“Cutting Choreography: redefining dance on screen”

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1. Introduction

In choreographing for video I am exploring mechanisms by which I can translate the kinaesthetic intimacy of dance and the body to the screen—to make my sweat bead on the surface of the screen. In doing so, I am drawing attention to the ‘individual’ experience, the emotional and psychological landscape which ‘lives’ in the physical landscape. The translation of these aesthetic and thematic concerns to the screen context has directed my research—comprising three dance video artworks and this accompanying exegesis—toward the technical and communicative processes of collaboration in a filmmaking context, to the role of choreographer as editor, and to montage as the site for the realisation of the choreographic vision.

Through the nexus of theory and practice, I aim to illustrate that a true hybridisation of the dance and film art forms—that is, the skilling of choreographers in cinematic processes and languages—can give rise to dance as an accessible new media art. Choreographers who direct both the cinematography and the editing process can mediate their own creative vision. I also intend to demonstrate the capacity of dance to re-educate viewers regarding images of the body, dance and women. A redefinition of technical and artistic roles in the industry, alternative applications of the codes and syntax of compositional form, and new approaches to the promotion and distribution of dance film can assist this re-education. Furthermore, the development of the dance film audience has the potential to contribute to new developments for dance as a viable and progressive live performance form.

In Chapter 2, ‘The language of the choreo-cinematic,’ I chart the aesthetic, psychological and technical terrain that informs dance and filmmaking practice. By comparing the tools and syntax of the cinematic with the choreographic, I discuss the compatibility of the dance and film languages, their potential for collaborative development as a distinct, embodied media art, and as a vehicle for my creative and communicative development as an artist.

The discussion of my own dance video works, The 12 stages of adventure, Back & Forth, and 27 seconds, in Chapter 3, ‘Cutting choreography,’ pays particular attention to aspects of the temporal—the patterns, rhythms and narratives stimulated by the choreography of montage. This investigation of the temporal, thematically and technically, in my artworks then provides a platform from which to view the interplay between time and space, making connections between the actual and the virtual, the objective and the subjective, the technical and the creative, the body and the mind.

In a theoretical context, I have found that frameworks for analysis offered by feminist and experimental film theory best serve to support my arguments in relation to considerations of the female auteur or independent practitioner, and to representations of the female body on screen. Throughout this exegesis I will draw...
on feminist methodologies\textsuperscript{1} to examine representations of the body, women and
dance in film/video, issues of creative control and communication in the directorial
and production roles in the dance/film industries, and strategies for redefining dance
as a media art.

In ‘cutting choreography’ I am demonstrating that new knowledge in relation to art
making and reception must come from a practical engagement with the art-making
process. My examination of my creative and communicative processes, of my
embodied research, has informed my theoretical perspective, revealing new sites,
processes and communicative potential for this separate hybrid art of ‘dance film.’

\textsuperscript{1} Specifically relating to theorists including Laura Mulvey and Elizabeth Grosz.
Chapter 2: The language of the choreo-cinematic

For me, film is primarily a dance medium.
(Smith 1975: 208)

Dance and film¹ should be considered as equals, in process as well as product.

One medium should not simply serve the other: the video does not exist to preserve the choreography in live terms; conversely the dance should not be subjected to the needs of film production to an extent that the movement is impeded. To achieve this active relationship, it is essential that practitioners of one medium develop an understanding of the other. (McPherson 1997: 49)

In developing the choreographic in the cinematic I am concerned with investigating the psychological nature and technical processes of film and dance. I seek to demonstrate how a collaboration of these forms can inform and develop dance film as a distinct embodied media art—one which best suits my creative and communicative potential as an artist. Sherril Dodds describes dance on screen as a triadic relationship—the creative encounter between physical movement, the camera and the edit. (Dodds 1997: 45) This triadic relationship is both the subject of my research and the site of my investigation into the relationship between my dance aesthetic, my collaborative artistic processes, and my search for a form or context which can mediate my artistic intent most directly with an audience.

In this chapter I will compare the tools and syntax of the cinematic and the choreographic to foreground the aesthetic and technical connections I have made as a dance video practitioner. As two art forms which involve ‘writing in movement,’ I will examine and compare their spatial (planes, pathways, perspectives) and temporal (structures, speed, rhythm) parameters, their relationships to light, colour, and texture, and will propose a re-definition of camera as dancer and montage as choreography.

2.1 Historical (dis)connections

There is an ongoing contradiction for the dance form as perhaps the first and most naturally ‘human’ (embodied) of the arts and yet consistently the last to respond to or be embraced by technological changes. Dance has the shortest history as a tertiary level area of study and still encounters scepticism as a legitimate field of research. Similarly, as conferences as recent as 1995 titled ‘Is Technology the Future For Dance?’ confirm, dance seems to be asking this question somewhat later than other art forms. (Trotter 1995: 16) While dance film has barely established itself as an art form,² with a small bibliography of artworks and a large amount of negative press³ to its name, it also presents itself as exciting new terrain for artistic research. In a
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postmodern⁴ artistic context where nothing is original, it is only a re-examination of the collaboration of art forms that can provide new creative territory.

Dance tends to be less visible within film practice or, indeed, as practice or research in its own right. It seems that the experiential nature of the art of dance, its connection to the body and physicality rather than to written language or tangible product serves to distance it from the broader artistic community. It is kept invisible by its intangibility; its intimate connection to the physical body disconnects it from the verbal body and written language; its ephemeral quality sets it outside the narrative structure of most film. Dance critic, Jack Anderson’s comment—

Dance is the most perishable of the arts. Ballets are forgotten, ballerinas retire, choreographers die—and what remains of that glorious production which so excited us a decade ago, a year ago, or even last night? (Ellfeldt 1976: 193)

—reflects the concerns of many dancemakers who are now looking to new performance contexts and new technologies to communicate with wider audiences and assert visibility and longevity for the art. Dance’s relatively undocumented history not only dilutes its identity as an art form, but also serves to isolate dancemakers from each other, perpetuating the fragmentation. Australian choreographer, Russell Dumas, turned to making dance films in an effort to assert his identity as a dancemaker, to participate in contemporary dance discourse and to close the gaps in the geographical and historical visibility of the art form.

I was interested in an area of dance that was, if not esoteric, at least not popular. I would do things (in Australia)...and they would disappear. Few people would see them and I was interested in having the work subjected to the critical appraisal of an audience...It was also a question of situating the work in relation to particular modern dance lineages. (Jowitt 1997: 1)

Dumas, however, recognizes that there (is) a difference between something that (is) the registration of a theatre piece and the process of making video-dance. (Jowitt 1997: 3) The use of film technologies for the presentation of dance demands a re-evaluation of the dancemaking process and an understanding of the tools of cinematic language. The documentation of dance practice requires a re-evaluation of the practice itself in the context of the documenting technologies.
2.2 Writing in movement

The ‘cinematic’ refers to the aesthetics and internal structure of the art of film. Cinematography, literally meaning ‘writing in movement,’ concerns itself, like dance, with space and time. Dance and film both use embodiments as the substance of their language. Both arts transpose those modes of being alive and consciously embodied in the world that count for each of us as direct experience. (Sobchack 1995: 37)

We, as viewers, can be equally ‘transported’ by our experience of a film as we can by our viewing of a live dance. We can connect the lived experience, filmed or danced, with our own physical experience. The live dance presents us with the tangible physicality of the moving body—the proximity to the sweat, the audible breath, the wave of air displaced by the body, the physical involvement of having to move our eyes and body to follow the action. The film offers a ‘reality’ in which the viewer can participate emotionally and, with point of view, angle, and camera movement, kinaesthetically. In film and in dance we are watching moving images, bodily writings of experience, and that practice of image watching and interpretation...never excludes the physical boundaries of the sensate body. (Burnett 1995: 205) The tools, then, that both art forms employ are drawn from the common denominator of the body, from the way we see, hear, and feel.

A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflective movement that makes itself reflexively felt and understood. (Sobchack 1995: 37)

2.3 Spatial shifts

Film removes the spatial limits of theatre and stage, direct contact with audience at the moment of performance, and chronological (physical) time, replacing real laws of gravity with other laws of spatial orientation. (Greenfield 1999: 2)

Despite the fact that screen space is two-dimensional, the filmmaker, like the choreographer, composes in three dimensions. Film’s access to a multitude of locations capable of multi-perspectives provides an almost infinite spatial range and such a close approximation of reality that it can be, to the viewer, essentially as three-dimensional as a live body in space. (Monaco 1981: 130) Walter Benjamin upholds the contrary opinion—that the performer’s presence is connected to the aura, dependent on their corporeality, requiring their bodily presence on stage. (Benjamin 1973: 231) While films do not include the physical presence of live performers; it is that same absence which can contribute to their sense of reality.
Films replace the artifice of the theatre by the actuality of landscape, distances, and place. (Deren 1960: 64) Susan Sontag writes that the history of cinema is often treated as the history of its emancipation from the ‘frontality’ of theatrical models. She asserts that theatre (or dance) is confined to a logical or continuous use of space while cinema (through editing) has access to an alogical or discontinuous use of space. (Sontag 1966: 367)

The arrangement of the mise en scene creates the composition of the screen space. That two-dimensional composition consists of the organisation of shapes, textures, and patterns of light and dark. In most films, though, the composition also represents a three-dimensional space in which the action occurs. Since the image projected on the screen is flat, the mise en scene must give the audience the cues that will enable us to infer the three-dimensionality of the scene. The filmmaker uses mise en scene to guide our attention across the screen, shaping our sense of the space that is represented and emphasising certain parts of it. (Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 190)

‘Mise en scene’, a term first applied to the practice of theatre direction, is the direction of what appears in the film frame, how an event is ‘staged’ for the camera. David Bordwell emphasizes the powerful impact framing can have upon an image as it defines on-screen and off-screen space, controls the distance, angle, and height of a vantage point onto the image, and as it can move in relation to the mise en scene. (Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 227)

2.3.1 The receding pyramid

The essential difference between the frame of the stage and the film frame is the reverse perspectives they offer of space.

The front of the stage is wider and it narrows in perspective as we go upstage. The camera is the reverse. It is narrow at the front and widens out the further from the camera a person or object is placed. (Jordan 1995: 92)

An acknowledgment of this receding pyramid (Lockyer 1993: 129) of camera space is fundamental for the creation of dance film, recognizing its specificity and transdimensionality (Rosenberg 2000: 278) as a different architectural space to that of the proscenium stage. In many cases it is the choreographer’s refusal to acknowledge the site specificity of dance film (that, as dance filmmaker Douglas Rosenberg asserts, of the site of film itself) that prolongs the debate over the ‘success’ of transferring dance to the screen. The very use of the term ‘transfer’ implies support of a spatial hierarchy in which the stage has the primary and
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dominant ownership of the dance form. Criticism of dance film is essentially rooted in this positioning of dance and film as separate and conflicting forms, in which one or the other medium is being violated. (Kower 1995: 85)

This could be attributed to a history of dance screen work that attempts to document a stage work rather than create a screen work.

Many dances designed for the stage are not suited to film presentation but to assume that dancing is exclusively a theatrical medium is to take a needlessly restricted view of it. (Kower 1995: 85)

A letting go of this theatrical approach to choreography (both in terms of creating new work for screen or reworking stage choreography) can essentially heighten the impact of a dance event rather than diminish, as Lloyd Newson of DV8 Physical Theatre describes, its visceral quality. (Meisner 1991: 17) By rationalising the foreground (therefore larger and more important) action, while providing additional supporting information in the background, the main body or action is kept prefaced or central, contextualized by the background. In a live situation, depending on our position in the auditorium, the viewer may have to shift their eyes to take in the downstage and upstage action, consequently creating two sets of action, two contexts which may or may not appear to directly relate to each other. The single frame of the screen attaches the context or other information directly to the central body and offers a concentrated field of dynamic connection. In this way, stage dance could be seen as a choreographic dilution, in which many dancers and many viewers are required to impart a choreographic vision. The spatial field of the camera, narrowing the foreground, selects a specific perspective and implies a single viewer—the dance subject identifies the individual viewer, drawing attention to the visceral quality of their embodied viewing experience.

In a sense the spatial field of the film frame can inscribe the body temporally. The flat surface of the frame is inscribed with depth in the same way as inscriptions on the body’s surface (clothing, scarring, and markings) can provide a social and cultural history of the body. The additional information in the background (potentially creating the illusion of attaching itself to the foreground body as it overlaps or intersects with its edges) can infer a history of experiences, relationships, and locations. This invests the body with a past and extends the viewer’s understanding of and empathy to that body. This concept reflects current theoretical discourse in dance, which considers the broader cultural, social, and historical influences at play in the dancing body. Susan Leigh Foster, in her Manifesto for Dead and Moving Bodies, writes:

Each of the body’s moves, as with all writings, traces the physical fact of movement and also an array of references to conceptual entities and events...
...Each body establishes this relation between physicality and meaning in concert with the physical actions and verbal descriptions of bodies that move alongside it. (Foster 1995: 180)

The layering of bodily images that is possible within the depth of the film frame—the concentration of detail juxtaposed against a background of other physical possibilities—suggests bodily actions and relationships in time and space beyond the edges of that frame. The receding pyramid of camera space can provide a re-configuration of dance space for the choreographer, which, in its construction of transdimensionality requires the viewer to participate in re-imagining the nature of dance itself. (Rosenberg 2000: 278)

2.3.2 Close-up and personal

Film has an intimacy where the subtlety of the tiniest gestures and expressions becomes part of the movement vocabulary, and part of the dance—the image of the rise and fall of a breath through a nostril, the movement of an eye looking up, a finger scratching skin, a piece of hair blowing in the wind. (Mahrer 1995: 96)

There is a strong relationship between the use of the close-up in film and the use of downstage space in stage dance. In film, the closer the subject the more important it seems—in dance, downstage figures appear larger and therefore more powerful. As viewers we will recognize large shapes first (Bordwell and Thompson 1997: 192), reading their significance or importance in relation to their distance from us in space—a subject at close range is more visible, more audible, and has the capacity to make physical contact. On stage, the performance of a solo dancer, like the close-up in film, directs the spectator to the detail of one moving body rather than many. However, the viewer is unable to alter their spatial proximity to the subject, to come close to the detail of the body. It is rare for a live audience to be able to gain access beyond the personal space of the dancer, to the surface of the body, which can then suggest (through touch, heat, sound, or visually through openings) the interior space.

Many contemporary choreographer/performers are now considering the intimate space of the body through new dance practices such as contact improvisation, and the internal space of the body through ideokinetic and improvisational techniques. Most often, however, this attention to the intimate detail of the body informs the artist’s process in creating choreographic material and enhancing their performance quality rather than offering the audience direct access to that space.

Screen dance allows the cameras to come close whereas...in the theatre you lose that intimacy. (Kower 1995: 86)
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Through the close-up eye of the camera the intimate space of the body and, potentially, the internal landscape or psyche of the subject can be made visible. This magnified landscape of what Dodds refers to as the televisualised body (Dodds 1997) opens the language of dance out to a broader audience and, for that matter, to the untrained body. The movement vocabulary on screen does not need, and in fact may be mismatched with, the technical virtuosity of the dancer’s whole body. Instead, the smallest and simplest of everyday actions can take on immense visual and kinetic significance when framed, filmed and edited in a particular way. (Dodds 1997: 47)

The redefinition of dance and dancer possible in the cinematic context, and the challenge it presents to traditional notions of dance (and film) as a high art form, reminds me of the journey of Yvonne Rainer. Rainer not only challenged traditional notions of dance by democratising the vocabulary and the personnel—

\[\text{NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make believe no to glamour and transcedency of the star image. (Banes 1977: 43)}\]

—but she subsequently shifted her artistic activity into a documentary cinematic context, a genre which, according to Trinh Minh-ha, asserts its independence from the star system...takes real people and real problems from the real world and ...sets a value on intimate observation...capturing reality on the run. (Minh-Ha 1991: 33) Similarly, the move of a significant number of dancemakers (interested in the documentary or autobiographical ‘truth’ of everyday movement) toward the creative context of independent filmmaking,8 indicates that the intimacy of the film context is an attractive creative vehicle for dancemakers concerned with alternative and personal views of the moving human body.

\[\text{The close-up camera registers thought, it reveals the individual rather than the ‘dancer,’ moving the dancer from the stage into life, and a different concept of what dance is arises. (Greenfield 1999: 2)}\]

2.3.3 Positions and pathways

The film frame, as a single image in space and time, could be considered a metaphor for a single action or moment of the dancing body. The connection of a series of frames resembles the connections of movements through the body (or of the body through space) in a dance phrase. Just as the choreographer’s aesthetic task is the consideration of the journey of movement through the body and through space, the filmmaker’s task is the consideration of the journey of the viewer’s eye through and across frames.

\[\text{The famous diagonal from upstage right to downstage left is so often used because it makes the most powerful visual and psychological impact (because) it moves the audience’s eye from left to right, the pathway universally followed by human beings in visual scanning (even in cultures}}\]
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who read from right to left). It brings the dancer from a point of distance to one of proximity. (Blom & Chaplin 1982: 52)

Blom and Chaplin’s comments restate spatial design considerations made in The Art of Making Dances by Doris Humphrey. (Humphrey 1959) Humphrey recognizes the strength of the diagonal pathway through the stage (or framed) space, second only to the straightforward pathway. She also cites the centre as the strongest point on the stage space, mirroring film’s recognition of the tendency for our attention to be drawn to the centre of a framed image. The use of diagonal pathways for movement through frame is one means to assist the physicality and continuity of the filmed dance.

