. 255.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the place of the body in North American theatrical culture before the twentieth century, its delimitation according to the moral holdings of Puritanism, and the societal shifts that gradually loosened this constriction, see Helen Thomas (1995) *Dance, Modernity and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 31-52.

⁴⁸ For details of the 'first generation', North American female practitioners who pioneered modern dance both at home and in Europe (notably, Isadora Duncan, Loïe Fuller, and Ruth St. Denis), see: Thomas's *Dance, Modernity and Culture*, pp. 53-84; Isa Partsch-Bergsohn (1994) *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States: Crosscurrents and Influences*, Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, pp. 49-53; and Banes's *Dancing Women*, pp. 66-93.

⁴⁹ Thomas has noted that a crucial distinction should be made between the parallel 'national' projects of Kirstein and Graham in the 1930s, which, she proposes, were "concerned with establishing an American cultural identity", and the kind of aesthetic 'nationalism' associated by both of these "liberal-minded" Americans with contemporary fascist movements in Europe, of which both were fiercely critical, if not outright condemning. *Dance, Modernity and Culture*, p. 131.

⁵⁰ This correspondence is cited in Garafola's 'Lincoln Kirstein, Modern Dance, and the Left', p. 22.

- ⁵¹ A continuing displacement of Native Americans – both geographically, from territory lost through warfare or ceded under United States-dictated trade agreements, and symbolically, from the consolidation of the idea of a North American ‘nationhood’ – is necessarily absent from the myth of a ‘land of promise’ attached to the Euro-American expansion. For details of Native American displacement in both these senses, see Armstrong Starkey (1998) *European and Native American Warfare 1675–1815*, London: UCL Press, pp. 1-16, 137-166.
- ⁵² For details of the myth of the American landscape as imagined in these North American artistic practices see: R. W. B. Lewis (1955) *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 90-109; Linda S. Ferber (2009) *The Hudson River School: Nature and the American Vision*, New York: The New-York Historical Society; and Joseph W. Reed (1984) *Three American Originals: John Ford, William Faulkner, and Charles Ives*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 3-8.
- ⁵³ Balanchine cited in Claudia Cassidy’s article ‘On the Aisle’ for the *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, 17 August 1935. This citation is reproduced in Jowitz (1988) *Time and the Dancing Image*, New York: William Morrow, pp. 255.
- ⁵⁴ Balanchine’s Broadway commissions over this period included choreography for Josephine Baker upon her return to New York in the 1936 Ziegfeld Follies; for the 1936 Rodgers and Hart musical *On Your Toes*, for which he produced the “jazz-tap ballet” ‘Slaughter on Tenth Avenue’; and the 1940, Vernon Duke musical *Cabin in the Sky*, on which he collaborated with Katherine Dunham. Banes (1993a) ‘Balanchine and Black Dance’, *Choreography and Dance* 3: 3, pp. 59-77, pp. 67-8.
- ⁵⁵ Performance analysis for *Agon* is based primarily on a recording of the *pas de deux* danced by Darcey Bussell and Lindsay Fischer at the New York State Theatre, New York, in Spring 1993. This recording was broadcast by PBS television in 1993 as part of their *Great Performances: Dance in America* series, and was titled ‘The Balanchine Celebration: Part Two’. The video recording of this performance used for analysis is as follows: *The Balanchine Celebration: Part Two* (1996), prod. Nonesuch Records, WarnerVision Entertainment, © The George Balanchine Trust. Originally broadcast as an episode of PBS *Great Performances: Dance in America*, prod. Thirteen/WNET, New York, [1993]. Analysis is also based on the author’s viewing of a live performance of *Agon* by the New York City Ballet at the London Coliseum, London, in March 2008. The *pas de deux* was danced by Wendy Whelan and Albert Evans.
- ⁵⁶ Flowers notes an example of such a confrontation in his discussion of Nikita Khrushchev’s United States tour of 1959, during which the Soviet premier and his wife were invited to visit the Empire State Building. See Flowers (2009) *Skyscraper: The Politics and Power of Building New York City in the Twentieth Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 70.
- ⁵⁷ The version used for analysis here is a recording of the solo danced by Janet Eilber, recorded in Nashville, Tennessee in 1976. This recording was first broadcast by PBS television in 1976 as part of their *Great Performances: Dance in America* series, and was titled ‘Martha Graham Dance Company’. The video recording of this performance used for analysis is as follows: Merrill Brockway (dir.) (1998) *Martha Graham Dance Company*, prod. Emile Ardolino, New York: Nonesuch Records. Originally broadcast as an episode of *Great Performances: Dance in America*, prod. Thirteen/WNET, New York, [1976].
- ⁵⁸ For a discussion of the cross-pollination of German and American dance expressionism see Dee Reynolds (2001) *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham*, London: Dance Books, and Partsch-Bergsohn’s *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States*.
- ⁵⁹ Italics my own.
- ⁶⁰ For further details of Laban’s early biography, see John Hodgson (1998) *Mastering Movement: The Life and Work of Rudolf Laban*, London: Methuen, pp. 16-24.
- ⁶¹ My discussion of volkish thought is guided by George Mosse (1998) *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York: Howard Fertig, pp. 4-17, and has also been informed by Jeffrey Herf (1984) *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15-17.
- ⁶² For a full account of Monte Verità between the years 1900–1920, see Martin Green (1985) *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins: Ascona, 1900–1920*, Hanover and London: University Press of New England. Some of the notable figures who spent time at the commune were Otto Gross, Carl Jung, Herman Hesse, Franz Kafka, and Isadora Duncan.
- ⁶³ For an analytical breakdown of the ‘mechanics’ of the movement scale, see Laban (1966) *Choreutics*, annotated and ed. Lisa Ullmann, London: MacDonald and Evans, pp. 68-82.
- ⁶⁴ In her biography of Laban, Valerie Preston-Dunlop includes a 1947 photograph taken by Roland Watkins of dancer Geraldine Stephenson who is in the midst of “demonstrating *choreutics*” within a life-sized *icosahedron* frame. Preston-Dunlop (1986) *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life*, London: Dance Books, fig. 66.

