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To Those Who Wait:

Question: We have developed an appetite for immediacy, satisfaction and overstimulation. Duration is dead. In a world of increased technological dependence and increased attention span, what is still worth our time?



photo: henry curtis

Bios:

Declan is a choreographer and dancer originally from the UK. He holds a Master in choreography from London Contemporary Dance School and a qualification in Curatorial Practice from DOCH/Uni Arts, Stockholm. His choreographic interest lies with the tensions between High Art versus Pop and Technology versus The Body. His work has been shown at Kusthal Charlottenborg, Den Frie Udstilling (Copenhagen), The Royal Opera House, The Place, Bloomsbury Festival (London), International Dance Festival Birmingham and more.

As a performer, Declan has toured internationally with National Dance Company Wales, Martin Forsberg and Helena Waldmann. In 2019, he received the danceWEB scholarship at ImPulsTanz under the mentorship of Anne Juren, Annie Dorsen and Mette Ingvarsten. In August 2019, he joins The Field, a new company-collective, based at Tanzhaus Zürich.

Simea Cavelti holds a Bachelor from London Contemporary Dance School. She worked on many occasions in the MENA region, where she also had several residencies for her own projects. Her works have been performed at Roundhouse and Trip Space in London, Südpol Lucerne, Tojo Theatre and Dampfzentrale Bern, Fête de la danse Switzerland. She has worked with choreographers such as Joshua Monten, Emanuel Gat, Renate Graziadei, Fabrice Mazliah, Karin Hermes, Marcel Leemann, Declan Whitaker and Marie Alexis as well as the visual arts/performance director Omar Ghayatt. Currently she collaborates as a dancer and choreographer with director/author Maria Ursprung for 'The History of the Soldat' in the frame of the Lucerne Festival and continues to develop her independent research.

Celina Liesegang is a London based artist specialising in performance, choreography and music. Her work has been presented both nationally and internationally in venues including the Südpol Luzern (CH), Linbury Studio Theatre (Royal Opera House), Robin Howard Dance Theatre (The Place), Victoria and Albert Museum. Celina trained at London Contemporary Dance School. During her time there she attended the California Institute of the Arts working with Lucky Plush Productions choreographer Julia Rhoads. She later undertook the JV2 Professional Development Certificate where she performed alongside Jasmin Vardimon Company in Maze as well as on JV2's UK Tour. She is now an Education Facilitator with the Jasmin Vardimon Company.

Riccardo T. is an Italian performance artist based in London. After finishing his studies at La Scala and working in ballet he moved to London at 20 years old to study at London Contemporary Dance School. Since 2014 after graduating from LCDS he has been creating live art work with Antonio Branco, and working with other artists such as Donna Huanca, Nadim Abbas, and Clod Ensemble. Riccardo's practice focus on themes of queerness, contemporary sexuality, gender norms, porn consumption, and fetishisation.

The Process:

Between applying for a research period and conducting the research our question shifted quite a lot. We luckily ended up having the chance to work together on this research on two previous occasions at DanceXchange in Birmingham, England. The work we embarked on at Forsøgsstationen was already in motion and by the time we met again the question had moved on.

My initial proposal was centred around duration, specifically in relation to contemporary dance performance. I was interested in asking, why do we value longer works? And in interrogating the idea: ***Can a 1 minute dance be just as valuable as a 1 hour dance?***

By the time we arrived for the research at Forsøgsstationen we were much more interested in the passing of time and how in our hyper saturated world there is little opportunity to slow down. Our focus was on exploring ways to experience time physically.

Some tasks that we did to achieve this were:

1. We took a silent walk together and tried to experience a full hour. When we collectively agreed an hour had passed, we returned to the studio.
2. We tried to dance to loud techno, without a clock, for what we perceived to be 2 hours.
3. We sang for one minute with a timer and then one minute without a timer.
4. We worked for twenty minutes taking a 2 minute break every minute.

This realisation of our shift in interest meant we could dive deeper into our research and delve into a deeply rigorous physical practice. This propelled the work further than if we had begun from scratch and was extremely meaningful.

The previous preparation also meant we had developed a common understanding on how we worked best together. We were able to jump forwards with the new research ideas and during this time the work even changed title twice, from: **The Death of Duration** to **For The Time Being** and then **To Those Who Wait**.

The process was a continual dialogue, questioning both the physical possibilities to express the questions and also questioning the social relevance of the question itself.

We arrived at the following:

- How has the speeding up of society impacted on the possibility to engage in conversations or discussions with nuance, uncertainty and pauses?
- How do we expect the news to be presented to us?
- Are we still able to pay attention to something without having the craving to do something fast/stressful/multi-present?
- How has our need for speed affected our personal relationships?

What we learned:

Since we were working a lot with the idea of speed, we wanted to find a method to draw attention to slowness. Initially we were playing with contrasts and extremes. Finding material that would look slow because it was contrasted against something much quicker.

Actually what became present, was to perceive the slowness, the audience themselves had to be confronted by their need-for-speed. We realised that we had to find a way to force the audience to really sit with themselves and to experience all the frustrations, anxieties and wishes, being exposed to such extreme slowness conjures. It wasn't enough to represent slowness, we had to make people experience how they feel when are subjected to it.

We realised that actually we have become so used to being overloaded, that to feel stressed nowadays is to feel somewhat normal. To have a constant barrage of information and to not let oneself sit and think for a moment is the new normal.