Geographical obliques translate into the plane of the frame as diagonals which are read as inherently more active than horizontals and verticals.
(Monaco 1981: 155)

Douglas Rosenberg’s Bardo (in extremis) (Rosenberg 1996), a screen re-working of a Molissa Fenley solo, makes use of the diagonal in a close framing of Fenley’s body and limbs. Her arm creates the diagonal through frame, delineating the screen sculpturally and creating a shared composition between frame, body and unoccupied space. He creates a spatial tension between arms, arms and body, body and camera frame that supports and moves the eye from frame to frame. Rosenberg will often use a dissolve between shots so that the body fills the negative space of the preceding shot, and in this way, makes both negative and positive space active, moving the body through its own space. Maintaining focus on a hand, he leads the eye to the background of the frame, offering depth to the shot then, with a shift of focus to her body and then to her foreground hand, leads the movement forward again. The majority of Bardo is in slow motion facilitating Rosenberg’s close tracking of the movement. He successfully continues the movement within the frame by shifting between following the movement (moving the frame) or by allowing the movement to enter and leave the frame. The use of extreme close-up assists this continuity with the whole body—the vessel through which the movement travels—becoming the broader landscape. The movement is then always present.

Bardo (in extremis) is concerned with articulating the minutiae of Fenley’s movement while reconceiving her ‘choreography’. (Rosenberg 2000: 276)

The visual experience of watching film is also a physical experience—an optical movement. While the viewer of film does not (unless viewing in a cinema or close to a large screen) have to physically move their head to read the screen image, they do move their eyes.

We do indeed read an image physically as well as mentally and psychologically...the eyes must move constantly in order to perceive an object... (Monaco 1981: 125)
2.3.4 Perspectives

The mobility of the camera offers views not normally available to the live audience. (Jordan 1995: 92) The variety of angles and perspectives of the body offered by re-positioning the camera can extend the range of the existing action, multiplying the choreographic possibilities as attention is brought to new aspects of the movement. The plane or direction of movement can be heightened (an overhead shot of a spin, a low angle on a descent to the floor) or contrasted (a movement of the camera in opposition to the physical action). The effort or physical impulse underlying an action can be revealed (close-up of muscular action central), attention can be diverted to the unseen consequences, or the echoes of action in peripheral body parts (the back view of a front body action, the movement through an arm during a leg action). The moving camera can enhance and re-design the choreography and the performance.

The camera’s shifts can also enhance the kinaesthetic effect of the image for the viewer. The camera can play with the viewer’s sense of balance and gravity as it tracks around, or cuts from under to over, or behind the body. As the viewer’s perspective on and relationship to the moving body shifts so, too, does their emotional or psychological connection to the image, and, consequently, their recognition and reading of the meaning of the image. The viewer’s perception of depth is increased as the perspective on the image shifts, because this depth immediately reveals the link between the subject and the space—positing the subject and viewer in three-dimensional space. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 267)

The camera, like the dancer, exists in three-dimensional space and has three angles of movement: the approach or pan axis (the horizontal or table plane); the tilt axis (vertical or door plane); and the roll (sagittal or wheel plane).11 No only can the movement of the camera shift the dancer’s relationship to space but it can reconfigure or shift the space itself, extending its geographical, gravitational or temporal parameters.

* A swing-pan—whereby a shot of one person is terminated by a rapid swing away and a shot of another person or place begins with a rapid swing of the camera, the two shots being subsequently joined in the blurred area of both swings—brings into dramatic proximity people, places, and actions which in actuality might be widely separated. (Deren 1960: 68)

The swing-pan connects formerly unconnected or absent spaces and subjects, creating an illusion of one extreme space when, in actuality, two or more very separate locations (in space and/or time) have been shot.

* The tilted camera which includes the dancer in his/her environment can create either an experience of risk-taking or an illusion of weightless flight. (Kower 1995: 86)
Kower, in her conference paper *Being there: dance film/video history—a perspective*, cites Meryl Tankard’s dance film, *Sloth*, as an example of this use of the tilted camera to *trick the audience’s perception of gravity* as it *uses rock faces as walls and floors*. (Kower 1995: 86) I utilized the same device in my 1993 dance film, *Betrayal*, to add a ‘surreal’ quality to the film. By tilting the camera, and placing the table at which the dancer sat at a ninety-degree angle to the floor, I was able to create the illusion that she was sitting normally at the table while an assortment of objects flew past her from left to right of frame. That her hair is following the same horizontal trajectory as the objects further enhances the surreal quality of the shot while suggesting the force of air travel along that pathway (either created by the force of the moving objects themselves or by some larger unseen force acting upon them). The objects, in subsequent shots, appear arranged on the formerly empty table, their arrival explained by the tilted shot.

While the tilt, pan and track do, to some extent, imitate the physical movement of viewing, the camera roll is less natural and can have an unusually striking impact as a result. Fred Astaire’s famous dancing on the ceiling shot, and the full circle walk inside the spaceship of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, are two well-known examples. In both cases the function of the shot is to allude to a defiance or lack of gravity.

The perspectives offered dance by the shifting perspective and angle of the camera can make dance film more ‘live’ than live dance. English choreographer, Siobhan Davies, comments that dance, *like a sculpture...should be as interesting from the back as the front—and that if that is the case then the viewer should be given the opportunity to see it from as many perspectives as possible*. (Rubidge 1993: 215) The choreographic variety and intimacy offered by changing and/or unusual camera perspectives on the dancing body, has the potential to not only create engaging dance film but to encourage innovative approaches in the creation of live dance work.

Lisa Nelson notes that she *made significant discoveries about (her) dancing by seeing how (she) saw by using the camera*. She found that the camera reflected (her) way of relating to (her) body and the environment.

*I work with the medium of video through my kinaesthetic sense. In dancing, working without the camera, I find that when I shift into vision, just looking at light and form, I don’t have any desire to move.* (Nelson 1992: 9)

The operation of the camera *teaches you about angles*, and should be regarded as *though it is another dancer in the choreography*. (Mahrer 1995: 96) Many choreographers are putting themselves behind the camera or, in live performance contexts, placing cameras directly onto the dancer’s body. The accessibility of video as an inexpensive format with immediate playback facilities, coupled with the fact that the video camera has become a familiar tool for choreographers in the rehearsal studio, accounts for the ease with which many choreographers approach the camera.
The choreographer’s relationship with the camera operator (if it is someone other than themselves), resembles that of the cinematographer with the operator which in turn (depending on the context) is akin to that of the choreographer with the dancer. If the choreographer is working with a non-dancer operator it is necessary to find working processes and language which can choreograph the camera’s body.

In my 1996 dance work entitled *Point of view*, I was faced with the challenging task of choreographing the third body of my camera operator (Paul Huntingford) into a duet between myself and Jane Mortiss to create the filmed illusion of a recording from my point of view. Without the equipment or funds to actually strap a camera to my body I went through a fairly elaborate process of ‘faking it’. After creating the original duet in the studio (in which Jane and I worked in quite close proximity) I ‘pulled it apart’ and inserted Paul into the action. Working in small segments we developed a quartet for three bodies and a camera that could simulate the duet as I experienced it. It involved some manipulation of the camera between us to maintain the direction, angle and rhythm of my movement pathway while negotiating and, in effect, concealing the third (Paul’s) body. Some additional manipulation in the editing suite compensated for any real time disruptions in the video to match it with the live duet when projected in the live performance. The live duet had to be re-choreographed to fit the timing of the edited video to complete the illusion of a live surveillance from my point of view in performance. Here the tools of working cinematically extended my choreographic range and enhanced the performance product, presenting the audience with an interesting play between live space and video space, between viewing objectively from a live distance to entering the action and making a kinetic connection with the projected image. I also find it significant that Paul assumed the role of editor as well as camera operator for this project, his experiential involvement in the dance material serving to better inform the choreography of the montage.

My exploration of camera operation and camera direction has informed my approach to creating and structuring choreographic material for the stage, as I will discuss in more detail in 3.11. The camera as dancer (and thus viewer as dance participant) is further enhanced by the liberation of the camera from the tripod into an extended choreographic range of movement.

2.3.5 The camera dances

In recent film and television history there has been a marked increase in the use of the moving camera as a means to heighten the viewer’s sense of emotional and kinaesthetic involvement. The use of the moving or hand-held camera adds urgency and disorientation to the television medical drama, anxiety and tension to the horror movie, heightens the immediacy or intimacy of an interaction between characters, or involve the viewer in the rhythmic patterns or visual interruptions of comedic sequences.
Documentary filmmaker Trinh Minh-Ha writes that the *sense of urgency, immediacy, and authenticity in the instability of the hand-held camera* is a ‘documentary effect’ being used by many fiction filmmakers to *play on the viewer’s expectation in order to “concoct fables.”* (Minh-Ha 1991: 40) She sees this use of the moving camera (and other documentary techniques such as the *oral-testimony-like quality of the direct interview*) as a means of involving the viewer in a truth-like moment of reality. The motion of the camera moves the viewer into and within the screen space—an *invisible self that assumes the active role of a character in the plot* (Arnheim 1974: 402) or a dancer in the choreography.

*...A hand-held camera is appealing because of the way the cameraperson can move freely with the dancers in any direction, creating the sense that the camera is part of the dance.* (Mahrer 1995: 96)

The choreography of the moving camera is one of the most significant tools linking dance and film composition, one that Yvonne Kower considers worthy of more attention by choreographers. (Kower 1995: 86) Each type of motion implies an essentially different relationship between the camera and the subject. (Monaco 1981: 77) There is a sense of informality possible as the camera negotiates the dancers’ space, making the *dancers (appear) more multi-faceted as people.* (Rubidge 1993: 211)

*The approach and retreat of the camera has its obvious model in the body... producing physical as well as emotional reactions in the spectator ...circulation between reality and the image, one which brings the body into aesthetic response.* (Peucker 1995: 136)

The dance of the moving eye of the camera can add to the dynamism and kinetic impact of the dance material, as it shifts the viewer’s perception of motion.

*For instance when the motion of the camera pans against the dance action our sense of friction is increased. When the camera pans with the live action, our sense of flow is increased. The combinations of the two create many degrees of friction and flow, a ‘to and fro’ kinetic which makes visible the inner drama of our physicality but which is not possible with the naked eye.* (Mahrer 1995: 95)

Many non-dance filmmakers could be regarded as choreographers in respect to the particular attention they assign to the movement in their films. David Lynch admits that he spends more time on scenes without dialogue. (Keeler 1997) The recently released German film *Run Lola Run* focuses specifically on the physical action of running, connecting the emotional urgency of a ‘deadline’ with the relentless exertion of the physical body. (Tykwer 1999) Stanley Kubrick overtly uses camera movement to involve his audience so that the spinning of a prehistoric bone or a
space station, rather than a dancer’s body, could be regarded as dance. The proposition that any movement, whether belonging to the untrained ‘everyday’ body or to an inanimate object, is ‘dance’ is one asserted by many contemporary dance practitioners and one most often attributed to the manifestos of postmodern dance in the sixties and seventies. Yvonne Rainer’s 1965 manifesto (as mentioned in section 3.2.3) was a strategy for demystifying dance. (Banes 1977: 43) Her Trio in A was a dance designed to be performed by any body, regardless of shape or dance experience, and has been influential in questioning what can be defined as dance or dancer. Similarly, the kinetic or ‘dance’ possibilities inherent in the moving camera further opens the terrain of film for choreographers beyond the limits of the dancer’s body. Many choreographers, including Rainer, have, in their investigation of film as a creative medium, moved away from ‘dance’ per say, and yet employ the same sense of aesthetic and attention to movement as they did in a traditional dance context.

2.3.6 Light and Colour

Light creates space. (Arnheim 1974: 311)

Choreographer and dance filmmaker, Russell Dumas, works with light as a means to jettison movement, recognizing that light determines how something is seen. (Jowitt 1997: 8) Cinematographer, John Bailey, considers light and colour to be some of the determining factors of a good composition, allowing him to play with the balance of what recedes and what asserts itself in a shot. (Schaefer and Salvato 1984: 49)

Light and shade contributes to our perception of depth. It puts in the curves, enables us to discriminate concavities from convexities, and aids in our perception of surface characteristics. (Schiffman 1990: 339)

Since brightness of illumination means that a given surface is turned toward the light source whereas darkness means that it is turned away, the distribution of brightness helps to define the orientation of objects in space. At the same time it shows how various parts of a complex object are related to one another. (Arnheim 1974: 313)

Stage lighting for dance incorporates a large amount of side, back and down lighting to highlight the three-dimensionality of and the planes of movement within the body. It differs from traditional stage lighting for drama, which tends to focus the light on the face of the relatively immobile actor using predominantly front light. A lighting design for dance will use lighted pathways through the stage space to focus the path of movement of the dancer. An overhead light can emphasize a turning action; side lighting emphasizes the shape and detail of the three-dimensional body; specific channels of light can focus our attention to specific body parts as they enter or leave the ‘spot’. The positioning of lamps for stage dance concentrates on offering depth
and dynamic to the image just as the ‘key’ lights and ‘fill’ lights do for the filmic scene.

The focus and movement of the light itself can ‘dance’ providing movement for the viewer’s eye in lieu of, or in addition to, the movement of the dancer. In Chiaroscuro (1995), a single hand-held follow spot was utilized to explore the potential of a duet between my dancing body and the viewer’s eye. The choreography became the movement and locations revealed by the light. By working with a single light it was possible to remove the background and disorient the viewer’s eye by removing fixed frames of reference to space and gravity. The additional shifts in angle and proximity of the edited shots kept the viewer ‘dancing’—their relationship to the action in flux, attaching them kinaesthetically to the action. At times the light moved through the frame without lighting any part of my body, continuing the movement as it drew the viewer’s eye. My movement sequences in this video were predominantly improvisations with tensions and release in the intimate space of the body. I was interested in revealing something of the interior or emotional landscape that lies beneath the subtle or withheld gestures of the physical body (terrain I explore further in reference to my dance video works in chapter 3). Through the specificity of the light source I was able to guide the viewer’s eye to the tension between the surfaces of my body rather than to the shape of my whole body in space.

...Illumination tends to guide attention selectively, in accordance with desired meaning. (Arnheim 1974: 326)

Just as light can be used to bring out the shape of the body (or dark shapes can be made prominent against a light background), colour can be used to attract the viewer’s attention. Warm or saturated colours come forward and can be used in costuming to preface the dancer, or to emphasize foreground elements. Colours can be technical tools as well as psychological ones. In her film, The Tango Lesson, Sally Potter has shot the main action, the perhaps mundane ‘real world,’ in black and white, using colour only to illustrate the ‘fiction’ of the film scenes her character is writing. Her ‘passion’ for her script (which her character struggles to sell to, or ‘bring to life’ for, commercial investors) is highlighted by this use of colour. (Potter 1997)

The use of black and white in current filmmaking is usually an aesthetic or stylistic choice rather than an economic one. As a less complicated technology than colour film it has tended to be associated with honesty, being more real, more aesthetically proper. (Monaco 1981: 91) It is interesting that a significant number of dance films, especially during the eighties and nineties, were made in black and white. These choices may have been economic—affordable for unfunded or independent filmmakers—or political—in that black and white can imply a realist or artistic approach distinct from the colour of most mainstream or narrative films. Aesthetically, the choice may be driven by the dramatic contrast of black and white that can enhance the three-dimensionality or sculptural aspects of dance.
Filmmakers have used colour to enhance mood or inject symbolism into scenes. Jane Campion’s *The Piano* uses a blue tinted lens to highlight the ‘foreign’ nature of the New Zealand landscape for the immigrant protagonist—the colour blue associated with cold and stasis. (Campion 1992) In *Three Colours Blue* the recurrence of blue in the landscape or in the tint of the lens again underlines the emotional landscape of the narrative, of a woman dealing with grief. (Kieslowski 1993) In *Betrayal*, I make strong use of the colour red to support the emotional theme of anger and passion. This three-minute scene dealt specifically with those few seconds that build to an outburst of anger—the chemical change which can be ‘felt’ physically as the adrenaline builds quickly. The wine that spills to then change both the dancer’s costume and the tablecloth red is a metaphor for the physical repercussions of this emotion, of injury, blood. The use of redhead matches, red playing cards, and a red rose, added associations with danger (fire) and chance (loss—the absent ‘other’ in the relationship). This 16mm film was designed for projection in the context of a live performance—to present a dualism, a symbolic representation of the emotional action against the physical ‘danced’ action. The colour red in stage lighting and costume in the live context, and in the objects and set in the filmed action connected the two narratives. The use of the same dancer on film and live, of course, was the main connecting element. Both her live body and her recorded self in the same theatre space at the same time, inferred a remembered or ‘felt’ self, the dancer’s emotional landscape, in addition to her physical presence.

### 2.3.7 Focus and Texture

*Focus...is one of the codes that connect the codes of composition with those of movement.* (Monaco 1981: 164)

Focus, related to movement, is another cinematic tool offering choreographic potential. By shifting focus in a film shot it is possible to shift the interest, the viewer’s attention, a device limited in live performance to lighting changes or fades, or by shifting the movement from one body to another. A focal shift within the lens can shift the attention without altering the lighting or the other action in frame—it performs the effect of the pan or zoom without moving the camera.

*Focus is the most important variable in the syntax of the shot.* (Monaco 1981: 162)

Shallow focus can offer more control over the image for the filmmaker by emphasizing one ground over another, while deep focus, offering more ground, a larger scene, provides more information in the mise en scene.

The textural qualities of film—including the type of film format, the type of lens, the gradient and exposure of the film, the sharpness or softness of lens focus—far surpasses the possibilities for dance in a live context. The stage context has a limited capacity for textural change other than the use of coloured gels, gobos, or lamps.
with varying lenses. Some innovators in lighting design are exceptions to the rule, creating cinema-inspired illusion on stage such as the use of extreme low lighting or unusual light sources (overhead projectors, hand-held lights, purpose-built light sources within the stage set). Many performance-makers, dance and theatre, are recognizing the textural (and consequent evocative) qualities of utilizing film projection or computer-animated imagery within the total performance design.