⁶⁵ Janet Ward states that, by 1929, “more than one in four of the total population of 64.4 million Germans lived in cities of more than one hundred thousand”. Ward (2001) *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 10.

⁶⁶ For details of how the Nazification of the Movement Choir network formed part of the institutionalisation of anti-Semitism at this time, and of Laban’s own role in defining ‘German’ dance in relation to the concept of a ‘white race’, see: Carole Kew (1999) ‘From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance: The Rise and Fall of Rudolf Laban’s ‘Festkultur’’, *Dance Research* 17: 2, (Winter), pp. 73-96, pp. 78 and 93 n 41; Lilian Karina and Marion Kant (2003) *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 85-87 and 317-19; and Laban (2003) ‘Letter to Herr von Keudell, Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, 11 February 1935, (Bundesarchiv 50.01 237)’ in *Hitler's Dancers*, pp. 217-8.

⁶⁷ For a full account of Laban’s changing status within the RKK, his eventual departure from Germany in November 1937 to settle, via Paris, at Dartington Hall in England, and the simultaneous re-designation of the role of dance within the Nazi state, see Karina and Kant’s *Hitler's Dancers*, pp. 124-135.

⁶⁸ Schultze-Naumburg was appointed by Nazi minister Wilhelm Frick who had been elected in December 1929 as the state of Thuringia’s representative to the Reichstag. Frick’s instatement consolidated the local shift to the political right that had led to the Bauhaus’s move from Weimar to Dessau in 1925. Stephanie Barron (1991) ‘Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany’ in *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Modern Art, pp. 9-23, p. 12.

⁶⁹ For a details of the founding of the Deutscher Werkbund, and the programmes it implemented for the reform of the German design economy, see Frederic J. Schwartz (1996) *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture Before the First World War*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 1-17.

⁷⁰ For details of Schlemmer’s biography prior to, during, and after his post at the Bauhaus, see Schlemmer (1972) *The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer*, selected and ed. Tut Schlemmer, trans. Krishna Winston, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 3-5, 93-95, and 177-9.

⁷¹ Details of the *Triadic Ballet*’s production history are drawn from: RoseLee Goldberg (2001) *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 111-113; Schlemmer’s *Letters and Diaries*, pp. 93, 177, 251; and Karl Toepfer (1997) *Empire and Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910–1935*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 139-144.

⁷² Performance analysis of the *Triadic Ballet* is based on a video recording of a reconstruction of the work made in 1968 in Stuttgart, directed by Helmut Amann. The ballet was reconstructed by Margarete Hasting, Franz Schömb, and Georg Verden, with the artistic advisement of Tut Schlemmer, Xanti Schawinsky, and Ludwig Gröte.

⁷³ For a discussion of the Bauhaus notion of ‘totality’ as a reformulation of Richard Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* – a discussion that chimes with but is beyond the contextualising scope of this chapter – see: Matthew Wilson Smith (2007) *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 48-70.

⁷⁴ Schawinsky’s pedagogical and performance practice at Black Mountain in the late 1930s was intended to reawaken the experiments in total theatre in which he had been involved at the Bauhaus Stage in Weimar and Dessau, and Mary Emma Harris describes it thus: “The stage was to be a laboratory for synthesizing through nonanalytical, non-literary means ideas being explored in all disciplines of the curriculum, including contemporary, scientific, philosophical, and artistic concepts”. Harris (1987) *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p. 40. A Bauhaus-informed exploration of formal abstraction in the theatre was sustained in the Light Sound Movement Workshop conducted by Betty and Pete Jennerjahn a decade later, of which Harris surmises, “the class created short theater pieces using projected slides, painted backdrops, music, dance, and, at times, verbal texts or themes” (ibid.: 208). For further details of experiments in multi-formal performance conducted at the college until the early 1950s, notably Schawinsky’s *Spectodrama* projects of 1936-7 and the Light Sound Movement Workshop in the years 1949-51, see: Schawinsky (1971a) ‘From the Bauhaus to Black Mountain’, *The Drama Review* 15: 3, (Summer), pp. 30-44; Schawinsky (1971b) ‘Play Life Illusion’, *The Drama Review* 15: 3, (Summer), pp. 45-59; Schawinsky (1973) *my 2 years at black mountain college, n.c.*, account written for the Black Mountain College Research Project, 1970–1972, [Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin]; Harris’s *The Arts at Black Mountain*, pp. 40-45, 208-10; Martin Duberman (1974) *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*, London: Wildwood House, pp. 98-99; and Vincent Katz (2003) ‘Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art’ in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 13-235, pp. 75, 137-8.

⁷⁵ As is suggested by Richard Kostelanetz, Cage did not assign a title to this piece. Kostelanetz (1980) *The Theatre of Mixed-Means*, New York: RK Editions, p. 57. He later referred to it as both an event and a Happening, and historians of his work have even used a formal title, *Theater Piece No. 1*. However, for

purposes of consistency and in anticipation of Cunningham's later use of the word 'event' in the presentation of his own practice, this performance shall be referred to as the 1952 event.

⁷⁶ My use of the term 'mixed-media' follows Kostelanetz's classification of what he terms 'mixed-means' theatre in North American (and largely New York based) avant-garde performance practice in the middle decades of the twentieth century. He defines this genre in its contradistinction to "literary mono-mean practice", which, while conceivably incorporating multiple artistic forms within a single work, nevertheless proceeds in service of illustrating a singular, overriding, and usually textually driven narrative. See *The Theatre of Mixed-Means*, p. xi. Kostelanetz has referred to Cage as "the putative father of the mixed-means theatre", identifying the 1952 event as the very first of its kind in North America (ibid.: 50).

⁷⁷ While Schlemmer's theatrical projects at the Bauhaus and those conducted by Schawinsky at Black Mountain are not one and the same, the latter's *Spectodrama* owed its conceptual origins and aesthetic materials to models established in the former's theory and practice. This is made especially clear, for example, in the conceptual resonances that Schawinsky's later writings bear with Schlemmer's early theory for Bauhaus publications and courses (the stated aim of his Black Mountain theatre practice, for instance, was "to get at total experience"), and in Albers's reported recognition of "the extent to which the [*Spectodrama*] performances, which seemed innovative and original to the [Black Mountain] students, were derivative of Schlemmer's work". See Schawinsky's *my 2 years at black mountain college*, p. 2 ("total experience"), and Harris's *The Arts at Black Mountain*, p. 45 (Albers's opinion).