Our research was very discursive. We spent a lot of time looking at references online. This helped us arrive at a common understanding aesthetically. Even if the references and inspirations didn't obviously inform the research, this constant input was a way of filling the space with ideas that hung in the air, sunk in slowly or gave a springboard to jump from for new ideas.

The physical practice:

The most important part of the research was developing a way to work that allowed the dancers to enter the physical world we were trying to enter.

Through the research, and in my opinion, most vitally, we developed an hour long preparation that was for both mind and body, that combined all our questions into a physical practice.

The preparation allowed the dancers to work on:

- Extreme slowness
- Staying physically 'alive' in slowness, with regard to focus, gaze, tone in the body.
- To keep the slowness interesting
- How to breath through the slowness
- Virtuosity in slow motion
- Relaxing the muscles

The breath became an amazingly important tool. One technique we developed was to question how it is to dance in the pause between your inhale and exhale. How to exist in that brief moment of silence before moving on.

It was both physically useful and artistically elegant. It allowed the dancers to combine both aspects of the work and to have a concrete and reliable resource to continue working at such a slow pace.

This practice was also something that I have developed into a workshop and taught for the professional dance training at Dansehallerne and DanceXchange.

Afterwards:

Last year's research was a fulfilling opportunity to initiate an exciting work. Now, continuing with this project, I was able to move out of the studio and onto the stage and to take into account audience reactions. We presented a final work at the Resolution festival in London at The Place, in February 2019. The artistic growth and refinement of the ideas was largely shaped during our research at Forsøgsstationen and I'm sure the work we presented would not have been as polished had we not dedicated time to proper research and investigation. Presenting the final work at The Place was important, not only as it is a venue at the forefront of contemporary dance, but as they initiate schemes such as Choreodrome, WorkPlace and are an Aerowaves partner, all of which are of significant interest to me.

The project consolidated a group of collaborators whom I deeply trust. We have accumulated a shared knowledge from the research and its with their collaboration that this work achieved its best potential: to tackle my questions and to create the most interesting work possible for the public.



Reviews of the final work:

Original Link:

<https://www.theplace.org.uk/blog/resolution-review-2019/wed-13-feb-triangle-motioncharlie-hendren-dance-theatredeclan-whitaker>

While the first two pieces felt like full-length programmes, Declan Whitaker's work was uncomplicated, minimalist and quite frankly a bit of a relief as a coda to the evening. Three dancers build choreographic material with a meditative focus. Very little seems to happen apart from slight shifts in the body, the twitching of a finger, a slight incline of the head. It's time to zone out as we watch material develop, sequences materialise - in silence. Jarring techno music sporadically galvanises the performers into different

phases of bigger, faster action and new languages evolve but always return to the initial sanctuary of stillness and silence. Surprisingly cathartic.

Choreographer Zhi Xu packs complex choreography, inventive technology and props into *Dialogue: X-Body* with an insatiable creative energy. Digital graphics provide a mystical backdrop and trace the progression of dusk to dawn and within these nocturnal landscapes, five women and Xu himself interact with a range of other technologies. Computer applications morph their bodies into blurring images or fantastical fish that flit across the cyclorama; but they also experiment with sound as one dancer manipulates a microphone through breath and movement. While there are moments of stunning collision between the rich components of this work, their impact is undermined by the overload of ideas.

In his solo, Charlie Hendren brings us back from the alien abstract worlds of Xu to the earthy material one of man. Surrounded by a mess of objects - instruments, clothing, camping gear, this hermit in the woods named David Moore entertains us through stories, music and dance. An accomplished narrator, Hendren also impresses in his ability to segue from tricky physical moves to musical versatility. A lost soul - his head full of memories, landscapes and journeys, Hendren's captivating at times but ultimately loses us on his convoluted, emotional travels.

Josephine Leask

Under a projected full moon, a group of dancers nest together, swelling and contracting like a lung. *Dialogue: X-Body* draws resources from technology and from ceremony - at one point, a hanging microphone is carried on as if it's a dying god. Zhi Xu's choreography is commanding and considered, and the techno-occultist visuals are sometimes arresting, like an ultrasound scan of the dance. The whole feels inconclusive, but full of rigour and desire.

Charlie Hendren plays a recluse with little to his name but a pot of flour, some bottled water, a guitar and a looping machine in this portrait of male self-isolation and angst. Occasionally he catches something tender and pathetic about this person alone with only himself to play with; but mostly it's hard to distinguish between the self-laceration and the self-regard. Despite its talk about the "the reality of this pain", *A Light in the Backwoods* felt a bit unreal, a precocious echo of other things, too full of sound to let itself be.

By contrast, Declan Whitaker's *To Those Who Wait* makes patience its element. The three dancers begin in extreme slowness - their wavering bodies allowed just to happen to themselves - and in silence, except for the lyrical creak of the room. It circles intricately through phases of heightened colour and euphoric club

music, the dancers' gradual alignment making them seem movingly continuous across distances. At one moment, there is an uncanny looping reversal between the performers, halfway between an instagram 'boomerang' and a choreographic shiver. The piece resolves in silence with a musical sense of design, as if the whole thing were one single complex gesture. This felt enquiring and purposeful, an example of the attentiveness which the critic Eric Griffiths wrote can "slow our transit through our selves".

Bryn Davies