In Tracie Mitchell’s dance film, *Sure*, she uses a slow transition from soft focus to sharp focus at the start of the film, and reverses that transition to end the film. In the first instance the camera is held in shallow focus and a dancer walks toward the camera until her blurred whole body outline becomes a sharp focus on her close-up face. The final transition moves the camera, maintaining its shallow focus, back from the dancers to take them from clarity to soft focus. In both cases the effect provides a transition for the viewer into the dance action. As the viewer’s eye negotiates the focal shift, mimicking a physically familiar visual orientation with space, the viewer’s attention is drawn to the dancer, to a relationship with her. The final shift back to the distancing effect of the soft focus eases the viewer back out of the ‘reality’ of the dance—a device which I think serves to assist the viewer in negotiating (and hopefully engaging with) the narrative of dance within the narrative of film.

The speed and gauge of film stock contributes markedly to the grain and textural quality of a film. A 16mm or 35mm film provides a clarity and realism superior to that of the smaller 8mm frame (or Super 8 film). Similarly, the video format has now graded up with digital video to surpass previous low-end formats including Hi-8. The textural difference between video and film, or between analogue and digital technologies, is particularly marked—digital recordings sample and quantify a signal into numerical form (the smooth curve of an analogue signal becomes a series of square steps in a digital ‘curve’). It is the accessibility of video (economically and technically) which facilitates its widespread selection as a recording format. Aesthetically, the textural differences between formats can be used to assist the thematic narrative of a film or to posit the viewer differently in relation to the action. Super 8 film is often used to indicate memory, to infer the past, or to add *the newsreel look of the grainy image* to documentary (Minh-Ha 1991: 40); and video within a film can suggest surveillance or immediacy. My use of 8mm film within *The 12 Stages of adventure* implied a past or memory for Viviana’s character, as it’s jerky and grainier quality contrasted to the clarity of the main video format.
2.4 Temporal shifts

2.4.1 Montage

_The film editor is responsible for what you see, and how long you see it, for what you hear, and how long you hear it. We are orchestrators of picture and sound._ (LoBrutto 1991: 198)

I believe that montage is choreography. It is in the editing process that the form of an artwork is created, where the raw materials are formed and shaped, the space-time relationships are choreographed, and where the sound is married with the image.

_Editors organize minutiae, intensify subtleties, heighten emotions, and blend countless elements of image and sound to create a film._ (Oldham 1992: 1)

With the **jigsaw puzzle** the editor must find the **pattern of the picture within the thousand fragmented bits recorded by the camera.** (Oldham 1992: 7) In the same way, the choreographer pieces together a dance-work from the fragments of phrases, motifs and images she has created on the bodies of the dancers. As a choreographer I often set tasks for my dancers, which means that they have a direct creative input into the work. Together we build the materials, the shots. The craft and my role as choreographer works then in the structuring of these materials—overlapping, juxtaposing, reversing, exaggerating, minimizing, looping, joining—in short, in the editing. Dance filmmaker and scholar Michele Fox regards her works as **‘choreographed in the edit suite’** and makes a distinction between editing for the continuity of the live choreography and the montage approach.

_In montage, the shots are taken from different spatial and temporal contexts and juxtaposed, breaking down completely the order of the live event and creating a shape and energy unique to the video dance._ (McPherson 1997: 49)

The freedom available in montage to **create a new form, a new style of creating and telling a story** (LoBrutto 1991: 168) offers the choreographer access to an enormous dance vocabulary and direct access to manipulating the performance and meaning of the material. Trevor Patrick, interviewed in relation to his dance film, _Nine Cauldrons_, created as part of the Microdance project, comments:

...Almost immediately I’d begun the process of honing down the ideas and pinning myself down to lengths of time and images, I realised the potential there to make another piece or any number of different pieces...a hundred films could have been made from all this material and they could each have been very different. (Gardner 1997: 34, 38)
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Unfamiliar with the film production processes, Patrick found himself collaborating against (his) will because the whole structure is geared to the losing of ownership in order to become the collective ownership and collective responsibility. (Gardner 1997: 40) Patrick’s preference for, or at least familiarity with, his work to be under his control and ownership—

*I am used to my work being my work* (Deren 1945: 39)

—is echoed in the areas of experimental and documentary film, where many filmmakers have taken on an individual mode of production. Many of these artists refer to themselves as ‘filmmakers’ as a statement of their holistic approach to all facets of the artistic production, technical and aesthetic.

Maya Deren wrote, directed, edited, and often performed in her own works. She advocated that the artist must understand the actual structure and the techniques of (her) medium in order to recognize the formal and philosophical concepts of (her) age. (Deren 1960: 70) In this way, if the choreographer wishes to assert their artistic control in the making of the dance film it is not enough to involve themselves only in the direction of mise en scene without an understanding of the techniques of post production. Moreover, the presence of the choreographer in the editing room (if we consider Eisenstein’s theory of montage of attractions) is more essential than their presence on the ‘set.’ The integrity of the flow and rhythm of events is controlled by the editor, creating the aesthetic ‘look’ and the underlying meaning of the choreography. The editor has the potential to take material from almost anywhere and the craft itself presents new artistic possibilities via this objective approach to the materials at hand.

Most directors, in recognition of this creative potential, will work in close collaboration with their editors, and partnerships in which both director and editor share a technical understanding and communicable aesthetic are often maintained from project to project. Barry Malkin, editor of nearly all of Francis Ford Coppola’s films, says of the collaboration—

*Our tastes are very similar and there’s a mutual trust. There’s a lot of timesaving...because we’re often on the same beam. Communication is done in shorthand.* (Oldham 1992: 326)

Carol Littleton, editor of *E.T.: the extra-terrestrial* (1982), extends this consideration to her relationship with the cinematographer, recognizing their contributions and heightening them, to bring out their best qualities.

*It’s really my job to be the interpreter of other people’s work and ultimately rewrite the film using image and sound.* (LoBrutto 1991: 225)
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I believe that the role of editor in dance film should be assumed by the choreographer (or the editor’s role should be seen as choreographic) in the fulfilment of her artistic vision. If you’re an editor, you’re a moviemaker.46 Paul Hirsch, Oscar award winning editor of Star Wars, supports the primary artistic role of the editor.

...The director is shooting material designed for the editor, so it seems to me that editing is good preparation for directing because you can see what works and have an idea of what you need to go out and get. (Oldham 1992: 195)

It has been my individual control of the technical aspects of editing which has taught me about filmmaking as a whole, and which I will discuss in relation to my artworks in chapter 3.

With editing you are crafting the entire experience (Oldham 1992: 57), creating a cumulative sensory event which draws on rhythm, instinct, emotion, psychology, art. (Oldham 1992: 1) Similarly, it is my experience of editing that has informed my direction or operation of the camera, making my shoots more economic (quantity of shots) and more flexible (quality of shots). Maya Deren provides me with a strong role model in her independent and inclusive approach to dance filmmaking.

Once cutting is understood as an organic part of the planning of a film, in the sense that one shoots to cut, the combinations which can be worked out between motion across splices, timing, spatial orientations within the frame, etc., are endless or, at least, excitingly rich. (Deren 1947: 260)

There is certainly a degree of ‘manipulation’ involved in the montage of a film (a term that could be interpreted as deceitful). However, it is a mechanism for inviting the active participation of the viewer to construct meaning from a shot in relation to the shots on either side of it. Graeme Turner, referencing both Metz (Metz 1982) and Dayan (Dayan 1974), asserts that the cinema can hide its method of constructing itself because of the viewer’s deferral of meaning of one shot until we see how it is ‘sutured’ by its relation to the following shot. (Turner 1988: 112) The subliminal power of editing (Oldham 1992: 5) often makes editing invisible, but rather than functioning as some sort of viewer deception, the craft of editing facilitates the communication of the filmmaker’s psychological and aesthetic intent. Editor, Sheldon Kahn,47 has confidence in the viewer’s capacity to receive and process information from the ‘unreality’ of complex editing.

Audiences are very sophisticated today. They catch a short image on the screen, register it in their minds, and understand it. (Oldham 1992: 25)

Maya Deren relied on the viewer’s capacity to recognize and understand the perceptual reality of the photographic image, as she created new time-space relationships and ‘realities’ in montage. (Mast, Cohen et al. 1992: 6) She asserted
that a meaningful manipulation of the sequence of film images could relate separate and distant places, making them continuous by continuity of identity and of movement. (Deren 1960: 68) In Study in choreography for camera (Deren 1945) she creates a continuity of movement, editing shots of a dancer moving through diverse locations. By connecting the physical action of the dancer as he extends his leg out of frame or leaps into frame, Deren connects diverse spaces into the real time of the dance action.

One can film different people at different times and even in different places performing the same gesture or movement, and, by a judicious joining of the shots in such a manner as to preserve continuity of movement, the action itself becomes the dominant dynamic which unifies all separateness. (Deren 1960: 68)

In this way, montage can draw the viewer’s focus to a consideration of the dance action itself. The continuity of movement from frame to frame can give the dance a primary role as the ‘reality’ connecting time and space in film. The problems that can arise in preserving identity across shots in film editing (Arnheim 1974: 392) can be solved, to an extent, in dance film if the dance movement itself is used as that underlying identity.

2.4.2 Speed & FX

In its manipulation of the temporal, montage can play with rhythm and pace in ways that can intensify or alter the tensions and interplay between images. The capacity to vary the speed of shots in postproduction offers the editor further control over the psychological impact and meaning of the film.

The use of slow motion has expressive uses as well as its revelatory ones. (Deren 1960: 65) Its use to convey dream-like or fantasy sequences is a common mainstream cinema device that we as viewers have come to easily recognize. There is a lyricism possible which encourages the viewer to dwell on a moment. It is both this lyricism and contemplation that has seen it used extensively in dance films. The use of slow motion in dance films can invite the viewer into the physicality of the dance, bringing attention to the kinaesthesia of the dance and the effort of body mechanics. However, there is also the danger of it contributing to the image of dance as ‘otherworldly’ or fantastic, as an art form that bears little relation to real bodies.

...Slow motion is not simply slowness of speed. It is, in fact, something which exists in our minds, not on the screen...It is because we are aware of the known pulse of the identified action while we watch it occur at a slower rate of speed that we experience the double-exposure of time which we know as slow-motion. (Deren 1960: 65-66)
Jane Campion incorporates a lot of slow motion in her films because she sees it as a way of observing characters with more intensity. (Wright Wexman 1999: 104) For the choreographer, slow motion offers this intensity to the movement itself as it, in essence, creates new movement material, magnifying and revealing the motor detail. In this way a single turn of a head seen in slow motion can offer as much (if not more) kinetic information as a triple turn at normal speed. Moreover, as viewers, we are encouraged to ‘settle’ into an observation of the specificity of the movement and the dancer performing it as we are pulled out of a normal progression of time and into the speed of ‘reflection.’

A use of reverse motion in post-production can function in a similar way to the use of the retreating camera or the direction of action from right to left within frame in the mise en scene. It can ‘undo’ time, suggesting a retreat (whether actual or in the form of a memory) into the past. In a dance context a reversal of action can further alter our perceptions of the body in space as it reveals an undoing of movement that may contravene gravitational laws or offer idiosyncratic, unexpected sequencing within and between bodies. On a psychological level reverse motion can imply a need or capacity for ‘re-writing’ the past, of reverting mistakes, of the potential to ‘start over,’ and it can, by revealing the history of the subject’s experience, offer a more intimate connection for the viewer. These implications or possibilities of ‘undoing’ time formed the basis of my choreographic theme in the dance video 27 seconds, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 3.

Postproduction effects (solarizing, colouring, strobing) and transitions (dissolves) provide mechanisms for fine-tuning the look and continuity of the montage. The image itself can be refined to match or contrast an adjacent shot, and dissolves allow two images to exist simultaneously. Choreographically, the dissolve can connect solo dancers into duets, can juxtapose actions and spaces in the same time frame, and can, on a practical level, solve transitional problems across cuts. Dissolves can be used to indicate a time lapse or a change of location, but this criteria is adhered to less today in feature films because audiences will make jumps with you…if you just cut, the audience will follow you…they won’t be confused. (LoBrutto 1991: 21)

Audiences are smarter today, they’re wiser and accept things. It’s from looking at a lot of television. (LoBrutto 1991: 42)

2.4.3 Rhythm, sound & music

Film editing shares with dance an intrinsic connection to rhythm and musicality. It is not surprising that many editors have been or are musicians, as the percussive nature of editing requires an attention to the division and interrelationship of portions of time. Regardless of the presence of music or rhythmic pulse in the soundtrack, the images are read as rhythmic pieces by the eye and the pace and flow of those rhythms impacts on the expressive nature of the film.
Tension can be increased with a series of short cuts. An interruption of a series of short cuts with a long piece of film can offer relief or calm as the eye has time to resolve the image. A shift from fast action within shot to slow action or stillness can heighten fear or imply some dramatic psychological shift. *Run, Lola, Run* plays with similar shifts of rhythm and speed to reinforce its narrative theme of competing with the clock.\(^{48}\) In a recurring sequence in which Lola must arrive at a destination by a midday deadline, a use of extreme slow motion on the second hand of the clock, over a split screen of Lola and Manni, intensifies the urgency of the scene. Our excitement is heightened as these shifts of rhythm tap into our subliminal desire for time to slow allowing the protagonist to succeed, to take control of that element that is beyond human control.

Paul Hirsch, editor of *Star Wars* (1977) attributes his background as a percussionist to his sense of rhythm and timing in film editing. He acknowledges the impact of acceleration in editing on the audience’s sense of time and suspense.

> The audience’s nervous system starts to respond to the impact of the cuts, and their heart rate and heartbeat and everything starts speeding up along with the pace of the cutting and creates a feeling of excitement. (Oldham 1992: 190)

Hirsch also relates the relationship of editing with music to the relationship between music and dance.

> You try to organise the motion that’s in the frame in a way that captures the music as a dance will capture the music. (Oldham 1992: 191)

While not all dance will relate to music in the same way, there is always an interrelationship formed for the viewer between what is seen and what is heard which can effect the meaning of the image. Sound or music can reflect and support the image to reinforce one type of reading, or can be used to contrast or juxtapose the image offering other information and different readings. It is important to recognize the difference between music and sound in the total soundtrack and the balance of sounds that are the ‘atmospheres’—the *noises that break in on the created world* (Minh-Ha 1991: 202)—and the musical compositions. While film is *extremely musical*\(^{49}\) the ‘music’ extends to the words, footfalls, environmental sounds and acoustics of the people and places contained in the image. Our attention as viewers can be drawn to the sound accompanying an image to intensify our involvement in the action. David Lynch uses this device in *Wild at Heart* (Lynch 1990) by slowing down and amplifying the sound in relation to a close-up image, for example, the striking of a match. The sound reinforces a sense of proximity to the image action and intensifies the viewer’s sense of being involved in the reality of the scene. It is the incorporation of these ‘real’ sounds that can enhance the kinaesthetic impact of dance on screen, involving more of the viewer’s senses in the visual experience.\(^{50}\)
Sound editors have the same creative influence over the image as the picture editor, and must balance all aspects of the dialogue, music and incidental sound to support the edited film. Ideally, sound should be the equal of image in the cinematic equation. (Monaco 1981: 41) The role of the composer/soundscape artist in dance film carries enormous creative responsibility perhaps because dance, in most cases having no scripted dialogue, no verbal narrative, relies on the ‘clues’ contained in the soundtrack to assist the viewer in conferring meaning.

A sound that one does not recognize (because it is decomposed, recomposed, changed—cut, repeated, emphasized differently) provokes, among other things, a renewal of attention for the image whose (form and) content becomes the only point of reference left and vice-versa. (Minh-Ha 1991: 205)

Dance film incorporating the ‘real’ sounds of the moving breathing body can be perceived as more ‘real’ in film, reflecting a more enhanced version of the live experience. In this way film is a suitable vehicle for contemporary choreographers who have already explored the terrain of the intimate audience experience of dance. Often preferring intimate venues, minimal uses of music, and an attention to deconstructed or pedestrian movement over stylized virtuosity, these choreographers invite the audience to perceive the frailties and effort that humanizes the form. Helen Herbertson while Artistic Director of Danceworks, described the company’s work as being a perfect vehicle to develop a new audience looking for dance that can speak to them directly. (Dyson 1994: 77)

The use of music in contemporary dance, as a partner to and not a master of the movement (Humphrey 1959: 132), and as just one possible aspect of the total soundscape, underlines its ‘reality effect’ and its compatibility with the film form. In the context of film the dance composer’s role extends to that of sound editor or soundscape artist. Just as the choreographer must consider the holism of the image from mise en scene to montage, the composer must consider the entire range of melody, harmony and rhythm that connects and breathes life into the bodies, spaces, and actions of the dance. Composer, John Cage, is infamous for his use of ‘unmusical’ sounds, silence, and ‘prepared’ instruments as accompaniment for dance. When working on the soundscore for Merce Cunningham’s dance film, Points in Space, he restates his preference for an equal partnership between music and dance, a position that characterizes his extensive collaboration with Cunningham.

I wanted a situation in which the choreographer and composer worked simultaneously and brought their work together without one being ahead of the other, or interpreting the other. (Cunningham and Caplan 1986)

Sound actualizes time. It can bring life to a still image, and can realize space as it creates a locale. In Christian Metz’s identification of five channels of information in film—the visual image; print and other graphics; speech; music; and noise (sound
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Effects—the majority are auditory. The interrelationships between speech, music and general sounds and their capacity to communicate as strongly as the visual image makes the role of sound editor as crucial as that of editor. As *translators through which the film speaks* (Oldham 1992: 7), I think the choreographer and the composer should share the role of editor.