⁷⁸ See Duberman's *Black Mountain*, pp. 19-54 and Harris's *The Arts at Black Mountain*, pp. 2-7, for a full account of the events that led to the founding of Black Mountain College.

⁷⁹ For Dewey's discussion of the need for a national educational reform that could address the societal shifts of late nineteenth-century industrialisation and urbanisation, and do so by cultivating a democratic form of communal engagement, see: Dewey (2008) *The School and Society*, Delhi: Aakar Books, especially pp. 7-24, and (1997) *Democracy and Education*, New York: The Free Press, especially pp. 81-99.

⁸⁰ For an account of the construction of the Lake Eden site, see Duberman's *Black Mountain*, pp. 155-160 and Harris's *The Arts at Black Mountain*, pp. 56-65.

⁸¹ Cited in Duberman's *Black Mountain*, p. 169.

⁸² The Cunningham/Cage visits to Black Mountain took place in the spring and the summer of 1948; in the spring and the summer of 1952, and in the summer of 1953. For details of these residences see Duberman's *Black Mountain*, pp. 277-92, 346-62, and David Vaughan (1997) *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, Chronicle and Commentary by David Vaughan, ed. Melissa Harris, New York: Aperture, pp. 63-8, 72-80.

⁸³ In his autobiography, Rice writes: "Black Mountain was to be education for democracy. The college was not, we said, an end; it was a means. Such a dichotomy of life is moral irresponsibility; some of us knew that, some did not. Here was another division. If it was to be education for democracy, if that was its end, that must also be its means: it must be education in democracy". Rice (1947) *I Came Out of the Eighteenth Century*, First Edition, New York and London: Harper & Brothers, p. 327. For a representative instance of the inconsistency with which Rice himself employed this principle of an education both 'for and in democracy', see Duberman's comprehensive *Black Mountain*, pp. 122-40, on the 'schism' that divided the college in 1936 over the question of Rice's perceived abuse of power as self-appointed leader of the community.

⁸⁴ In his *Black Mountain*, Duberman cites from an interview he conducted with Merce Cunningham on 18 December, 1967. All subsequent citations of Cunningham attributed to Duberman here refer to this same interview.

⁸⁵ Additional details have been located in the following sources: Duberman's *Black Mountain*, pp. 350-8; and William Fetterman (1996) *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, pp. 97-104.

⁸⁶ There exist two different published transcriptions of this interview. The first is published in Kostelanetz's *The Theatre of Mixed Means*, pp. 50-63. The second, (from which this particular citation, cut from the first transcription, is derived) is published in Kostelanetz (ed.) (1971) *John Cage*, London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, pp. 6-35.

⁸⁷ In an interview conducted in 1980, Cunningham revealed his consternation that during his company's early tours to Europe he and Cage were so frequently asked about their 'politics'. He went on to state: "Now I begin to understand. But what we represent is in a sense no government". Earlier in this interview he reinforced such a position by claiming: "We represent anarchy so to speak. John Cage does more than anybody else. He speaks out so openly against all governments". Cunningham and Jacqueline Lesschaeve (1985) *The Dancer and the Dance*, London and New York: Marion Boyars, pp. 164, 162.

⁸⁸ Although Cunningham has stated in a BBC Radio Three interview with John Tusa that he had "leaned more from" Cage during their partnership than vice versa, there are many instances in which their respective practice appears to be quite divergent. Merce Cunningham and John Tusa (2003) *The John Tusa Interviews: Merce Cunningham*, BBC Radio Three, first broadcast 7 December 2003, online transcript, available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/cunningham_transcript.shtml [Accessed

23/07/11]. Just one example would be their differing uses of indeterminacy. As observed by Vaughan, Cage “abandoned [absolute] authority in the performance of his music”, preferring to give musicians very loose instructions that they could determine in performance as they chose: as was the case, for example, with the 1952 event. See Vaughan’s *Merce Cunningham*, p. 125. However, according to Vaughan, Cunningham “was too much of a choreographer to be willing to relinquish that [same] control” and his subsequent maintenance, for the most part, of a singular authority over his choreographic score will be discussed later on in this chapter (*ibid.*).

⁸⁹ Archive source. Merce Cunningham, ‘Taped and Filmed: I / 31 / 83’, Production Notes for *Coast Zone* (1983), Merce Cunningham Dance Company Archive, Merce Cunningham Dance Studio, New York.

⁹⁰ See Roger Copeland (2004) *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 229-245.

⁹¹ In the early 1960s Cunningham experimented with a certain degree of indeterminacy in his choreography, permitting his dancers to make their own decisions during performance regarding “tempo, direction, and whether to do certain movements or not”. *The Dancer and the Dance*, p. 150. This was the case in 1963, for example, with both *Field Dances* and *Story*. However, for the vast majority of his dances, decisions regarding movement content were pre-determined by Cunningham himself.

⁹² During his short time at SAB, Cunningham trained with one of the Petersburg-schooled teachers employed by Balanchine and Kirstein. He recalled in interview with Lesschaeve: “Then I went to the American Ballet School and there was a particularly wonderful teacher named [Anatole] Obukhov, an old Russian”. *The Dancer and the Dance*, p. 68.

⁹³ The first work for which Cunningham used chance operations was *Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three* (1951).

⁹⁴ Merce Cunningham and Dance Company, which consisted of Cunningham and the seven dancers with whom he had been working that summer, gave its inaugural performances at Black Mountain College on 21 and 22 August 1953. A modified version of this programme was taken to the Theater de Lys that winter for the company’s first official New York season. The other four works presented alongside *Suite For Chance* were the chance-composed *Solo Suite in Space and Time* and *Solo* (later known as *Untitled Solo*) (both choreographed 1953) and the non-chance composed *Septet* (1953) and *Rag-Time Parade* (1950). See Vaughan’s *Merce Cunningham*, pp. 73-80.