### 2.5 Dance on screen

In this chapter I have discussed ways in which the languages of the choreographic and the cinematic could be compared and reconciled to develop dance as a media art. This is in no way to deny the autonomy of either art, rather to suggest more informed means for practitioners from both disciplines to approach the dancing body on screen. Dance and film are still quite different mediums with traditionally different approaches to the concepts of time and space. It is a familiarity with the subtleties of these differences that can realize their shared creative potential for moving the body.

I have also to this point only attended to the relative compositional forms and psychological impacts of dance and film in a generalized sense. There are a range of specific variables to be considered in relation to the dance film, designed for the larger, public screening context, and the dance video, viewed on the small screen of television. The scarcity of funding for dance film, and the expense of working in that format, has essentially forced dance artists to work within the more accessible video format, as I have done within this research. Similarly, there are fewer platforms for the screening of dance film, limited to the small window of arts programming available on television, and the recent rise of dance film festivals. In view of this I use the term dance ‘film’ to include both film and video, only specifying formats where it has a particular aesthetic consequence or in relation to economic considerations for the form.

A survey of the range of material that constitutes dance on screen is itself a larger discussion than can be contained within the scope of this exegesis. My research in this area has, however, been significant in the contextualizing of my own work within the field, and in discovering the shifts at work in the making and reception of dance as an art form. I have, then, included a more comprehensive discussion of the development of dance on screen as an appendix to this exegesis (refer Appendix A). This discussion examines some early representations (the Hollywood musical, adaptations of stage dance for the screen, dance documentaries), some models that incorporate dance in a broader social context (Ballroom ‘Dancesport’ and the music video), and the essentially ‘contemporary’ dance work that has been designed specifically for the screen. I have also discussed a selection of experimental and recent narrative films that attend to the body and compositional form from a more choreographic perspective.
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I use the term ‘film’ to refer to both the film and video formats unless otherwise specified.

I will discuss and analyse specific dance film and video works in Appendix A.


Some definitions of the ‘postmodern context’ relevant here include:


Criticism of the compatibility of dance and film includes practitioners and theorists from both art forms.

In chapter 3, I will discuss how these concepts of social and cultural inscriptions of the body, with particular reference to Elizabeth Grosz’s book Volatile Bodies (1994), have specifically influenced the dance content for my dance video work, Back & Forth.

Deborah Hay, for example, draws on Buddhist philosophy with her performance meditations, using concepts such as “cellular consciousness” to guide her dance making.

I will discuss examples including Maya Deren, Shirley Clarke, Michelle Mahrer, and Tracie Mitchell in Appendix A.

Doris Humphrey was a pioneer of modern dance. Her text, The art of making dances, still holds much relevance for dance study today.

Merce Cunningham states that there is something about the idea of centre stage as ‘strong’ that (he) doesn’t like Jordan, S. (dir). (1987). An interview with Merce Cunningham. Surrey: University of Surrey, National Resource Centre for Dance. This has prompted him to try and use the stage in other ways. He is also inspired by Einstein’s theory that there are no fixed points in space and by Buddhist thought in which the individual is the centre. It is not then entirely coincidental that Cunningham has been a forerunner in the choreography of contemporary dance for the camera. In interview with Stephanie Jordan, he stresses that dance for the stage and for the screen are two separate things, one is not better or worse than the other, but different. Jordan, S. (dir). (1987). An interview with Merce Cunningham. Surrey: University of Surrey, National Resource Centre for Dance.
Ch. 2: The language of the choreo-cinematic


12 From the ABC-TV Seven Deadly Sins series (1993).

13 Refer Video Appendix 2.

14 Dancer, Jane Mortiss.

15 In reality the ‘flying’ objects fell straight down past the tilted subject. This shot was also recorded at half-speed to enhance the surreal quality and bring focus to the objects themselves. (Refer to Appendix Image 1)

16 Tracking involves the movement of the camera through space, moving us physically into the scene and changing our perspective as the spatial relationships between objects shift. Peter Greenaway has used the tracking shot to emphasize the physical movement, the journey through a landscape. In *The cook, the thief, his wife, and her lover* he tracks through the set (from rear of restaurant, kitchen, to dining room) constructed as a kind of metaphorical alimentary canal. Sinnerbrink, R. (1992) “The cook, the thief, his wife and her lover—a discourse on disgust.” *Continuum: Australian Journal of Media and Culture*. Vol. 5 (2). pp. 352–365. In the dance film *Rosa* Greenaway, P. (dir). (1992). *Rosa*. La Monnaie de Munt/Rosas Production. 15 mins. He uses the tracking shot to follow the dancer across the expanse of the ballroom setting. The continuous engagement with the dance action draws attention to the physicality of the dance, while the gradual revealing of the opulent setting adds to the sensuality of the journey. *He danced with it*. (Hawker 1999)

17 *Royal Wedding* (1951) directed by Stanley Donen.


19 This article was first published in CNDO by the Arts Documentation Unit, Centre for Arts Research and Development, University of Exeter, U.K. in 1992, and re-published in the cited journal in 1996.


21 See Video Appendix 4.

22 Jane Mortiss and myself performed *Point of view*. Jane Mortiss is an Australian dancer, choreographer and educator who has worked with *Human Veins, Danceworks, The One Extra Company*, and *Dance North*.

23 In the edited video we compensated for real time distortions by manipulating time and space in an abstract manner: inserting fragments of alternative landscapes (my hand across the floor became a hand wiping sand from the surface of a mirror to reveal my face; a roll away from Jane became a vista of another moving landscape of trees); adding short successive still shots of Jane retreating or approaching ‘me’ (the camera) to intensify the psychological impact of a pause in the live dance action (underlining the physical spatial relationship between Jane and myself).

24 Television series *ER*, for example, makes extensive use of the hand-held moving camera within the action to heighten the sense of anxiety and disorientation of the narrative context, from the point of view of both the traumatized victim and the medical team responsible for life and death decisions.

25 *Evil Dead* is a classic example of the use of often low-angle (or from an ‘in-human’ eye level/point of view) moving camera shots through landscape. The emotional anxiety for the viewer here is mostly related to the ‘unseen’ identity of the ‘monster’ that the camera embodies. When the camera movement also moves at speeds which are not human (ie.
accelerated or slow motion) there is an added conflict for the viewer (a speed faster or slower than the human heartbeat) which can impact on their kinaesthetic perception.

In *Run, Lola, Run* the use of the hand-held camera is reserved for the scenes between Lola’s father and his mistress. The jerky and close-up quality of the camera movement reveals information about their relationship beyond what is spoken. There is a sense that the viewer is in the room, in surveillance of an intimate interaction, which serves to convey the secrecy of their relationship but also doesn’t encourage the viewer to identify too closely with either of the characters, but to remain detached from them. Stanley Kubrick similarly used hand-held camera to shoot the rape scene in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).

I used hand-held camera in a comic chase with my legs in *This could be the start of something* (Refer Video Appendix 5). As the staircase descent continues at an uptempo pace, the terrain becomes progressively more difficult.

Kower asserts that many choreographers pay more attention to the choreography of movement within the frame than to the movement of the frame itself.

Amy Greenfield, Film Dance Journal published by Anthology Film Archives, as cited in Mahrer.

This could, however, mean that he finds those scenes more difficult and time-consuming rather than deserving of more attention.

In *2001: A Space Odyssey* Kubrick uses the match dissolve from whirling bone to rotating space station to connect both space (terrestrial and outer) and time (prehistoric and ‘present’).

It was both a controversial and innovative choice that awarded Best Dance for the Camera (IMZ Dance Screen 2000) to *Birds*, a dance film without dancers, in which the natural movement of birds becomes an exhilarating dance experience.

Rainer’s first films were aligned to the theoretical terrain of dance, investigating notions of the female body. She then found that the medium of film and its politics enabled a greater range of theoretical positions to be explored. (Fensham 1991)

*Chiaroscuro* was shot in a Church interior rather than a controlled ‘blacked’ space. The removal of the background was, then, not complete but the experiment served to allude to and facilitate later, more sophisticated uses of light.

Red is most likely associated with anger, passion, revolution because of colour connections with blood and fire—the face reddens with blood and heat is generated from the physical tensions of anger; passion is associated with lips or the interior of the body; revolution implies death or the spilling of blood.

A ‘gobo’ is a type of stencil which, when inserted in place of a gel, can throw patterns of light onto the stage.

Ben Cobham, for example, is a Melbourne-based lighting designer who has developed an ongoing collaboration with choreographer/performer Helen Herbertson and has a reputation for creating innovative designs utilizing often unusual light sources. He often constructs new (stackable boxes offering directional or ambient light for *Free Fall* in 1997) or adapts unusual lighting sources which inhabit the performance space as part of the physical set or attached to the performers’ bodies (hand-held torches for *Physical Business* in 1994, masked overhead projectors for *Crowd* in 2000).

Some examples of Melbourne-based artists using film/video/computers within live performance contexts include: Company in Space (interactive video and digital technologies), Margie Medlin/Danceworks, and Cazernine Barry (film projection).
I will provide more detail about Mitchell’s work in Appendix A. 

Further discussion in chapter 3.

Microdance was an initiative of the Australian Film commission and the Australia council, undertaken with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, in which several choreographer and director teams were funded to create short dance films in 1997.

Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein believed montage to be an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots, that create new ideas, new realities, rather than supporting a narrative. (Eisenstein 1949)

Some examples of ongoing director/editor partnerships include Jane Campion and Sally Bongers, and DV8 Physical Theatre’s Lloyd Newson and John Costelloe.


Kahn’s filmography includes One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Ghostbusters, Out of Africa.

Refer Appendix Image 2.

Carl Littleton, editor of ET, The Accidental Tourist, Swimming to Cambodia, relates her skills as an editor to the skills of performing music. She says that you need to perform expressively, and in balance with the other aspects of the ‘orchestra’...the Director’s statement, the music, what the actors are doing, what’s going to happen. (LoBrutto 1991)

Another example is Thierry De Mey’s Rosas danst rosas (discussed in Appendix A).

I worked with Melbourne contemporary dance company Danceworks under Helen Herbertson’s direction from 1990-1995.

Cage worked predominantly with choreographer, Merce Cunningham. Both Cage and Cunningham employed chance procedures in their compositional processes, a device which they further exploited by working in isolation to one another on any given project and deferring combining their efforts until the first performance.
Chapter 3: Cutting choreography:  
Back and forth between 12 stages and 27 seconds

How do I make my sweat bead on the surface of the TV screen?

My primary concern in this research revolves around the sentiment of the aforementioned personal reflection. I am concerned with the translation of the kinaesthetic intimacy of dance and the body to the screen. In this chapter, then, I will reflect (intimately) on the three dance video artworks—The 12 stages of adventure, Back & Forth, and 27 seconds—which are the primary sources driving and informing this research. As an artistic researcher, it is my practice through which I am able to make tangible the theoretical, making connections between the actual and the virtual, the objective and the subjective, the technical and the creative, the body and the mind.

The three videos, while complete artistic statements in themselves, each represent stages of this artistic ‘journey’ and need to be read in relation to one another. The title, Cutting choreography—back and forth between 12 stages and 27 seconds, aims to preface that this chapter deals with the ‘hands-on’ nature of this research, with particular concern for the relationship between the editing process and the choreographic process. By citing the titles of the three videos out of sequence I am offering a temporal metaphor for both the research and for the construction of this chapter. The 12 stages of adventure provides the meta-narrative, that of my personal journey from choreographer to dance video artist. Twelve sub-headings, drawn from the structure and thematic content of this first dance video, articulate the predominant issues arising from my research. In sections 3.1 and 3.2, I provide a preamble contextualizing this body of work in relation to my prior activity (where I was in my development as a dance artist that prompted me to direct my work toward the cinematic), and the nature of my personal aesthetic (what is it about my style and vocabulary as a creative artist that is compatible with cinematic style). The sub-narrative in this chapter plots the making of the videos in chronological order: The 12 stages of adventure in sections 3.3 to 3.6; Back and Forth from 3.7 to 3.10; and 27 seconds in 3.11 and 3.12. These simultaneous narratives are designed to reflect the non-linear nature of my ‘learning’—a concept which not only refers specifically to the creative potential of editing, of cutting choreography, but also to the interplay between past and present, of the ‘unlearning’ of my role and processes as choreographer. The framework for this chapter is also a device through which I can offer a further personal narrative, incorporating excerpts from my choreographic journals (identifiable through shaded type). With the inclusion of this experiential layer, I propose to weave the creative with the academic, juxtaposing the theory with the practice, and the practice with its component artwork parts.
In previous chapters I have considered elements of and approaches to dance film from a range of perspectives. The predominant question arising from that discussion for me is the question of the individual practitioner, the matching of form with personal aesthetic, and the personal solutions to the technical, interpersonal and economic frameworks employed by the artist. In light of that it is important to note that my processes and resulting artworks are an example of one possible experience drawn from my aesthetic choices, my range of experience (both personal and interdisciplinary), my choice of collaborators, my personal politics, and my economic limits. My practice articulates how the dance film medium offers me a form that suits my personal aesthetic, realising my creative vision, my autonomy across the technical production range, and my personal subject matter. In my research I have found that feminist theory provides a compatible theoretical framework for the discussion of the dancing body on screen. Ann Cooper Albright asserts that contemporary dance and feminist theory are mutually informative discourses, (re) articulating the body and the relationship between physical bodies and social meaning. (Albright 1997: 141) I have similarly found that a feminist perspective echoes both my thematic concerns regarding the body and subjectivity and my pursuit of a structure or vehicle which is a re-articulation of art forms.

**Choreographic starting points:**
Journeys/pathways...interruptions/stillness’s...actions that stimulate emotion or memory...kinaesthetic connections to memories of locations, time. Phrases (theirs and mine) based on “grab, search, discard, measure, sob, ricochet, wait.” Each dancer remembers an ‘adventure’ from some time in their life. They write it down in response to the following questions:

1. where were you? (place yourself in time, place)
2. How did it start?
3. What was your reaction to this?
4. Who helped you?
5. How did you get there?
6. Who or what did you meet there?
7. How did you feel about them/it?
8. What did you have to do?
9. What was the result/at the end?
10. How did you get back?
11. Did anything else happen on the way back?
12. What did you bring back/end up with?
The ‘adventure’ cycle itself could be regarded as a metaphor for the human
development from birth to death, the ultimate rite of passage. The pattern could be
likened to models used in some spiritual or self-developmental contexts where an
identification of ‘steps’ along the stages of an experience can assist in managing an
experience, in learning and personal development. While I use these 12 stages to
chart my technical development chronologically from the first to the third artwork, I
will also use them as a framework to connect issues or creative themes ‘back and
forth’ across the research journey. My investigation of the temporal, thematically and
technically, in my artworks then provides a platform from which to view the
interplay between time and space, and to explore a new relationship between known
parts (Deren 1960: 67) in the creation of dance on screen.

3.1 The place where you are—something is missing

I was curious about the sun.

It was like finally finding the glove that fits...In motion pictures, I no longer
had to translate. Fortunately, this is the way my mind works, and I could
move directly from my imagination onto film.

—Maya Deren, Biographical Statement, 1954 (Clark, Hodson et al. 1984: 57)

I can identify with Maya Deren’s journey that led her to film via dance and poetry.
As an artist the practice of making art has been as much about finding the right form
through which to express myself, as it has been about the personal statements I have
made in my artworks. The search for the ultimate vehicle has been a process of
accumulation rather than elimination. I have drawn on a range of art forms,
positioned myself in a range of perspectives from which to view and comment on the
individual physical and emotional condition. At this stage of my professional life I
have moved beyond the average career span for a dancer and am finding the
traditional dance models (with a focus on the young or emerging artist, the company
structure, and the theatrical context) no longer offer me the right vehicle for speaking
about and utilizing my experiences as a mature artist. Nor does the small specialist
dance audience provide the challenge or feedback I’m looking for. I have also found
that my aesthetic attraction to the filmed image has continued to grow, encouraging
me to extend my skills in cinematic production and to focus my art making in this
area. Fellow dance filmmaker Tracie Mitchell connects our mutual interest in the
dance film form and its relationship to our career development as dance artists
stating:

...We’re venturing into new territory now because we’ve lived half of our
lives, and we’re preparing for a new part of our lives, and that’s what we’re
bringing to our work...that’s the weight of our questions now—Interview
with Tracie Mitchell. (Reid 2001: 3)
Just as Bazin states that *a new subject matter demands new form* (Bazin 1950-55: 160) I have moved into an exploration of the form of dance film as a means to deal with the contemporary condition of the body and dance in the face of the telecommunications revolution. Dance, as an art form needs to address questions relating to its longevity, vocabulary, and accessibility to global audiences. The active population of the dance community now also extends to include mature performers with many dancers continuing their craft beyond the parameters of the youthful body, and in doing so addressing the changing nature of their physical bodies. The dance of the mature body must resolve the (so-called) physical limits of aging—reduced mobility and stamina, changes to skin texture and pigmentation—with the expressive range and depth issuing from more years of experience. The challenge for the mature dance artist is public as well as personal. Coming to terms with our own aging does not automatically alter public opinion. In an article which draws on the insights of a collection of mature artists (all of whom could be listed as part of the ‘avant garde’ of the sixties and seventies), Jean-Claude Van Itallie writes—

*Our society denies death to the point of inconceivability, and views aging with the same shame as defecation.* (Van Itallie 1994: 35)

In a section of the same article, Yvonne Rainer sees the issue of the body as an object of desire as a contributing factor to the invisibility or dismissal of the mature dancer. She suggests that we no longer find the aging body desirable because it reminds us of death. (Rainer 1994) The challenge for dance on screen is doubled by dominant media representations of young women as objects of pleasure, in addition to these dominant perceptions of dancer as young woman. My revealing the ‘textures’ (physical and psychological) of the individual characters in my dance videos I aim to encourage a feminist reading of my works in which identification supersedes objectification.

*The end (filmed) material was highly personal...It was more about feeling, texture, intimacy, rather than being linear or representative.* —Interview with Viviana Sacchero. (Reid 2001: 1)

The mature dancer could be seen to provide a metaphor for the dance film form itself. Both have the rich communicative potential that comes from the bringing together of a range of experiences or creative processes. For the mature dancer this richness comes from their extended performance history of communicating with audiences, collaborators and with their own body over time. For the dance film, the richness and diversity of two art forms coming together offers a multi-lingual statement. Dance film also has the capacity to provide a space for the mature dance voice, as it can access the detail of action and subtlety of expression of the solo dancer. The large scale of the stage (larger, whole body actions and larger numbers of dancers to fill the broader general space) to an extent denies the ‘individual’ dancer because proportionally an ‘audible’ dance statement requires an ‘amplification’ or exaggeration of the body. This exaggeration threatens to caricature
and consequently objectify the dancer. On screen this dominant reading of dance can be challenged as new models of ‘dancer’ and ‘dance’ are made visible. The statement of ‘power’, for example, that demands a virtuosic leap or lift on the stage can be conveyed on screen with the direct point of a finger. I would argue that the finger point actually communicates greater power, as it requires less physical effort to execute it. Dance film has the potential to change the vocabulary and identity of dance.

In his article *Video Space: A site for choreography* dance video director and educator, Douglas Rosenberg believes that *dance for the camera has mirrored the upheaval in the culture and...served as a site for the discussion of...the very nature of dance itself.* (Rosenberg 2000: 276) Rosenberg’s own works make visible those bodies which traditionally have been relatively invisible in dance, bodies which do not fill the youthful, long-legged criteria which has become a stereotype in much stage dance. Rosenberg has featured performances by mature dance artists such as Anna Halprin (Rosenberg 1998) and Molissa Fenley (Rosenberg 1996), different bodies like the muscular and compact body of Li Chiao-Ping (Rosenberg 1999), or the dying body of John Henry in the documentary *Singing myself a lullaby*. 11 (Rosenberg 2000) Rosenberg’s work is itself an example of dance film re-defining dance and operating as a site for individual expression and cultural debate. Similarly, dance film offers me a site through which I can make the personal visible, with attention to the range and diversity of the individual that extends beyond an image of youthful physical perfection and acknowledges the scars and struggles of experience.

### 3.2 The call

> "I’d read about it and I’d seen pictures."

*What we are pursuing at the deepest level when we respond to the Call is a sense of our own completion.* (Moody and Carroll 1998: 109)

I am ‘called’ to filmmaking because of the intimacy available in the form, because of its potential to connect the visual and the aural, and to connect the audience with the individual character. Films offer the performing artist longevity by capturing and preserving the intangible. It could be argued that this desire to preserve the moment, to capture and extend my life as a dance artist, is related to that universal question of mortality. However, all theological discussions aside, I have recognized a synergy between the aesthetic of film and my personal aesthetic which falls into three main areas. These are the temporal (a strong relationship to rhythm, sound, and musicality); the personal (a concern with the individual’s ‘story’, connecting the physical with the emotional or interior landscape); and the collaborative (between art forms and practitioners).
3.2.1 The Temporal

The temporal aspect of my aesthetic has consistently steered my creative activity toward arts that call for an attention to rhythm, timing and sound (such as music, poetry writing, tap dancing, comedy, and radio). I choreograph in a temporal sense. My movement phrases are predominantly driven by the dynamics of rhythmic structures, and I form a creative work using patterns and arrangements that most often reflect harmonic and rhythmic structures.

*I think most of my movement is driven by a sense of rhythm and timing. It is how I build all of my movements, a play on acceleration, deceleration, syncopation, and that is how I get my dynamic, from the shifts in timing... and because this piece (27 seconds) is about that, it looks at the way time distorts that, reflects those dynamics which reflect emotion.* —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 11)

Continuing the musical analogy, I will build a single movement phrase, a single musical ‘voice,’ through a lateral play across a range of tempi and instrumentation, giving it the potential to shift at any point into an alternate voice, dimension, pathway. The macrocosm of the single phrase contains the multiple microcosms of simultaneous yet different phrases much in the same way that a musical chord contains a number of notes that could lead the melody into a different key. Choreographically, I choose to set up material that can offer multiple entry and exit points and allow shifts in instrumentation (from rhythm to first voice) either from body to body or across one body. Aesthetically I am stimulated by this capacity for multiplicity and choice, by layering an event and charting my way through the different points of view. I constantly try to shift the identity of the material in a way that can allude to many voices through the ‘dance’ of one multi-faceted individual.

In *The 12 stages of adventure*, for example, the ‘Grab, search...’ phrase contained movements which shifted mood and dynamic as they traversed the instructions inferred by the words/text. Each word contains dynamic qualities of weight, pathway, and time comparable to Laban’s categories of movement qualities, (Bartenieff, Davis et al. 1970) but with added inferences of emotion or relationship. The ‘grab’ is sudden and pulls into the body and hints at a reflex or quick decision. ‘Search’ is sustained, with the action travelling out in concert with the body, implying someone/thing is missing. ‘Discard,’ like Laban’s ‘thrust’ is a direct, strong, sudden movement with the added implication of a severed relationship. ‘Measure’ is the length of the journey between two points. ‘Sob’ has the ‘wring’ of the internal meeting the external, a percussive rhythm and a heavy, downward pathway of travel. ‘Ricochet’ snaps the speed, force, and direction of movement outward and horizontally in a three-point echo from the body. ‘Wait’ settles the focus back to the individual, to stillness and contemplation. The phrase itself is multi-faceted and, in its diverse shifts of mood, when applied to one individual, represents...
a longer period of time, a lifetime journey. With six versions (each dancer created their own version) of this phrase and six bodies performing in several locations, I had set up numerous permutations of the one formula. In editing, I could use the dynamic structure of the phrase as the continuum with the capacity to shift bodies/locations with the edit points inherent in the words. For example, over the continuous action of my gliding ‘search’ hand I could shift identity between myself and Hayden, and across locations—implying an extended use of time and space than that of the single action performed by the one body in one location. Similarly, editing with the rhythm of the ‘sob’ I could ‘drop’ the movement into a new place and new context—from my hand (alone, interior) to Natalie’s hand (alone, exterior, and then in relationship with Viviana in an alternate exterior).

The non-linear capacities of video editing programs support my lateral approach to composition, facilitating a reorganisation of the movement images in relation to a time-line. The simultaneous narratives and pastiche which non-linear editing makes possible again reflects these musical layers in harmonics and instrumentation. The editing program itself visually resembles staves of musical notation. The audio track is the constant, the drum or rhythm track. The video tracks match the melody lines of, for example, wind or string instruments, and the effects track, the track in which the dissolves or speed effects are represented visually, connect the lines of vision like the counterpoint or intervals of a harmonic chord. This research, which marks my entry into the role of editor, has revealed ‘my’ choreographic form and a new role in which to ‘perform’. Devices such as repetition and retrograde, manipulations of speed, and juxtapositions of text and image are now available to me in the editing suite and, rather than having to demand extreme virtuosity of my performers, I can ‘perform’ these manipulations directly and with an enormous range of specificity. I can have a direct link to my audience and, in a sense, can elicit specific responses via my performance in the editing suite. With repetition of image design or movement motifs, I aim to build a history, a familiarity between performer and audience. With changes in speed I can affect the audience on a physical level (the viewer/listener’s heart rate will adjust to match the pulse of the movement/sound) effecting a kinaesthetic response and inflecting the movement content emotionally. The use of slow motion can encourage a slowed heart rate and a relaxed state and receptivity in the viewer. This is further magnified as it reveals the actual structure of movements or changes which either cannot be slowed down in actuality or whose nature would be changed by a change in tempo of performance. Rendering visible the hitherto unseen can solicit intimacy between the viewer and the subject. (Deren 1960: 62) I seek out multiple connections in movement in order to connect with the variety of individuals that make up an audience.
All the choreography is in the editing…
—connecting frames of similar line, motion, shape, colour, body parts
with memory, clothing, actions, range of motion.
—connecting memories/ideas with sounds.
One journey of water flowing down the body…is re-routed by the shape
of the body, the shape of my personal experience…water represents time
(born head first, toe-tagged at death), body parts represent incidents
through time and sound/music augments and adds layers to all these
experiences…
…When I live in a single moment, that moment is coloured and layered
by all senses and all experiences.

3.2.2 The Personal

As we tell our small stories and connect them with larger ones, we create
meaning out of our life. (Steinman 1986: 121)

When I choreograph, I am connecting stories: the stories embedded in my movement
and my choreographic vision with my dancers’ personal stories; our collective stories
with the movement material; and the resulting ‘danced’ story with the experience(s)
of those who listen or watch. (Steinman 1986: 104) In The Knowing Body: the artist
as storyteller in contemporary performance, author Louise Steinman states that to
tell a story and to receive a story, you have to be inside the story, to find your place
in it. (Steinman 1986: 121) I find a resonance with Louise Steinman’s text which is, itself, a story connecting the stories of other artists, discussing connections between
the verbal and the physical, between performance and personal history. As a dancer
and choreographer I am dealing with human interactions and relationships. To be
‘inside’ the movement, and to find my ‘place’ in relationship to my fellow dancers, I
look for personal connections that can deepen and layer the physical vocabulary. For
me, the expressive and communicative potential of dance lies in the choreographer’s
consideration of the entire body, which includes the sensory, emotive, and historical
experiences of each individual dancer. I draw on storytelling in my choreographic
process as a means to create a shared ownership of the material and the process, and
to access memory (and the kinaesthetic perceptions intertwined with it) as a
choreographic tool. (Steinman 1986: 22)

…Memory is embedded in our very act of seeing and movement seems to be a
particularly potent force in unlocking memory’s vivid detail. (Steinman 1986:
71)

All three of my dance videos incorporate personal material from the performers
involved, with Back and Forth dealing directly with the idea of revealing the self
through the body, showing the vulnerabilities, detail and intimate space of the
individual body, physically and psychologically. In sourcing my dancers’ stories I
am informing my creative process as much as I am building content. My interest in
their stories is my interest in and value of them as individuals. The content of the stories becomes a means to establish a relationship which can in turn create and communicate a shared story. In revealing the ‘personal’ dancer I am revealing the ‘personal’ in the exchange between myself and my dancers, revealing myself by revealing what I value.

_We began with personal stories, which developed into phrases, which we combined with other phrases...this allowed me to have an association with the original source, as well as with the evolution of the movement throughout the developmental process. I also found it helpful having various ways with which to engage with the material. I remember the movement as being highly textural. So, as well as executing the 'steps, ' I had feelings, emotions, stories, contact with other dancers, text, and memories with which to engage._ — Interview with Viviana Sacchero (Reid 2001: 1)

In most cases the stories sourced in the studio process are a mechanism for accessing subtlety and integrity of performance, although the images, emotions and memories that then become connected to the movement do colour that movement with a perceptible sub-text. For example, while a viewer of _12 Stages_ may not be able to articulate Viviana’s childhood memory of following a road in an attempt to reach the sun, the sense of infinite distance and vulnerability is visible in her walking. The intimacy of film, and its familiarity as a storytelling vehicle, allows me to explore this level of detail and subtlety in performance and to suggest personal narratives that may not be accessible for a stage audience.

Film also gives me access to the dancer’s audible voice either directly through narration, dialogue or as a part of the soundscape. By connecting the voice and the body, language and images I can then assemble a total identity, an integration of the physical, verbal, and conceptual, a human sum of sensory and emotive parts.

_The voice is a direct line to the emotions._ (Steinman 1986: 109)

### 3.2.3 The Collaborative

My artistic practice is enriched by and inseparable from my collaboration with others. It is the social and communicative exchange of working with others, which stimulates my creative process. The culture of dance practice deals with the concept of community on a daily basis. The dance class is an interactive site where individuals must negotiate the same space and time together. Even the solo dancer must find collaboration between body parts, between body and mind, between their present performance and the history of their body’s movement. This microcosm of collaboration extends out in layers in performance projects as it does in film projects, extending from performer to performer, performer with choreographer, artistic personnel to technical personnel, to distributors, critics, audience. Intrinsic to every layer is communication—listening, contributing and working with a larger group.
creative energy. The film project offers me the same potential to explore connections with different individuals, to find the dynamic and communicative mechanisms of that group which, like the choreographic process, is essentially a creative process. The film itself, the distillation of the entire creative process of filmmaking, becomes, for me, like my own body dancing—a single action or statement that is the ‘elixir’ of my entire lived, and danced, history. Dance film also facilitates a collaboration of art forms, a meeting of styles and narratives, which extends my choreographic vocabulary.

3.3 The response to the call

“I put all my belongings in a locker and I got on the train.”

...Because every good process is about accumulating and eliminating. It is about editing, so you have got lots of things to throw away so you can reveal what is underneath. —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 6)

The 12 stages of adventure, the first of my three dance video works, represents the accumulative stage of this artistic research. To examine and facilitate my choreographic shift from the stage to the screen, I began with familiar terrain of developing material with dancers in a rehearsal studio, and devoted a considerable amount of time to examining my choreographic processes, my ‘belongings.’ In this way, The 12 stages could be seen to represent the pre-production period for all three works.

The ‘adventure’ film genre suggests both a structural and psychological framework. It suggests a universal pattern of physical behaviour and emotional response, a common series of goals or landmarks charted by different individual routes. My choice of this thematic starting point meant that I had to ‘unpack’ my choreographic material to define the common temporal arrival points (a plane through space, a part of the body, a degree of effort) while building a diversity, a layering of potential alternate routes to those points. My use of six dancers in effect provided this diversity. By directing the ‘journey’ of the choreographed movement through different bodies, I could already alter the route of the pathway without altering the material itself. It was possible to build layers of material from one phrase or, as I discussed in 3.2.1 with the ‘Grab, search’ phrase, from one set of instructions.

However, the integrity of the overall journey on screen demands more attention to the individual dancer. The particularities of screen space—the narrow foreground, the impact of the single body in frame, the intimacy of close-up, and the ‘dance’ of the moving camera—expose the detail of each dancer’s physical articulation and expressive performance. To shift my work into screen space I needed to explore processes for developing an intimacy between the performer, the material, and the camera.
By working extensively with a video camera in rehearsal I was able to explore the relationship between the movement material and the screen space, and let this ‘eye’ inform the direction of the choreography. At the same time I was able to personalize the camera, setting up a familiarity between it and the dancers. The dancers and the camera shared the history of the movement, a body memory of how it felt to create the movement, and to be seen performing the movement from a range of perspectives.

...*With practice you become more accustomed to dealing with the camera...I’m not so aware of a live audience watching me from a front perspective. I sort of view it as a sort of three-dimensional, global experience. So in that respect it brings a holistic awareness.* —Interview with Fiona McGrath (Reid 2001: 1)

To reveal the ‘personal’ for the viewer I explored mechanisms for creating an intimacy between the performers and the movement material. In the early rehearsals of *The 12 stages* I set up particular improvisational structures and movement invention scores which gave them ownership of the material. One series of choreographic tasks, incorporating techniques drawn from my experiences of working with Lisa Nelson,\(^\text{19}\) concentrated on kinaesthetic memory. In one case I asked dancers to traverse a difficult pathway (a stairwell) with their eyes closed, constructing it incrementally by rewinding the material in small sections before progressing. By eliminating sight, and by using an accumulative process to build the pathway, the emphasis was placed on the dancers’ kinaesthetic responses and recall. The sense of touch became primary, with the dancers having to ‘see’ through touch, and drawing an attention to their relationship to that intimate space. The choice of a stairwell added an element of risk that further encouraged the dancers to work with their proximal space in a considered and intimate way. I then further built the history of this kinaesthetic experience by placing these solo blind pathways in relationship to each other in the studio. Out of their original context the pathways became augmented with gravitational issues, for example, how to reproduce the action of leaning away from the arm without the support of the stair railing.

Recalling movement that was unseen, which had only been experienced through touch, gave the dancers’ movement a particular quality—one quite similar in quality to the recollection of a distant memory or dream. Viviana’s solo in the ‘I was alone’ section of *The 12 stages* is her kinaesthetic recollection of ‘reading’ the blind pathways of two other dancers (Hayden and Cara Mitchell). With her eyes closed I asked her to use her hands and body to ‘see’ the other dancers’ movement. With Hayden and Cara working slowly and closely together, Viviana could cross between bodies or receive stimulation from different directions with different body surfaces simultaneously, adding further detail and variation to her kinaesthetic reading.
She reaches through her fingers, the side of her face, between her shoulder blades like she is searching out a series of childhood memories—through the hallway in the dark, her mother kissing her goodnight, the sun on her back in summer.

I often incorporate text in my choreographic process as a tool for generating material with the dancers. Some of this text becomes incorporated in performance (either spoken by the dancers or incorporated in the soundtrack), but the majority of it functions as a device for finding particular rhythms and qualities in the movement and to provide imagery and a shared history for the performers. In each of my artworks each dancer has brought in a personal story of their own. For 12 stages there were six stories (including my own) relating a past event that had been an ‘adventure.’ Back and Forth used a selection of personal stories that recounted the events surrounding scars or trauma points on my body. 27 seconds sourced nineteen accounts of events in which time distorted, where it seemed to slow down or speed up. I include these unscripted personal accounts to imbue my work with a sense of reality, to give it some documentary ‘truth’ in that it contains recollections of actual events in the participants’ own words.