⁹⁵ Examples of Cunningham’s presentation of *Events* in gymnasium, gallery spaces, open-air public spaces, and the proscenium stage respectively are: *Gymnasium Event #1*, Queensborough Community College, New York, April 1968; *Beacon Events*, seven performances given at Dia: Beacon Museum, New York, 2007–2009; *Event*, Piazza San Marco, Venice, as part of the Venice Biennale of 1972; and *Event*, Barbican Theatre, London, June 2005.

⁹⁶ See, in particular, Moira Roth’s (1998) seminal essay of 1977, ‘The Aesthetic of Indifference’, in Moira Roth and Jonathan Katz, *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage*, Amsterdam: G & B Arts International, pp. 33-47, as well as Copeland’s *Merce Cunningham*, p. 35. For further details on Cunningham’s cultivation of an aesthetic of ‘cool’, especially in the context of New York avant-garde practice of the 1950s and 1960s, see Maria Shevtsova (2007) *Robert Wilson*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 14-18.

⁹⁷ For a delineation of the terminology used to distinguish dance works made for different types of screen media, see Kent de Spain (2000) ‘Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans’, *Dance Research Journal* 32: 1, (Summer), pp. 2-17, p. 5.

⁹⁸ For an overview of the technical capacities of video and film and their distinction from one another, as well as from digital media, see Sean Cubitt (1993) *Videography: Video Media as Art and Culture*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. xi-xix.

⁹⁹ Archive source. Merce Cunningham, ‘Taped and Filmed : I / 31 / 83’. For full catalogue listing see note 89 above.

¹⁰⁰ Manovich has stated that “cinema followed [the] logic of industrial production... It replaced all other modes of narration with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of shots which appear on the screen one at a time”. See Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p. 270.

¹⁰¹ In his *Merce Cunningham*, for example, Copeland has commented that “perhaps coincidentally (perhaps not), this wire-frame body-prototype [produced in the *LifeForms* computer program] looks remarkably like some of the more robotic designs from Oskar Schlemmer’s 1922 *Triadic Ballet*” (p. 191). Johannes Birringer has similarly suggested that in Cunningham’s later digital collaborations with Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar, Schlemmer’s “Bauhaus aesthetic [had] come full circle”. Birringer (1999) ‘Contemporary Performance/Technology’, *Theatre Journal* 51: 4, *Theatre and Technology*, (December), pp. 361-381, p.364.

¹⁰² Archive source. Merce Cunningham, ‘Taped and Filmed : I / 31 / 83’. For full catalogue listing see note 89 above.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Alastair Macaulay, in his article ‘Communing With A Master in a Long Farewell’ for the *New York Times*, 31 May 2010, has explained how Cunningham was not completely dependent on the *LifeForms* program in that he reverted to an ‘old style’ of choreographing specific phrases on the bodies of specific dancers in his final work, *Nearly Ninety*.

¹⁰⁵ The foregoing description of the basic structural components of *BIPED* is drawn from: Copeland’s *Merce Cunningham*, pp. 193-196; Ann Dils (2002) ‘The Ghost in the Machine: Merce Cunningham and Bill T. Jones’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24: 1, (January), pp. 94-104, pp. 94-5; and Paul Kaiser (no date, a.) ‘*BIPED*: Illustrated Essay’, online essay, available from: <http://openendedgroup.com/index.php/artworks/biped/essay/> [Accessed 26.08.11]. The following analysis of choreography is made in relation to live performances in London’s Barbican Theatre in October 2008 and October 2011, as well as recordings of the work shown in Episode 004 of the online series *Mondays With Merce*. See: Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation (2009b) ‘To Get From Here to There’, *Mondays With Merce*: Episode 004, (February), online film, available from: <http://dlib.nyu.edu/merce/mwm/2009-02-23/> [Accessed 30.12.11].

¹⁰⁶ Archive source. Correspondence between Merce Cunningham and Gavin Bryars, 17 January 1999, Rehearsal and Choreography Notes, *Biped* (1999), Merce Cunningham Dance Company Archive, Merce Cunningham Dance Studio, New York. Cunningham had also given a similar indication to Kaiser and Eshkar, as suggested by Kaiser in his ‘*BIPED*: Illustrated Essay’.

¹⁰⁷ Over this time the Ballett Frankfurt worked on two stages within the Städtische Bühnen: the proscenium arch opera stage and the smaller drama stage. For information regarding these spaces, and how the Ballett Frankfurt operated within this venue under Forsythe’s directorship, see: William F. Condee and Thomas Irmer (2008) ‘Experiments with Architectural Space in the German Theatre’ in *A History of German Theatre*, ed. Simon Williams and Maik Hamburger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 248-274, pp. 266-7; Senta Driver, William Forsythe and Jennifer Tipton (2000) ‘William Forsythe and Jennifer Tipton: A Conversation About Lighting’, *Choreography and Dance* 5: 3, pp. 41-78, p. 59; and Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main (no date) ‘Technische Daten der beiden großen Bühnen’, online entry, available from: http://www.buehnen-frankfurt.de/bereiche_buehrentechnik.htm [Accessed 01/02/12].

¹⁰⁸ In private conversation with Peter Boenisch on 19 September 2005, Forsythe stated that the major artistic issue for his company was “an architectural one, of architecture and its incumbent ideologies”. See Boenisch (2007) ‘Decreation Inc.: William Forsythe’s Equations of “Bodies Before The Name”’, *Contemporary Theatre Review* 17: 2, pp. 15-27, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ *Three Atmospheric Studies* by The Forsythe Company premiered at the Bockenheimer Depot on 21 April 2005. The Ballett Frankfurt had given its final performance, of *we live here*, in April 2004, and the new company was founded in January 2005. Forsythe was already acquainted with the Bockenheimer Depot, having used it as an alternative performance space under the aegis of the Städtische Bühnen since the Ballett Frankfurt’s 1998–9 season. See: Gerald Siegmund (2011) ‘Of Monsters and Puppets: William Forsythe’s Work After the “Robert Scott Complex”’ in *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts From Any Point*, ed. Steven Spier, Oxford and New York: Routledge, pp. 20-37, pp. 23-4, 33; Rosalyn Sulcas (2005) ‘The Forsythe Company’, *Dance Magazine*, (August), pp. 76-77, p. 76; and Sulcas (2011) ‘Watching the Ballett Frankfurt, 1988–2009’ in *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, pp. 4-19, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ The labelling of Forsythe’s project as a ‘deconstructivist’ one became a formalised analytical trend in some Anglo-American and continental dance scholarship of the late 1990s, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹¹¹ This dependence on the economic health of the city is especially acute in the case of arts organisations in Frankfurt. Because it is not a state capital, this city cannot depend on the additional support of Hessen for the majority of its cultural budgeting. For details of the West German *kulturstaat* and its implementation in Frankfurt since the 1980s see: Salter (2004) ‘The Kulturstaat in the Time of Empire: Notes on Germany Thirteen Years Later’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 26: 2, (May), pp. 1-15, especially p. 5.