...It comes from the inside rather than the outside. You have to find other reference points. We talked about timing, using emotional images, their writing, and sourcing their own sources so that immediately you are seeking out personal attachment to those sorts of ideas. —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 13)

I used parts of the text most directly in 12 stages by incorporating Hayden’s narration of selected word and action sentences. His direct address to the audience aims to set up an intimacy with the viewer, providing the continuity of a single account (abstracted as it may be in its fragmented content) and marking the twelve stages like scenes. By creating a type of sign language for these sentences—actions which reflect either the rhythm or meaning of the word—I was hoping to provide a bridge between the verbal and the physical, between realism and abstraction. By connecting the words with movement I wanted to make the connections between an everyday ‘languaged’ experience and an embodied or ‘danced’ experience explicit for the film viewer.

Because most of the movement material was sourced from our own stories and experiences, it was easier to re-access the ‘intention’ of particular moments by recalling the original story/memory. —Interview with Viviana Sacchero (Reid 2001: 1)
### What connects these individual stories?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Viv</th>
<th>Hayden</th>
<th>Natalie</th>
<th>Cara</th>
<th>Jackie</th>
<th>Me</th>
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<td>Walking (forest)</td>
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<td>Jumping, paddling</td>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>walking</td>
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<td>Ocean/ cliff</td>
<td>Lake</td>
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<td>Castle/ ocean</td>
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<td>Water</td>
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<td>Alone Travellers</td>
<td>Group</td>
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<td>Crowd</td>
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<td>Concept of distance</td>
<td>Discovery, sand</td>
<td>Courage, Sharing</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>A story, Popularity</td>
<td>A postcard</td>
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</tbody>
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#### 3.4 Meeting with the mentor

“I had this need.”

I find that I ‘meet with my mentor’ (that is, I learn significant things about myself and about what I am trying to achieve) through my creative communication with others. In a teaching context I try to engage and inform students on a range of levels, re-articulating ideas from different perspectives (visual/imagery, kinaesthetic/tactile, aural/rhythmic, anatomical) to broaden their access to or ‘ways in’ to my teaching material. In a choreographic context I am interested in extending this approach to facilitate a creative exchange with my dancers, one which enriches my choreographic process and which can support each dancer’s performance narrative. In a live performance context my artistic vision is communicated with an audience fairly directly through my dancers, albeit with their particular inflections on the choreographic language. In this dance film context there is a third party involved in mediating the artistic vision—the camera. In this research, my ‘need’ has been to facilitate a creative and performative communication between my dancers, the camera operator, the movement material, and myself. The choreography of the camera becomes a facilitation of an interpersonal exchange.

As a choreographer and as a performer I have always been concerned with finding a performance integrity, one that reveals something personal, individual, and human.
My background in drama goes some way into foregrounding my interest in ‘human truths.’ Acting theorists as diverse as Stanislavsky, Brecht and Grotowski agree that it is the presence of (the) self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths. (Auslander 1995: 77) In addition, as a company member of Danceworks this idea of realism rather than stylisation was implicit in the charter of the company. Artistic Director of the company at that time, Helen Herbertson, writes:

> Our dance shies away from promoting only physical perfection, or from a preoccupation with choreographic form. Like the audience, our dancers are human beings first with recognisable imperfections and frailties as well as untapped depths of human potential. (Dyson 1994: 77)

I regard choreography as a tool rather than an end in itself. The sequence of ‘steps’ is a means for arriving at an ‘understanding’, a shared participation in an embodied experience. In ‘choreographing’ the camera I am concerned with establishing a shared terrain between camera (viewer) and dancer, an intimate relationship in which the emotional and psychological impact of the kinaesthetic experience is revealed. This means that the camera must not only participate in the movement spatially, rhythmically, dynamically, but it must understand the nature of its interpersonal relationship with the dancer. Essentially, I am trying to imbue the camera with an identity, one which is known to the dancer and which they are prepared to trust with their personal disclosure, with their ‘imperfections and frailties’.

> For me the camera is about getting the performers so used to it, so as to create a very relaxed situation otherwise...there won't be truth in the performer—Interview with Michelle Mahrer (Reid 2001: 3)

There needs to be a ‘play’ between preparation and spontaneity from both dancer and camera operator. The ‘accidents’ that happen, that is, the unplanned or unexpected moments which vanish with the rehearsal or the live performance can be captured on film. The tangibility of the filmed moment makes the ‘shoot’ a creative goldmine, combining the experimentation of the rehearsal room with the immediacy of performance. What is required from camera operator and dancer is trust and confidence in themselves and each other to stay with a moment, and meet the needs of a changing moment. Then, awkward, uncomfortable moments of vulnerability and powerful moments of virtuosity become equally rich. (Warshaw 1982) The camera and the dancer, like contact improvisers, must survive a dance moment. Tracie Mitchell is similarly interested in creating an environment for dancers and camera operators in which ‘accidents’ can happen, where the camera can catch their essence...the truth of those performers.

> You're working with people on screen...like you take a reel of photos of a picnic and there’ll be one that’s just fantastic because it will catch that group of people, like people really pissing themselves or someone (frowning)...and
that is what I’m interested in catching with dance on screen. —Interview with Tracie Mitchell (Reid 2001: 4)

In essence, I am interested in the improvisational capacities of performer and camera operator, their willingness and openness to interact and react with their instincts and their creativity.

A lot of the actual footage was derived from improvisational activities and just spontaneous craziness that we got up to on the day, so I think an improvisational skill is certainly required, because only so much can be captured, I think, through pre-planned ideas. I think the magic actually happens through mistakes and surprises. —Interview with Fiona McGrath (Reid 2001: 2)

Mistakes, surprises, accidents…all imply risk-taking and a relinquishment of control. At the same time the diversity that is made visible when a person or action is out of control, exposed, or vulnerable can offer the participant (subject or viewer) satisfaction and power—the power of choice. In my dance films I look to capture those moments that reveal what is at risk for the individual, capturing the sub-text of human behaviour, the verbal and physical disclosure usually restricted to the confidentiality of an intimate relationship. My strategy in creating artwork that can ‘reveal’ the individual is to increase the intimacy and the range of available choice. To layer the variables in the relationship between the dancers and the movement material of The 12 stages I built shared variations of personal text and gesture, and of tactile, visual, and emotional memory. To set up similar variables between the camera and the dancer I had to relinquish control over the interaction, and allow the camera and the dancer to make new choices in relation to one another, to react to changes rather than to enact a prescribed event. In some cases, when operating the camera myself, this meant disengaging my eye from the viewfinder and shifting its eye to other parts of my body—embodying the view of the event. In other cases, my body serviced the pathway of my vision, moving in and out of the floor, finding physical solutions to maintaining the smooth point fix between dancer and lens/eye.

For the dancer, the use of camera in rehearsal encourages them to consider alternate and multiple views of their action. They are in a sense made more vulnerable because they must consider the practical issues (‘will I kick the camera?’) and aesthetic issues (‘the camera is focussed on my back but the action is in my leg’). In the same way that improvisational tasks set up multiple variables in order to disorientate or upset control—and in doing so, access a level of spontaneity—the camera can serve to stimulate a heightened, almost three-dimensional attention in the performer. Fiona McGrath, dancer in Back & Forth, describes performing for the camera as a holistic, mind-body experience.27

When you’re performing for a live audience sometimes you choose to alter your gaze or change your point of focus…with your piece there were always
The dancers’ familiarity with my role as camera operator in rehearsal of The 12 Stages, and my connection to the movement material as its source, the initiating body, allowed the dancers to view the camera as another dancer, an equal participant in the action. Our shared knowledge of each other and of the movement terrain gave us the freedom to enter into unknowns but also had the potential to limit the choices we made in our interaction. Familiarity can breed complacency and predictability. By transposing our relationship to other, difficult locations I was able to provide exterior variables and unknowns into the context of shooting. Dancer and camera both had to negotiate the difficulties of moving in sand on the beach, between trees and uneven ground in the forest, against the wind, in the cold. The dancer lost balance and fell at a different time; the camera caught a different perspective of that fall or found itself falling. By altering the dancer and the camera’s relationship to external space, on an equal (loss of) footing, I hoped to intensify their shared relationship with the movement and each other.

As a performer, I rely strongly on my relationship to space when executing particular environments or sequences of movements, this paradigm was obviously shifted within the different environments and within the multiple takes (especially when working outdoors which presents a constantly changing external dynamic). It was quickly apparent that I had to alter my performance techniques. Working within different environments meant that the movement became the ‘constant’ and that external phenomena the ‘variable’. I had to alter my points of reference so that the external environment was not relied upon for directional/spatial orientation and association, but rather that my spatial orientation and referencing came from the central source of the movement. —Interview with Viviana Sacchero (Reid 2001: 1)

The relationship I am looking for between camera and dancer is a similar model to that of contact improvisation—a non-hierarchical notion in which each person is equal and each one has total responsibility for themselves and their behaviour.

You are aware and sensitive and present but you do not control what is happening. You give a freedom of choice for the simple reason that the other is capable of doing things as well. (Novak 1990: 72)

For The 12 Stages the shared adventure of the location shoot supported the thematic material. The forces at play in shooting the material resembled those which exist day to day—varying conditions, new choices, mistakes and surprises.
The live performance of *The 12 stages* in August 1998 served as a means for me to create a storyboard for the screen version. I was able to try out material against projected footage, to play with possible juxtapositions of material and individuals and to ascertain what footage was still needed. The live performance also allowed me to ‘stage’ a storyboard for camera operator, Paul Huntingford, whom I had engaged to shoot the final ‘white interiors.’ Some of these shots would include myself as dancer and, so, excluded me from operating. They would also be controlled in that the white cyclorama of the film studio eliminated external factors of background or environmental conditions, and placed emphasis on the subject in frame. With the camera feeding to playback monitors I could control and direct shot without having to be behind the camera. Involving Paul in the documentation of the live performance meant I could familiarize him with the material, that is, rehearsing a relationship with the dancers’ live performances and with the terrain or style of the footage I had shot on location. Furthermore, my experience of camera operating had built a shared vocabulary which Paul and I could take into the new terrain of the final shoot, where there could be an interplay and interchange between our roles as director and participant.

My collaboration with Paul Huntingford began with my first film, *Betrayal* (1993), so we have developed our language together over a number of years. Paul’s background as a musician, and our musical and performing history, has meant that he is familiar with movement and rhythmic ideas and understands my language or ‘style.’ His experience as a foley artist could probably be seen to have had a major contribution to his skills of filming dance. The foley artist sight-reads the moving image in order to place the sound of the action temporally and dynamically, with attention to weight, quality and pathway of movement. Paul’s practice in predicting movement events, and in utilizing his body to follow the action while watching a screen, has meant that he captures dance on camera efficiently and physically. Similarly, my experience of watching him shoot, and of being involved in the camera/dancer relationship with him, has taught me how to operate camera physically, choreographically.

My interview with Paul about the experience of working with the camera inside a duet in a previous work, *Point of View*, reflects the way we interact creatively, as we share the recollection of the physical experience of that shoot.

**DR:** you really had to operate like  
**PH:** the other dancer

**DR:** an invisible third dancer or you had to be  
**PH:** I had to be the second dancer at some points and then...did it cross over? Was I being...I was being the person you were dancing with?

**DR:** Well, it was all from my point of view  
**PH:** the person Jane was dancing with

**DR:** which was me
PH: Yeah…and then did I go out to be the third eye? To see both of you in the end shot? Did that happen?

DR: yeah…at the very end…but the bulk of it where we had you in between us…because we had to pull that duet apart and find ways to get you in it and move the camera around so it looked like you weren’t there.

PH: that was one of the most enjoyable bits of camera work I’ve had to do. The most challenging for sure. And trying to make it work…aside from just having a lipstick camera strapped to your head, because it just wouldn’t have worked…the shots had to be choreographed for focus-pulling and zooming in and out, and making it look like you were doing your certain moves…Yeah, Point of View was the closest I’ve ever been to the actual dance myself…

It also seemed like something I could never achieve behind the camera again, unless it was doing the same thing (with you). But it did give me more confidence in going for it, especially with documenting pieces I haven’t seen.  

—Interview with Paul Huntingford (Reid 2001: 5)

3.5 Crossing a threshold into a new world

“I must have walked for a while.”

The 12 stages of adventure was my first solo editing experience. I had taken a short course in Media 100 non-linear editing earlier in that year, and had considerable experience of directing and watching Paul editing on my previous works, but had not faced the machine alone before. This was the stage of the process where I learnt the most about all other aspects of working in video—in how I could improve the pre-production, the efficiency of the shoots, the quality of the sound score. Between editing The 12 stages and editing Back & Forth I volunteered to shoot and edit other people’s work as much as possible as a means to hone those skills and to become as familiar and confident with that equipment and technology as I was with choreographing the body.

I spent several days logging and selecting the best footage, doing rough cuts and playing with speed changes and stills manually at home, and then storyboarding to The 12 stages structure before I went into the edit suite. Without a sound structure to cut to, I set up a loose time limit (one minute per stage) as a means to keep my ideas succinct. I used Hayden’s lines of narration as the markers for each section and had musical themes from the composer to use as playback while I was editing, to assist my choices on a rhythmic and melodic level. Essentially, however, my choices were driven by the direction of movement within or through frame. I wanted the continuity of the action, the choreography, to drive the narrative of the edit. Having worked with the musical themes in rehearsal and in performance I knew the meter
and accent of the movement would match the sound stylistically. It was then another process of working with the composer to rearrange, refine and, in some cases, reinvent those musical sections\textsuperscript{35} to marry with the finished picture edit. This included the recording of additional footsteps\textsuperscript{36} and some real time musical improvisation to the picture playback.\textsuperscript{37}

The movement is the continuous, unifying element for \textit{The 12 Stages}. I was cutting choreography—re-defining screen narrative through a kinaesthetic script and re-defining the spatial and temporal constructions of my choreography through the cinematic tools of montage. I specifically used connections in colour and texture—white backgrounds in long shots (open iris for washed out background on exterior shots, and white cyclorama interiors) and the reds and purples of the dancers’ costumes in closer shots—to assist the connections between places and persons.

The varying textures and styles of the costumes added a subtle layer of individuality and history to the movement. Hayden’s hooded cape in ribbed velvet and the Celtic insignia coloured into his scalp provided a medieval and/or religious undertone that referenced his personal ‘story’—his solitary trek through mountains. His searching, his ‘need’ was to ‘meet with his mentor.’

\textit{Hayden shifting through the trees is really beautiful...has a bit of a Gothic feel.} —Interview with Natalie Cursio (Reid 2001: 2)

The similarity, though, in his lower body (loose red pants, brown boots) to Viviana’s allowed me to play with an ambiguity between their identities, cutting from one to the other on each step, and also to suggest a commonality of experience that is not separated by gender. The textures and weights of fabric shared throughout the costuming (chiffon, velvet) provided me with editing points across different bodies and to different locations of the one body. This allowed me to infer particular relationships between individuals or to re-sequence movement phrases and construct particular relationships between body parts. Editing between Hayden and myself on the sustained slice of the palm and lower arm from right to left of screen, I was able to extend the sense of the duration of the ‘searching’ action, while the similarity of our purple sleeves eased the spatial shift from body to body. I was able to use the red filling of frame as Viviana walks into the camera to not only shift location (interior to exterior) and from body to body (Viviana to Hayden) but across the body (from torso to lower leg). The patterning of the movement is re-choreographed across the body in a way that would not be possible in a live context, that is, to direct the viewer’s attention from torso to lower leg without referencing the body parts or motivating joints in between.

The manipulation of time and space in relation to colour and texture was developed further through postproduction effects. I incorporated a small section of 8mm footage of Viviana walking away down the road to relate the experience directly as her childhood memory. The texture and quality of 8mm is strongly associated with home
movies of the sixties or seventies, being the format available for domestic purposes at that time.

To punctuate the video and mark the stages more explicitly for the viewer I chose to insert black and white still frames. These brought the movement to rest before Hayden’s next line of narration, smoothing the transition from body to text. In the overall structure I used this device to signal the climax (the end of the ‘supreme ordeal’) by holding the still of Natalie’s ‘death’ for an extended period of time.

My choices to use fast, jump cuts or dissolves between shots were designed to support the rhythm of the overall narrative. The ‘supreme ordeal’ section that is the climax of the work, employs many fast cuts between bodies which accelerate until they reach Natalie’s slow fall to ‘death.’ The speed of the cuts heightens the impact and urgency of the scene without altering the original dynamic and speed of the movement. The use of slow motion and dissolve for Natalie’s fall further accelerates the previous shots while signalling both a denouement and suggesting a loss of control as a result of the preceding disorienting montage. In earlier sections, the longer dissolve serves to transport the viewer from one ‘reality’ (in space and time) to another with an eased pace that might suggest the sensation of dream or memory. The dissolve between Hayden’s hands (‘got on the train’) and Natalie’s finger ‘measure’ pours the viewer not only across place and person, but also across plane or dimension. Hayden’s hands move toward us and frame Natalie’s fingers which also trace a sagittal pathway from background to foreground, leading the movement toward the viewer and connecting the actions as measurements of time and of space from subject to viewer. This three-dimensionality is heightened by the juxtaposition of his frontal facing and her side facing. At the same time, the dissolve shifts our eye from Hayden/character to Natalie/movement, from centre to left of screen and back to centre, facilitating a sense of a change of time (present to past). The temporal ambiguity of the work is prefaced and then reiterated in the opening and closing journey up Viviana’s body, the ascension intercut with other bodies. The repetition of this editing sequence is used to signal a continuity that extends beyond this twelve-minute event, an open-ended cycle that is, in its potential for repetition, a universal pattern.