¹¹² For full details of these events, which included claims, in the late 1990s, that profits from the ballet’s touring programme were being diverted to fund other companies housed in the Städtische Bühnen, as well as the final negotiations between Forsythe and the city, which extended from the councillors’ call, in 2002, for the replacement of the Ballett Frankfurt with a ‘traditional’ classical company, see: Anne Midgette (2000) ‘Forsythe in Frankfurt: A Documentation in Three Movements’, *Choreography and Dance*, 5: 3, pp. 13-23, pp. 16-20; Sulcas (2002) ‘Frankfurt and Forsythe Face Off’, *Dance Magazine*, (September), pp. 19-21; and Salter’s ‘The Kulturstaat in the Time of Empire’, pp. 4-6.

¹¹³ The Forsythe Company was founded and continues to run as company-in-residence not only at the Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt (for which it draws funds from the city and from the state of Hessen) but also at the historic theatre in Hellerau, European Center for the Arts (for which it draws funds from the city of Dresden and the state of Saxony). The Bockenheimer Depot will provide the major point of focus here as the venue representing the relocation of Forsythe’s practice.

¹¹⁴ Forsythe has used the phrase ‘politics of viewing’ to characterise the subject matter of his work both within and without the proscenium arch. See Forsythe and Siegmund (2001) ‘Choreographic Thinking’, *Ballettanz International: The Year Book 2001*, (Berlin), pp. 73-74, p. 74.

¹¹⁵ Forsythe indicated in an interview with Anna Kisselgoff that he had been reading Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) while working on *Artifact*. See Kisselgoff (1987) ‘The Sound and the Flurry of William Forsythe’, *The New York Times*, 19 July.

¹¹⁶ Forsythe has explained these conditions: “We create on stage. That’s a great advantage of the German stage: one has a lot of time. Everything is worked out step by step on stage, and that’s why it looks so integrated. You can hardly ever do this in North America”. Forsythe and Jonathan Odenthal (1994) ‘A Conversation with William Forsythe on the Occasion of the *As a Garden in this Setting* Premiere, December 1993’, *Ballett International 2* (February), pp. 33-37, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ I refer here to Patricia Baudoin and Heidi Gilpin’s (1989) seminal ‘Proliferation and Perfect Disorder: William Forsythe and the Architecture of Disappearance’ in *Il Disegno Che Non fa Il Ritratto: Danza, Architettura, Notazioni*, Festival Catalogue Volume II, Reggio Emilia Festival Danza, (Reggio Emilia: I Teatri di Reggio Emilia), pp. 73-79.

¹¹⁸ Galloway’s work is also useful for providing a critically readjusted history of the network and its societal manifestations before and since the digital era. He calls for an understanding of networks neither “as abstract concepts describing shape or structure” nor as conceptual paradigms that contain the emancipatory promise of social egalitarianism, but as concrete “technologies of power, organization, and control”. Galloway (2010) ‘Networks’ in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 280-296, p. 282. While a further investigation of ‘the network’ in this sense is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge Galloway’s claim as being indicative of a recent body of work in this field that extends and problematises Castells’s earlier study. For more on this, see Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007) *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, and Geert Lovink (2003) *Dark Fiber: Tracking Critical Internet Culture*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, UK: MIT Press.

¹¹⁹ Recognising the collective nature of this process, Forsythe began crediting the choreographic work done on each production to the entire company. He also established a budgetary structure so that company members were paid for their choreographic input. As he explains in relation to *Sleepers Guts* (1996): “On our programmes everything’s credited ... and people get paid for authoring. But there are different levels of authorship. If I’ve made the material and you’re realigning it, ok you don’t get paid for it, but if you’re developing the material yourself and I need to use it, yes, you get paid for that section”. Jonathan Burrows, Dana Caspersen, and William Forsythe (1999) ‘William Forsythe and Dana Caspersen’ in *Conversations with Choreographers*, ed. Jonathan Burrows, London: Royal Festival Hall, pp. 23-29, p. 27.

¹²⁰ TAT was subject to the same councillor directed negotiations as the Ballett Frankfurt over this period. Forsythe would return to the Depot in 2005, operating his new private-public company there under a revised agreement with the city, which would provide this venue as a home for The Forsythe Company after the closure of both the Ballett Frankfurt and TAT. Siegmund (2002) ‘William Forsythe und as Ende vom TAT’, *Ballettanz* (July), pp. 14-15

¹²¹ Information regarding this installation was obtained, in part, from email correspondence with Gerald Siegmund on 15 February 2012. For further details see Spier (2011) ‘Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies’ in *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, pp. 139-150.

¹²² One might recall a scene from Mike Figgis’s documentary film about Forsythe, *Just Dancing Around?* (1996). Having discovered that the Städtische Bühnen had installed, in its foyer, a series of Cartier display cases before the premiere of a new triple bill in May 1995 (the jewellers had provided additional sponsorship to the theatre), Forsythe exclaimed: “I made a choice to work in a public theatre, and I don’t want it to become a marketplace”.

Appendix One: Images

Image 1

The Sun King in the *ballet de cour*

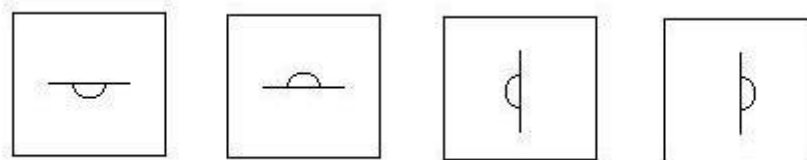


Louis XIV portrayed in his Rising Sun costume for *Le Ballet de la nuit* (1653)

Bibliothèque nationale de France, © RMN / Agence Bulloz

Image 2

Classical-balletic orientation (eighteenth-century instruction)

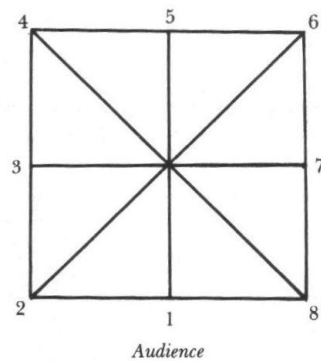


‘Squared’ directions of the body in the Feuillet system

Raoul Auger Feuillet (1706) *The Art of Dancing, Demonstrated by Characters and Figures*, translated by P. Siris, London, [Paris: 1700], Plate 1, Figures 3-5.

Image 3

Classical-balletic orientation (twentieth-century instruction)



FIXED POINTS OF THE PRACTICE ROOM OR STAGE:
RUSSIAN SCHOOL (VAGANOVA)

‘Squared’ directions of the body in the Vaganova method

Gail Grant (1982) *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*, New York: Dover Publications, [1950], p. 138.

Image 4

The social architecture of the Mariinsky auditorium



Imperial Box, Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg

Online image, available from: http://www.mariinsky.ru/en/about/history_theatre/virtual/ [Accessed 07.06.12].

Image 5

Balanchine's 'American' classicism



NYCB's Wendy Whelan and Jack Soto perform *Agon* at the New York State Theater, June 2004

Photograph © Paul Kolnik. Online image, available from:
<http://archives.danceviewtimes.com/dvny/reviews/2004/spring/nycb22.htm> [Accessed 19.07.12].

Image 6

Graham's 'American' expressionism

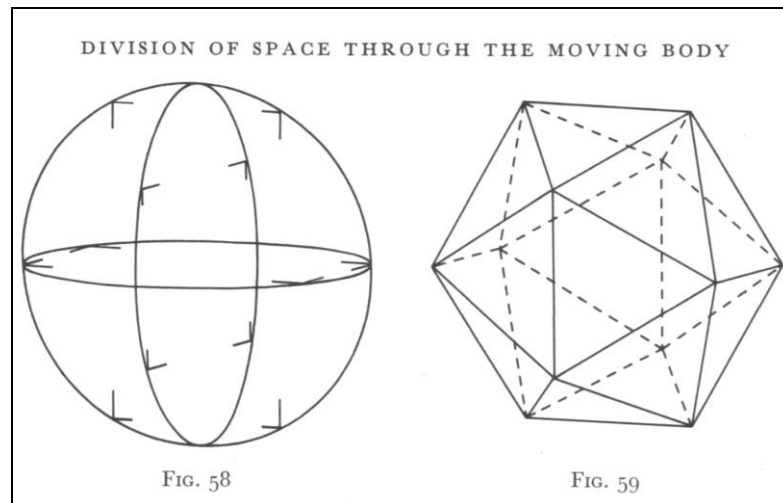


Graham as the pioneer woman in *Frontier*, set designed by Isamu Noguchi

Photograph © Barbara Morgan. Online image, available from:
<http://www.noguchi.org/setfrontier.htm> [Accessed 06.04.09]

Image 7

Laban's geometric frame for the kinesphere

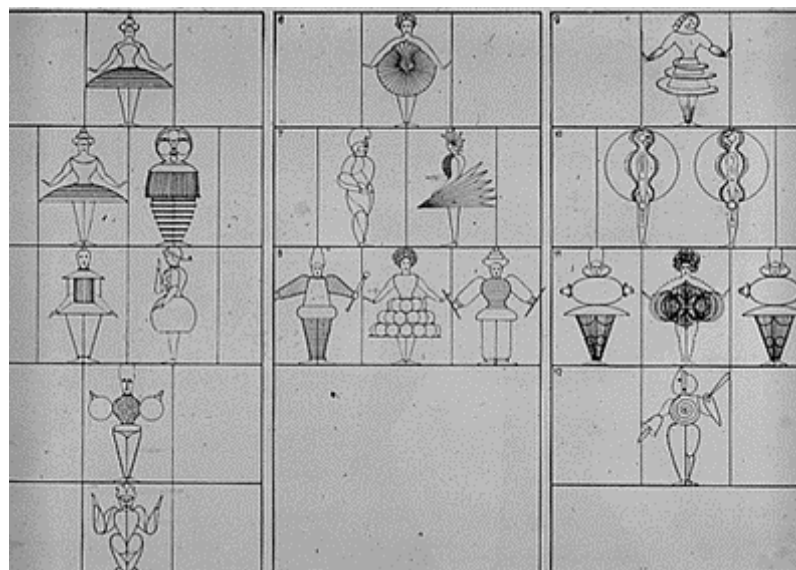


Icosahedron (Fig. 59), illustration by Lisa Ullmann

Rudolf Laban (1966) *Choreutics*, annotated and ed. Lisa Ullmann, (London: MacDonald and Evans), p.143.

Image 8

Schlemmer's schematic abstraction



'Abstract of the *Triadic Ballet*', illustration by Oskar Schlemmer

Oskar Schlemmer (1979a) 'Man and Art Figure' in *The Theater of the Bauhaus*, ed. Walter Gropius, trans. Arthur S. Wensinger, (London: Eyre Methuen), [1925], pp. 17-46, p. 38.

Image 9

The Black Mountain diagram for ‘coming together, standing together, working together’

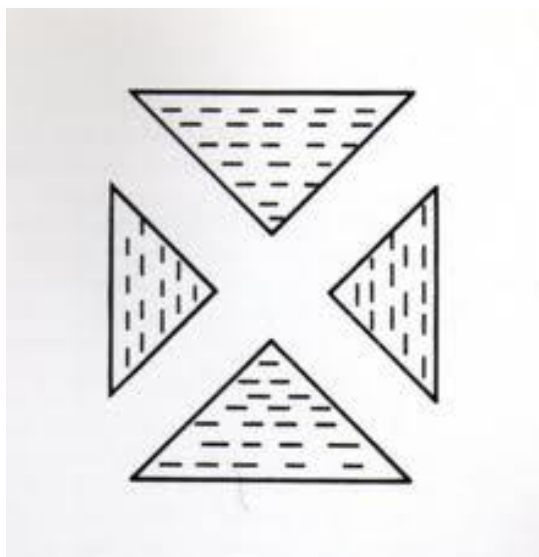


Black Mountain College seal, Joseph Albers (1935)

Mary Emma Harris (1987) *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, (Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press), p. xix.