There’s a sense of it could continue on from here…the dot, dot, dot—
Interview with Fiona McGrath (Reid 2001: 3)

The sense of the journey and the struggle to get there is evident. There is a strong sense of discovery and the finding of maturity. The film is very emotive…makes you curious, gives the idea of the different characters being separate individuals but also a representation of one individual. —Interview with Natalie Cursio (Reid 2001: 2)

3.6 Tests, allies, enemies
I hadn’t learnt theories about time, space and distance yet.

Readers are always already formed, shaped as subjects, by the ideological discourses which have operated on them prior to their encounter with the text in question. (Morley 1989: 21)

The process of defining a hybrid dance film form is, to a degree, a battle to deconstruct the viewer’s preconceptions of film genres or dance styles. The television music-video form has contributed greatly to audience reception of both dance and experimental filmmaking styles, with its emphasis on short, abstract narratives and juxtapositions of imagery and rhythm. However, it has also threatened to shunt dance film into the postmodern terrain of pleasurable pastiche, where form displaces content with random images which overwhelms the individual’s ability to interpret their meaning rationally, resulting, according to some, in a more sensuous mode of reception rooted in the domain of desire. (Harms and Dickens 1996: 216)

The average three or four minute time frame of music videos places them in the same temporal framework as advertising, where the visual image, the form, is both device and content. The pleasure of viewing, of receiving this visual over-stimulation, is to associate desire with a particular product (to buy that music artist’s albums, or to drink Kahlua).

MTV actively seeks to produce and/or reproduce homogeneity as a reality-effect, precisely by evaporating images of their content, subordinating them in a hierarchy of modes of address in which record sales are the overarching and absent principle. (Cubitt 1991: 54)

According to filmmaker Michelle Mahrer a ‘good’ dance film is between three and five minutes in length. On the other end of the spectrum a ‘good’ live dance work is around the fifty-minute mark. Certainly, DV8 have challenged this benchmark by successfully transposing a fifty minute live work to the screen, but their work tends to be the exception rather than the rule. When dance on screen is placed within the temporal limits of the few minutes as suggested by Mahrer, a range akin to a commercial break or between program ‘filler,’ dance is potentially typecast as primal pleasure (Turner 1988: 116) rather than legitimate narrative. Contrary to this I believe it is possible to attend to a dance narrative and to read meaning in the body beyond the time limit of a few minutes. As Vivian Sobchack suggests, we can draw on our bodily perception to sustain our capacity for reading the moving image, allowing the cinema (to return) us to our senses. (Sobchack 1995: 44)

Dance, as a non-verbal bodily form has been marginalized, ‘other-ed’ to the privileged signifying system of language. Daly sees the cultural marginalisation of the nonverbal as deeply ingrained—we cannot deny our words, but we can always deny the ‘body language’ with which we deliver them. (Daly 1992: 247) The subject matter for The 12 stages was form itself. I was trying to contextualize or language...
dance through a connection to a semiotic structure. Is it that we can only read meaning in a form if we can verbalize it? If we can establish a name for the dance film genre will viewers be more willing to read the content? The dance film has tried on many names, from Deren’s ‘cine-dance’ or ‘chorecinema’ to ‘dance for the camera’ or ‘dance on screen’ and, most recently, ‘motion picture dance.’

This hybrid form is still looking for a room—or an identity—of its own.
(Nascimento 2000: 7)

At a screening of The 12 stages at a higher degree research forum, feedback centred on an identification of the form, a comparison to known screen genres (music videos, experimental film) rather than identification with the danced subject matter. I do not consider that these viewers could not ‘read’ the dance content. Like Daly, I believe that although dance may not operate through normative codes of communication and may not be expressible in words, it is still meaningful…we can still ‘understand’ it. (Daly 1992: 245) There is, as Leslie Satin suggests, a ‘kinaesthesia’, in which the spectator completes the dance not only through the experience of intellectual observation, or emotional or psychological identification, but through the somatic, neuromuscular, dialogic response with the performer and the performance. (Satin 1996: 135)

I do want the dance film viewer to connect with this kinaesthesia, but I also seem to want the legitimisation of ‘languaged’ feedback. If I can direct the viewer through the verbal, the ‘languaged,’ to the kinaesthetic, and if I can merge form and content more directly, can I lead the viewer to a physical utterance? My task for my second dance video became a desire for this convergence — a direct relationship between form and content, between spectator and performer/author, between the ‘languaged’ exterior and the felt interior.

3.7 The approach

I want to communicate with people and find common symbols, which you can do by telling stories. (Wright Wexman 1999: 32)

The creative development of Back & Forth (originally with the working titles of Inside Out and then Head to Toe) was done in collaboration with the composer Mark Lang in 7 sessions (20 hours) over a period of 3 months. My initial concept was to create a microcosmic version of The 12 stages journey, of the interior or emotional journey through a single body. I was paring back (from 12 minutes to five or six minutes) and pulling in to the body (from exterior location and six dancers, to the body as location and two dancers). I wanted to see if less could be more.

The autobiographical content and the choice to perform my own artistic subjectivity in this work was a mechanism through which I could balance the relationship between form and content. By inscribing both the form/structure of the work and
Ch. 3: Cutting choreography

inscribing the performed narrative/content I hoped to draw attention to both. I sourced my own landscapes in terms of both physical presence on screen and personal, historical content. I mapped out a ‘trauma’ journey, locating parts of my body from head to foot, which were historically associated with specific accidents or physical trauma, and a performance anecdote that linked my relationship with my body as a performer. I took these ideas to Mark, along with a series of images and ideas that had a personal potency for me. Perhaps it was my third re-reading of Memoirs of a geisha but I had made a strong association with water as a metaphor for my personal journey. The image of a drop of water travelling down the body provided both an aural concept as well as a visual anchor by which the camera (and viewer) could navigate the otherwise disorienting landscape of the body in close-up.

The ‘journey’ for Back & Forth was, again, a temporal idea, that of my own aging. I wanted to shift between past and present by manipulating the quality of tone and texture of my voice in the same way as I planned to dissolve visually between Fiona as my younger self and my present self. We began with the recording of my reading of the text, my pink panther off-stage preparation story, layering a number of recordings in which I varied the rhythm or quality of my delivery. Mark used effects to manipulate the speed, tone, quality and texture of my voice and built layers of my vocal identity to suggest a personal history (in age or mood). We charted the musical structure to reflect the image of a descent down the body. The opening text set up the identity—direct narration in conversational language—and provided the recognisable aural motifs that we could then manipulate and reincorporate as the score progressed. In the same way as much contemporary musical composition is built, this opening motif was underscored with a strong rhythmic track and overlaid with samples of recognisable phrases from vintage vinyl (in our case, Henry Mancini’s Pink Panther Theme) and phrases from the text. The underlying drone or bass tone, which introduces the rhythm, represents the ‘flow’ down the body. Its low register implies a gravitational pull which is reinforced with the text sample of ‘focus down,’ and its trance-like continuity, together with the recurring sample ‘move,’ suggests a continuity of and attention to movement.

The ‘approach’ to Back & Forth was to preference the editing. All the choreography was determined by the creative collaboration of the soundscape. Not only did it predetermine the picture editing structure temporally but also it provided the spatial and visual parameters for each shot. Temporally, the musical structure works in three main sections—the ‘opening text’ (which I storyboarded word for word pre-shoot to enable real lip syncing); the ‘rhythmic variation’ (suggesting a move in toward the body, to the kinaesthetic dialogue); and the ‘drone with words variation’ (suggesting a shift that has moved beyond the proximal to the experiential). These sections signalled the visual shifts from the face to face, to the intimate (the introduction of the physical ‘dance’ vocabulary), to the interior (the lipstick camera close up in which the body as identity is surpassed by the body as experiential landscape). The final return to a coda of the opening text resolves the structure musically and visually and re-establishes equilibrium, coherence, identity.
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The similarity of our aesthetic ‘approach’ to composition was what prompted and facilitated the collaboration between Mark and myself. His familiarity with contemporary dance and my background in music gave us a mutual language to work from and build on. It was the nurturing and refining of our communication which established my trust in the success of the collaboration to the degree that we did the final mix and recording of the soundscape before any footage had been shot.

*Back and Forth was the establishing of the relationship, and understanding where each other was coming from and how best to relate that information...and then, when we went to the next project, that relationship was already there so you only had to say a couple of words and I knew where you were coming from...you were capturing my understanding of ‘vibe’ and ‘feel’...that really spoke to me.* —Interview with Mark Lang (Reid 2001: 2)

3.8 The supreme ordeal

I was angry at myself for being afraid, frustrated.

*Here, watch me struggle with how I’m trying to deal with these issues and maybe you’ll learn something from it and grow stronger.* (Albright 1997)

*Back and Forth* is an autobiographical account of how my experiences have marked and been marked by my physical body. I am using dance film to get personal—show my scars, reveal my childhood, and speak directly. I am pointing to my specificity as an individual to avoid generic classification as ‘female’ or ‘dancer.’ My dilemma is how to draw attention to my body and dissuade a reading of the body as object. Of course, my experiences of being both female and a dancer in the context of Western dominant culture have themselves formed how I write meaning with my body. In a conscious effort to subvert this dominant reading there is also the danger of perpetuating it by reverting to equally confining binary opposites. To deny the sensuality of my movement, to reduce my visible pleasure in performing would effectively distance me from my body, objectifying it once more for the ‘male gaze.’ Rather, I choose to embody both the sensual and the conceptual, performing female artistic agency as author of and object within my work. (Jones 1992: 28)

*Driven by a compulsion to fuse the outer body, which for women in patriarchy is objectified into a “picture” through male desire, with the inner self (the acting cognito-the intellect, the psyche), they enable themselves by enacting the feminist axiom “the personal is political.”* (Jones 1992: 30)

In order to ‘fuse’ my outer body with my inner self I have drawn on autobiographical incidents in which the inner self and the outer body collide, where a point on or
movement of my body references and reveals a specific emotional experience or intellectual realisation. The primary ‘character’ of the work (the underlying source of the visual and aural style) is drawn from my 1974 ‘Pink Panther’ dance solo, the performance experience in which I first identified myself as a ‘performer.’ I recognized the ‘power’ of commanding attention on stage, and was beginning to explore pre-performance rituals. As a twelve-year-old, it also marked my rite of passage from child to adult—a significant time of change in and attention to my body, and to my gender. The adult or present-day counterpart to this performing body anecdote is that of my recent experiences as a stand-up comic. An equally ‘new’ experience, my stand-up performances were predominantly verbal. In the comedy club context the performer is, through a direct conversational exchange, revealing and drawing attention to themselves, and the audience’s judgement of that performance is essentially a judgement of the individual. To succeed in this context is to receive mass approval, and feel an extraordinary amount of performance ‘power.’ When you make someone laugh, you dominate them. Stand-up performance is also a context in which the performer receives immediate feedback (with) no other art offer(ing) artists so quick and clear a measure of quality. (Stebbins 1990) With Back & Forth I wanted to focus this dialogue by using direct eye contact with the camera, suggesting a face to face relationship between myself and the individual viewer. This direct address to the camera allows me to elevate my status in relation to the viewer, while my vulnerabilities as a comic character invite the viewer to watch me deliberately lower that status to find a common ground. By making visible the power structures at work I am exploring means to subvert the ‘male gaze.’

The movement content for the central phrase in Back & Forth was extrapolated from stories connected to specific scars or points on my body associated with accidents or trauma.

**Trauma Phrase:**

- **The hand to the head**—hit on the head with a netball ring when ‘showing off’ jumping through a hoop tied to it (aged eleven);
- **the percussive turn/tilt of the head**—getting my plait caught in the meat hook as I jumped off the car in the garage (aged ten);
- **the outward roll of both shoulders**—constantly being asked if I’m a body-builder, a reference to my broad shoulders (ongoing);
- **tracing the scar on my shoulder blade**—seven stitches when I was seven to remove a cyst;
- **palms of hands forward**—looking at the wasting of the muscle between my right thumb and index finger (recent but perhaps related to one of the earlier head/neck traumas);
- **paws, and finger point up and side**—a digression into both a Pink Panther reference and to Fiona’s story of tangling a bicycle in a hanging power line.
two fingers falling from point to point down the leg—a fingernail into my thigh during a group lift in rehearsal, and a broken spoke of a metal chair into my calf at a nightclub; the foot forward—a bunion operation and plaster on both feet (age eighteen).

That many of the incidents or ‘accidents’ cited are themselves comic (in retrospect), and that I have chosen to frame the work in, at times, cartoon-like image and slapstick timing, is a means for revealing my personality, asserting my agency, and using laughter as a device of deconstruction. (Rich 1998: 320)

Back and Forth is also a direct reference to movement across frame, or movement of the camera (referring to the movement of the viewer’s eye, and the shifting of their attention, to what is more important at a particular moment). I wanted to focus the viewer on a deeper understanding of myself, the subject, one that at once recognized my past experience and my journey to where I am in the present, and to understand the connections between the physical and the emotional. By bringing the camera in closer and closer to the body, and almost de-personalising myself into a textured landscape of skin over which something ‘other’ travels, I sought to show something truly personal. Not the dry and witty or the spirited dancer or the gentle, softly spoken woman. I sought to shrug off these fictitious characters and illustrate the strong emotions and painful events that have shaped and impacted on me as an individual. If I had made a traditional narrative film I would have had to language aspects which have a deeper resonance on a kinaesthetic and emotional level. If I was to relate in words where each scar came from—how I was feeling then, where I was, who was involved—and if I was to articulate in written language something which impacts on my life on a much deeper, subconscious level, I would be placing my experiences and growth out into a controlled place with a finite articulation. If I could say it, I wouldn’t dance it, or, as Peter Sellars declared in a recent meeting I attended, words are about division...movement language is about connection.

Although it is grounded in live human bodies...dance carries the contributing possibility of being both very abstract and very literal. Some movements will give an audience only vague physical sensations, while other movement gestures have unmistakable meaning. Thus, dance can at once represent images that cite known cultural icons, as well as present physical states whose meanings are not so much visual as they are kinaesthetic. (Albright 1997: 142)

Dance film builds on this potential to shift between different modes of representation and, in doing so, engage with and problematize feminist issues concerning gender and the body in ways that speak to the complexities of our time. (Albright 1997: 142) I settled on the title, Back & Forth, as a deliberate reference to the relationship between different modes of representation. By taking control of the content, I was able to deal with personal feminist issues relating to the representation and treatment...
of women. By taking control of how my body is viewed, by controlling the space and the eye, I am able to reclaim dance as my expression of myself. I also wanted to respond to views (like Peter Greenaway’s) that consider that dance does not transfer well to the (film) medium because one is unable to capture the gesture and the full three-dimensionality of the body at the same time. (Kower 1995: 84) I reference live events, move in and down from the talking head, to gesture, and then to the extreme close-up in which three-dimensionality is seen in microcosm. By showing this amplification of physicality and intimacy available only to the camera, I am illustrating the range of three-dimensionality available in screen space.

3.9 Reward

I could see it lit up in the distance.

Freedom is created within the forms I practice to penetrate my boundaries as an experimental dance artist. Freedom rises from the strategies I must invent to surmount social, physical, professional, financial, and political constraints. Freedom’s value is reinventing more challenges to my personal and artistic survival. (Hay 1994)

My ‘strategies’ for shooting Back & Forth centred around an economic refinement of my pre-production preparations and my resources, including equipment, venue and personnel. Whereas The 12 Stages represents the accumulative stage of my creative research, Back & Forth involved elimination, an editing and refining of my production processes. Moreover, this paring back was a distillation of my knowledge and experience of both cinematic and choreographic processes into a hybridized approach, where a new interaction and language could be explored between subject and camera.

I approached the shoot as if facilitating an improvised performance, defining the parameters and stabilising the context while encouraging open decision-making and creative interaction—setting up ‘prepared spontaneity.’ With the edit structure in place, predetermined by the completed soundscore and detailed storyboarding of the first minute, my shot list was specific and manageable. I had also selected a venue that offered a controlled environment. The indoor theatre at Kyabram offered a ‘classic’ proscenium arch setting (red curtains, stage apron), reflecting the live performance location of my ‘story’ and my history as a performer, and playing on the ambiguity between stage space and screen space. The steep rake of the auditorium provided dramatic angles of and distance from the stage when shooting from the rear of the auditorium (or stage level shots from the first few seating rows). In addition, the black rear and wing curtaining and deep stage allowed for a blacking-out or disappearance of background for closer (on stage), gravity-defying shots.
The hand-held camera, moving and revolving over the white figures on a totally black ground, produces images in which their movement is ...gravity-free. In the absence of any absolute orientation, the push and pull of their interrelationships becomes the major dialogue. (Deren 1960: 68)

The number and range of pre-patched lights available via a central lighting board allowed for more control over how a subject was lit without the disruption of handling and re-positioning equipment. Using theatre lights instead of film lights served the ‘live’ performance look of the image and meant I was working with a lighting system I was most familiar with. I boosted the quality of equipment as far as economics could allow, moving from Hi-8 to digital video. Digital video provided clarity, almost starkness, to the picture quality that again reinforced the ‘harsh reality’ concept. By scheduling the shoot during semester break, I was able to draw on the University resources to include digital lipstick cameras, a separate DV recording deck, a higher quality portable monitor, and some redhead lights.

This quality control extended to the personnel. With two camera operators, Paul (previous collaborator) and Francis Treacey (University colleague), and multiple cameras we were able to catch more angles of the one movement event, providing excellent matching for editing, while minimising the number of physical ‘takes’ necessary. I chose to work with them because, apart from liberating me from the role of camera operation, both Paul and Francis are dance conversant and familiar with my aesthetic. They also both have a good ‘eye’ for visual design within frame, are experienced cinematographers, and are willing to participate physically.