Image 10

Cage's diagram for collaborative coexistence

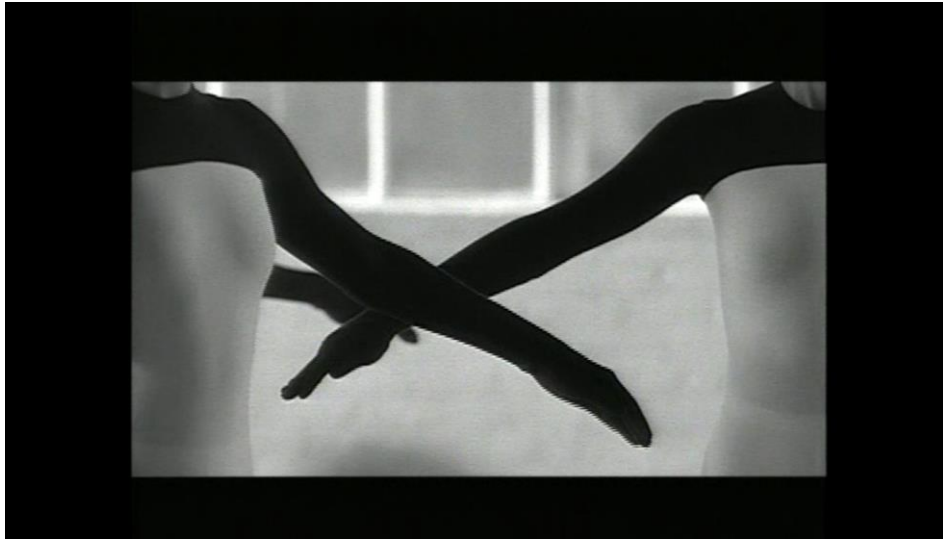


Seating plan for the 1952 event

William Fetterman (1996) *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers), p. 99.

Image 11

'Decentralist' edit in Cunningham's *Beach Birds for Camera* (1992): Opening shot



Still from *Beach Birds for Camera*

Elliot Caplan (dir.) (2006) *Merce Cunningham Collection, Volume 1: Three Films by Merce Cunningham and Elliot Caplan*, (Ashford: Quantum Leap).

Image 12

'Decentralist' edit in Cunningham's *Beach Birds for Camera* (1992): Fourth shot



Still from *Beach Birds for Camera*

Elliot Caplan (dir.) (2006) *Merce Cunningham Collection, Volume 1: Three Films by Merce Cunningham and Elliot Caplan*, (Ashford: Quantum Leap).

Image 13

Forsythe's 'counterpointed' kinesphere

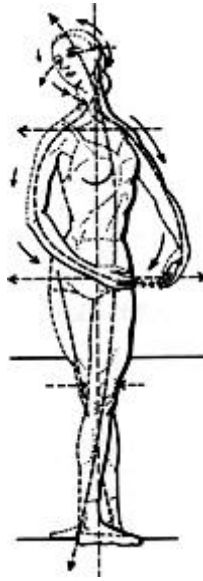


Diagram of counter-tensions in *épaulement*

William Forsythe and Paul Kaiser (1999) 'Dance Geometry: A Dialogue with William Forsythe',
Performance Research 4: 2 (Summer), pp. 64-71, p. 65.

Image 14

The space as a choreographic environment



Different zones of the Bockenheimer Depot transformation, 2003

Photograph © Nikolaus Hirsch. Online image, available from: <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/the-collaborative-legacy-of-merce-cunningham/24798/> [Accessed 02.02.12].

Appendix: Sources for Performance Analysis

A list of live and recorded performances that have provided the basis for extended passages of performance analysis included in this thesis.

Entries are listed in alphabetical order by name of dance work/production, and refer to the following works:

the 1952 event

Agon

ALIE/N A(C)TION

Beach Birds for Camera

BIPED

Blue Studio: Five Segments

Frontier

The Sleeping Beauty

Steptext

transformation of the Bockenheimer Depot

Triadic Ballet

the 1952 event (1952), produced by John Cage

Because no recording of this performance exists, extended analysis is based on information contained in the following written sources:

Cage, John, Michael Kirby, and Richard Schechner (1995) 'An Interview with John Cage' in *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. Mariellen R. Sandford, (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 51-71.

Cage, John and Richard Kostelanetz (1971) 'Conversation with John Cage' in *John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz, (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press), [1970], pp. 6-35.

Cunningham, Merce (1968) *Changes: Notes on Choreography*, ed. Frances Starr, (New York and Frankfurt am Main: Something Else Press).

Duberman, Martin (1974) *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*, (London: Wildwood House), [1972], pp. 350-8.

Fetterman, William (1996) *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, pp. 97-104.

Agon (1957), choreographed by George Balanchine

1. (Primary version used for analysis): a recording of the *pas de deux* danced by Darcey Bussell and Lindsay Fischer at the New York State Theatre, New York, in Spring 1993. The video recording used for analysis is as follows:

The Balanchine Celebration: Part Two (1996), prod. Nonesuch Records, WarnerVision Entertainment, © The George Balanchine Trust. Originally broadcast as an episode of PBS *Great Performances: Dance in America*, prod. Thirteen/WNET, New York, [1993].

2. (Secondary version used for analysis): live viewing of *Agon* performed by the New York City Ballet at the London Coliseum, London, in March 2008. The *pas de deux* was danced by Wendy Whelan and Albert Evans.

ALIE/NA(C)TION (1992), choreographed by William Forsythe and the Ballett Frankfurt

Because a recording of this work is not available, analysis is based on information contained in the following written sources:

Burrows, Jonathan, Dana Caspersen, and William Forsythe (1999) 'William Forsythe and Dana Caspersen' in *Conversations with Choreographers*, ed. Jonathan Burrows, (London: Royal Festival Hall), pp. 23-29.

Caspersen, Dana (2000) 'It Starts From Any Point: Bill and the Frankfurt Ballet', *Choreography and Dance* 5: 3, pp. 25-39.

Caspersen, Dana (2004) 'The Company at Work: How They Train, Rehearse, and Invent: The Methodologies of William Forsythe', *Ballett-Tanz Das Jahrbuch 04*, ed. Arnd Weseman and Hartmut Regitz, (Berlin: Friedrich Verlagsgesellschaft), pp. 27-32.

Forsythe, William and Paul Kaiser (1999) 'Dance Geometry: A Dialogue with William Forsythe', *Performance Research* 4: 2 (Summer), pp. 64-71.

Forsythe, William and Johannes Odenthal (1994) 'A Conversation with William Forsythe on the Occasion of the *As a Garden in this Setting* Premiere, December 1993', *Ballett International* 2, (February), pp. 33-37.

Beach Birds for Camera (1992), a film by Elliot Caplan and Merce Cunningham

The film is included, as part of a collection of Caplan/Cunningham works, in the following DVD:

Caplan, Elliot (dir.) (2006) *Merce Cunningham Collection, Volume 1: Three Films by Merce Cunningham and Elliot Caplan*, (Ashford: Quantum Leap).

BIPED (1999), choreographed by Merce Cunningham

Performance analysis is based on a combination of written, recorded, and live sources.

1. Written sources:

Copeland, Roger (2004) *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance*, (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 193-196.

Dils, Ann (2002) 'The Ghost in the Machine: Merce Cunningham and Bill T. Jones', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24: 1, (January), pp. 94-104, pp. 94-5

Kaiser, Paul (no date, a.) '*BIPED*: Illustrated Essay', online essay, available from: <http://openendedgroup.com/index.php/artworks/biped/essay/> [Accessed 26.08.11].

2. Recorded source:

Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation (2009) 'To Get From Here to There', *Mondays With Merce*: Episode 004, (February), online film, available from: <http://dlib.nyu.edu/merce/mwm/2009-02-23/> [Accessed 30.12.11].

3. Live source:

Live viewing of *BIPED* as it was performed by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the Barbican Theatre, London, in October 2008 and October 2011.

Blue Studio: Five Segments (1975–6), a videotape by Charles Atlas and Merce Cunningham

Production details of this videotape are as follows:

Atlas, Charles and Merce Cunningham (1976) *Blue Studio: Five Segments, A Videotape by Charles Atlas and Merce Cunningham*, prod. Thirteen/WNET, New York, © Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation, [Merce Cunningham Dance Company Archive, Merce Cunningham Dance Studio, New York].

Frontier (1935), choreographed by Martha Graham

Version used for analysis: a recording of the solo danced by Janet Eilber, recorded in Nashville, Tennessee in 1976. The video recording used for analysis is as follows:

Merrill Brockway (dir.) (1998) *Martha Graham Dance Company*, prod. Emile Ardolino, New York: Nonesuch Records. Originally broadcast as an episode of *Great Performances: Dance in America*, prod. Thirteen/WNET, New York, [1976].

The Sleeping Beauty (1890), choreographed by Marius Petipa

1. (Primary version used for analysis): a recording of the ballet performed by The Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, London on 5 December 2006. The role of Aurora was danced by Alina Cojocaru and that of Florimund by Federico Bonelli. This production was produced by Monica Mason and is a reconstruction of the Sadler's Wells Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty* of 1946, produced by Ninette de Valois and Nicholas Sergeyev. The DVD recording used for analysis is as follows:

Ross MacGibbon (dir.) (2008) *Tchaikovsky: The Sleeping Beauty (The Royal Ballet, 2006)*, prod. BBC / Opus Arte.

2. (Secondary version used for analysis): a recording of the ballet performed by the Mariinsky Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, in 1999. The role of Aurora was danced by Eugenia Obraztsova and that of Désiré by Anton Korsakov. This production was produced by Sergei Vikharev and is a reconstruction based on Sergeyev's Stepanov notation of Petipa's 1890 production. Footage of this performance used for analysis, which was captured from the audience, can be found here:

The Sleeping Beauty reconstruction, The Mariinsky Ballet, (1999), online film, available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1Kyq4fmDw0>, [Accessed 29/08/12].

Steptext (1985), choreographed by William Forsythe

Version used for analysis: a recording of the work performed The Royal Ballet at London's Royal Opera House in July 1997 (based on the work as this company acquired it in 1995). The work was danced by Peter Abegglen, Deborah Bull, Michael Nunn, and William Trevitt. The video recording used for analysis is as follows:

MacGibbon, Ross (dir.) (2000) *Summer Dance: Steptext*, exec. prod. Bob Lockyer for BBC2, first broadcast 24 August 2000, © BBC, London.

transformation of the Bockenheimer Depot (2003), an installation by William Forsythe, Nikolaus Hirsch and Michael Müller

Analysis of this installation is based on information contained in the following sources:

Hirsch, Nikolaus (2007) *On Boundaries*, (New York: Lukas and Sternberg).

Siegmund, Gerald (2002) 'William Forsythe und as Ende vom TAT', *Ballettanz* (July), pp. 14-15.

Siegmund, Gerald (2012) Email correspondence between AS and Gerald Siegmund, 15 February 2012.

Spier, Steven (2011) 'Choreographic Thinking and Amateur Bodies' in *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts From Any Point*, ed. Steven Spier, (Oxford and New York: Routledge), pp. 139-150.

Triadic Ballet (1922), choreographed by Oskar Schlemmer

Version used for analysis: a recording of a reconstruction of the ballet made in Stuttgart in 1968 and directed by Helmut Amann. The production was reconstructed by Margarete Hasting, Franz Schömb, and Georg Verden, with the artistic advisement of Tut Schlemmer, Xanti Schawinsky, and Ludwig Gröte. The video recording used for analysis is as follows:

Amann, Helmut (dir.) (1968) *Das Triadische Ballett*, prod. Gottfried Just and Bavaria Atelier GmbH for the Südfunk, Stuttgart, in collaboration with Inter Nationes and RTB.

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