I’m happy to be jumping on stage or being in the wings, or getting in the roof and shooting down like Busby. I’ll do whatever it takes in that respect. — Interview with Paul Huntingford (Reid 2001: 6)

Fiona, as the only other performer (and only other member of the entire shoot ensemble), also has the match of technical skill and improvisational and interpersonal responsiveness that I see in my camera operators. My preparation with her included a minimal number of rehearsals that divided the emphasis equally between preparing movement material and practising with particular improvisational structures in relation to the camera. I informed the physical movement with visual information from the storyboards, aural information from the completed soundtrack, and reflective feedback through video playback of rehearsals. I also discussed the autobiographical content and my overall artistic vision with her, inviting and empowering her creative contribution.

Within this structure of controlled environment and flexible resources, I approached the shoot with both a functional and explorative charter. The first half-day involved shooting the first minute of storyboarded shots (involving the opening text lipsync) and the generic contextual shots (close, mid and long shots of stage entrances and
exits, and matching close shots of Fiona and I to facilitate dissolves). These matching shots included: in and out of eye; back of head from stage point of view; close tracking down costumes; side shots of head moving back and forth; circular tracking of each of us performing the ‘trauma’ phrase. The second half of the day was then devoted to an improvisation between camera and dancer, frame and material. I defined the spatial parameters for Fiona and myself—a central stage area of about three metres in diameter—which we entered and exited in a ‘tag’ improvisation with and beyond the known movement phrases.

My instructions for Paul and Francis, their ‘movement phrases,’ were to either select and follow a specific pathway through/across the dancer’s body, or to let the body enter and exit the moving frame. In essence, their focus was on the juxtaposition between their movement pathway and the dancer’s with an attention to both real space and frame space. All four of us had to negotiate our bodies in concert within the stage space (not move near leads, or kick the camera, and keep the other camera and performer out of shot). We also had to be responsive to shifts in active and passive roles in the duet of frame and body (the dancer reduces their movement to allow the camera to travel across the body, or the camera reduces its movement to allow the dancer to travel across frame). Playback after shots provided feedback and direction for subsequent shots.

*The moving frame...can be used not only as a means of viewing action, but under certain conditions, can become the action viewed.* (Clark, Hodson et al. 1984: 96)

Using the moving camera in close up I aimed to deconstruct vision in favour of kinaesthesia. The close-tracking lipstick camera shots of the water droplet traversing the landscape of my skin follows the journey to maturity, a journey that has involved battles of control. The macro image of my leg shows the hairs (the real uncensored self) and the scars/ingrown hairs that relate a history of shaving my legs, of removing my individuality and submitting to the hairless artificial objectified image of woman. The camera journeys over scars and wrinkles that infer age, trauma, exposure, lived embodied experience, and becomes a *tool with which the human and corporeal can be magnified and revealed.* (Bromberg 2000: 27) The moving camera at this close range exaggerates the kinetic effect and disorients the viewer. The second and final day of shooting concentrated on the shooting of this very close terrain, and included similar duplications across the different textures of our costumes—satin to fur, fishnet to bare skin, shoes to ballet shoes to bare feet. The tracking of the water drop brought the cooperation of the previous day’s ‘dance’ between camera and dancer down to a microcosmic level, requiring a magnification of coordination and control between parties. Paul’s solution of adding sugar to the water added a viscosity that slowed and regulated the speed of the drop’s pathway, in combination with manipulation of surfaces, in relation to the gravitational pull, on my part as dancer. The highly concentrated focus of this detailed tracking task helped to divert attention away from any awkwardness that could come from working this intimately. The
intimate proximity of the partners (camera and dancer) and the concentration on the
skin, our largest sensory organ, again brings me to a comparison with contact
improvisation, where the basis is a constant bodily contact through a shared, ever-
shifting contact point or surface with a partner. (Kaltenbrunner 1998: 10)

3.10 The road back

I was alone.

...The two opposing figures that we present—me, the pink panther, and you in
your pink gown—there’s something really symbolic about that. Something to
do with evolution, or change, or memory and the present, and that really
comes across in the way you’ve edited it. —Interview with Fiona McGrath
(Reid 2001: 2)

The clarity of structure and content (character, colour, body terrain, stage context) I
had set up with the soundscape and the shoot, made the editing of Back and Forth
more a creative act than a technical one. Without the preoccupation with form I was
freed to explore my editing choices on the basis of meaning. I let my technical skills
support and facilitate my creativity in much the same way as my dance technique
opens (rather than dictates) my creative range in physical improvisation. I had the
support of the musical framework and the quality and specificity of the shots in
place, allowing me to do the ‘colouring in’ of the content, of how it reads.

In the inscription of my editing, I am holding a mirror up to a mirror. Fiona’s
character provides me with an image of myself as a child, at a moment when, aware
of a viewpoint of myself as reflected by the audience, I linked my introceptive and
extroceptive into a “specular image” of myself as ‘performer’.

To recognize his image in a mirror is for him to learn that there can be a
viewpoint taken of him...By means of the image...he becomes capable of
being a spectator of himself. Through the acquisition of the specular image,
the child notices that he is visible, for himself and for others. (Merleau-Ponty
1963: 136)

I am able to become spectator of my present self, in juxtaposition to my past self, as
viewed by the camera and presented to me as film viewer. By moving back and forth
between myself and Fiona I could bring past and present together, contrasting the
context and the mood, and reflecting the substantial in what may appear to be
superficial. I am juxtaposing time and space within one body.

The skin can judge time (less well than the ear) and space (less well than the
eye), but it alone combines the spatial and temporal dimensions. (Anzieu
1989: 14)
The performer could be seen to resemble the child—seeking affirmation, searching for a reflection of self through the eyes of the audience, visibly constructing their performance persona, their ‘self.’ *Back and Forth* is a means for me to view myself as a performer, as a female performer, as a female body, as a body—as the integrated, unified, coordinated information provided by my different bodily senses. (Grosz 1994: 100)

*My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’.* (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 235)

My film is intended to display and provoke sensuous experience (as opposed to sensual, pleasure) by entering the intimate space of the body and traversing the skin, the location of touch and sensation. As microscopic viewer, the openings and secretions of the body become significant parts of the macro landscape, the site of heat, moisture, and texture. I am blurring the boundary between the interior and exterior of the body. However, by constantly ‘pulling away,’ by cutting in glimpses of whole body or recognisable feature (Fiona’s whole body, or eyes, costume features), I am able to reconstruct identity out of the deconstructed body landscape. I can use a surprising interplay between objectifying and subjectifying the body to re-read the body outside of dualism. With an attention to this experience as one specific to the female subject, I hope to extend beyond the limits of Merleau-Ponty’s analysis which presents a discussion of sexuality as if it were the same dynamical force, with the same psychological structures and physiological features, for any sexed subject. (Grosz 1994: 110)

The drop of water on the magnified skin surface places the viewer at this theoretically blurred boundary. Largely comprised of water, the body’s interior is presented to the viewer as the drop travels over the skin surface. The magnification of my scars, of the hairs, pores, textures of my skin’s surface confronts the viewer to recognize the detail of my lived experience which is the sum of inside and outside, of past and present. To communicate the nature of this experience as ‘female’ I use symbolic association between particular body parts, colours, and icons. The symbol of the lips (when speaking, the drop over my lips, the camera entering the mouth, the flip of the lips to upside down filling frame), and the scars I trace with my finger, these openings to the body infer an association with female genitalia.

*...Welts, scars...create places of special significance and libidinal intensity...they privilege particular parts of the body as self-constituted orifices.* (Grosz 1994: 139)

I use clothing and texture, too, as a symbol of female, and as a comment on the way women are physically and psychologically marked by ‘fashion.’ Women are marked by the cultural imposition of high heels (shortens the achilles, displaces skeletal...
alignment), pointe shoes (bunions), bras and corsetry (muscular and respiratory restriction), and ‘revealing’ clothing (melanoma and skin aging, illness through exposure to cold).

Through exercise and habitual patterns of movement...and through clothing and makeup, the body is more or less marked, constituted as an appropriate or...inappropriate body, for its cultural requirements. (Grosz 1994: 142)

The textures of the costumes in Back & Forth, of fur against satin against skin, are materials that invite touch, and through them I am responding directly to the dominant cultural image of women as objects of desire. The use of an animal costume adds the issue of man-made language (Spender 1980) which assigns women with ‘pet’ names (kitten, lamb, fox, bit of fluff) (Greer 1970) and, in doing so, makes them less powerful, diminutive. My torch singer dress, which is linked to the animal with the fur choker, represents the ‘adult’ version in which woman as ‘performer’ is again represented as an object of pleasure or distraction. By permitting my character to speak (moreover to speak about a memory of my own sensation, a technique for my own distraction/pleasure) I am trying to dismantle and ridicule that traditional representation.

The colour of the costumes, pink, is another layer of my caricaturisation of dominant representations of women. Pink symbolizes the flesh, the lips, the vagina, the nipples, and is the traditional colour for dressing babies as a gender demarcation. On a technical level it doesn’t have the same propensity to flare on film as red does while still providing warmth and richness against the black background (with a relationship to the red of the proscenium curtains and a lateral connection to blood).

The body image is always slightly temporally out of step with the current state of the subject’s body...there seems to be a time lag in the perception and registration of real changes in the body image. (Grosz 1994: 84)

By inscribing myself with a temporal identity, with a history, I am also disallowing my objectification by the viewer. With history I achieve substance rather than surface. By illustrating my aging I am giving my individual persona a temporal weight, and, at the same time, alluding to the destructiveness of these imposed representations. By dissolving between my eye and Fiona’s eye, my face and her face, I link us as two temporal versions of the one self. With the close tracking of my skin’s marked surface with a ‘tear’, and the descent of the movement (as skin gives in to gravity) I am bringing my past body into my present text.

It is almost as if the skin itself served as a notebook, a reminder of what was not allowed to be forgotten. (Grosz 1994: 132)

3.11 Resurrection—another ordeal
...Because now there is so much screen life, so much two-dimensional information, working with film and video, that I am interested in finding out how you can meld that idea of how you can look at space differently and still work in a live context. How can that language translate? Because that is really the language of younger people now...that shift...You have got to shift with it or otherwise you just become this archaic thing. —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 12)

In October 2000, after having completed the edit of Back & Forth, I set off for Perth to choreograph a stage work for the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). I was returning to live choreography from the dance film context and had discovered new things about my spatial and temporal creative processes. From accumulation and elimination, I had now reached illumination. It seemed, at this time, that this project could offer a reflective analysis of how my choreographic processes had shifted, and could come full circle in considering the general impact of dance film on the form, content and reception of live dance.

I’m trying to find what my process is. I really have gotten attached to the editing process of film...there is something about how that operates, how the choreography of that is, that really interests me. I think that is having an effect on how I work in a live context. I feel like I am exploring new terrain. —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 7)

I decided to let these questions about form steer the content of the work. To deal with this reconfiguring of space and to employ the creative potential I had discovered in editing, I chose to focus on the idea of time itself, specifically a short period of time, 27 Seconds. Inspired also by the film Run, Lola, Run, the neo-narrative for 27 Seconds is about revealing the simultaneous narratives possible within a single event. I wanted to focus on the detail of an event and the ways in which it could be redirected, appear differently, have different outcomes depending on how you experienced it, viewed it/were positioned within it. Extending on the idea of accidents or events that change the course of our lives, I was interested in the emotive landscape of events and the impact of life’s ‘collisions’—the meeting of time and space—on our actions and reactions.

The post production technique of manipulating the speed or temporal structure of a shot was the one that seemed the most interesting for me and also the most difficult to reproduce in a live context. In the edit suite I can slow the action, rewind it, and loop small sections of it. I can choreograph movement to work against gravity and sequence movement against the ‘natural’ dynamic of the body. Watching a filmed movement sequence in reverse is fascinating because, in re-patterning the dynamic and sequencing of the body, it reveals the functions and patterning at play in our
bodies. The task I chose of rewinding live movement presented an ideokinetic challenge of finding ways to isolate and re-pattern body actions.

Ideokinesis uses the action of the mind to foster and stimulate body knowing. The direction of the process is towards physicalization of thought, insights about the body being expressed in transformed action. (Dempster 1985: 19)

I set myself an ideo-choreographic task with a phrase I refer to as the ‘rewind’ phrase. To apply the post production technique of reversing material, I created a phrase which I could then re-learn and perform in reverse. To connect the technical concept to the thematic concept I chose twenty-seven actions or gestures that I would like to reverse, that is, prevent from happening.

...For example, if you hit somebody, or say something that you are embarrassed about, and then learnt that in reverse, so I could take all those actions back. A sense of being able to undo time. —Interview with Dianne Reid (Norris 2000: 3)

The phrase accumulates gestures that either try to expel something from the body or pathway (a kick, a shrug, a head shake, a slap with the back of the hand), that hold tension in the body (a fist, a contraction, hands pulling in, shoulders lifting), or that increase the vulnerability of the body (a collapse of the knee, a balance, hands covering the eyes). I worked with the dancers on the reversal of the phrase after teaching them the forward version. I wanted them to understand the forward dynamic and be involved in the ideokinetic process of reversing that dynamic and analysing the detail of that. If I had taught them the reverse version initially it would have been given a progressive logic and I believe it would have lost the ‘odd’ quality I was striving for. Also, my charter for this work was to make processes explicit. The product was about the process, and the process was about the detail of body temporally. The emotional or psychological terrain is quite different when the temporal (and dynamic) structure is reversed. To ‘hit’, a movement away from the body with the height of effort near the end of the outward arc of the motion, ‘feels’ very different to bringing that impulse back into the body. To exert the amount of energy required for the action to ‘hit’ that outward point takes almost a second to reach physically. To reverse that action, trying to almost begin at that level of effort is extremely difficult and requires a particular technical attention to the control of the last eighty percent of the movement journey (illustration by contrast/relationship).

As the choreographic process of 27 Seconds unfolded, its resemblance of a ‘live’ editing process became more explicit for me. My choreographic tasks became exercises in transposing the techniques of post-production technology onto physical bodies. If I use the metaphor directly, regarding the final piece as the edit ‘program,’ the ‘rewind’ phrase became the master shot into and around which I cut and pasted the other choreographic material. With the potential to be performed forward and backward, I divided the phrase at half a dozen points between which the material
could loop or ‘jog,’ providing potential complex canons between dancers. I could further complicate the sequencing and the consequent relationships between the dancers by inserting other fragments of material at the same ‘jog’ points. With nineteen dancers in the piece I had a larger palette or ‘bin of clips’ to work with. To create these clips I needed to apply the spatial frame of the screen to the stage, creating live mise-en-scène. By using depth of field, that is, positioning dancers in vertical relationship (foreground and background), I was redefining the spatial frame of the stage. I selected to divide the stage into smaller frames, layering a single body or body-part as foreground frame, and multiple bodies and/or single whole body composition in the background. In this way I could play multiple shots throughout the stage space, providing a single shot for each audience member depending on their placement (as camera) in the auditorium. Then by manipulating the temporal sequencing of the movement phrases between the dancers within a given ‘shot’ I could apply the post-production effect of a ‘dissolve’ or ‘cross-fade.’ By having a significant movement motif (the high side leg kick or handstand) or rhythmic pattern (the sustained pedalling action of the hands while balancing curved over one leg) reappear from body to body, I could shift the viewer’s focus between foreground and background in the same fashion as a camera lens pulls focus. The layering of the looping phrases within frame also creates a live dissolve, that is, the viewer perceives two sets of action (two shots) at once as movement across the space connects temporally (dancers reaching the same point in the sequence).

Left is associated with the past and right with the future...as seen by the audience, time progresses from stage left to stage right. (Blom & Chaplin 1982: 52)

My choices of spatial pathways and directional facings for the dancers were influenced by the suggestion that westerners tend to read from left to right. Phrases would face and move horizontally across the space to reflect the linear passage of time. The ‘rewind’ phrase faces and moves from (the audience’s) left to right, so its reversal from right to left in space, in addition to its familiarity as a movement event (in its forward sequence), supports its temporal shift into the past. Duets or trios passing and crossing on that horizontal plane, performing phrases that loop and jog back and forth amplifies the temporal oscillations. The final group event (the ‘Run, Lola’ section) signalled by the only section of unison movement in the work, builds the anxiety and the desire for temporal ‘oneness.’ The unison provides a glimpse of resolution, of collective unity/identity, and the tight layered patterning of the fast-moving group builds the chaos before order. The rhythm and density of this section is similar to The 12 stages ‘supreme ordeal’ section. The final duet that resolves 27 Seconds reduces the universal experience to an intimate interpersonal one. Elevated above the ‘sea’ of rolling bodies, this duet shifts the plane of action, emphasizing vertical space (the ‘infinity’ plane, not subject to temporal change). It charts a quieter intersection of two solos to a final connection—a hand on her shoulder to open her eyes and bring her focus back to the detail of that single moment.
VN: I was thinking about when you first had the original ideas for the piece—time, and the warping of time, and subjective experiences of time—but now to me the stronger elements that come through are something to do with social consciousness or collective morality, maybe about culture or about an individual working within a social structure, as an individual your actions are either hampered or helped by others. Although that feeling of time warping is still there underneath. So you have created another layer on top that really sprung out of the choreographic process. Was this a chance thing?

DR: It is also a bit deliberate. I mean, time is also a metaphor for mortality. It starts at this place and ends at that place. The whole concept of ‘running out of time’ and what you do with your time is all to do with that ever-present issue about us being mortal beings who will cease to exist. And all the joy or whatever connected with it.

The resources available to me for this project at WAAPA enabled a new collaboration with a designer for the costumes and lighting. We used angled, down-light shaft lights and a fine mist of stage smoke to add three-dimensionality to the dancers and the stage space, and to infer an overhead perspective, a sense of the off-stage space above. These lights, programmed on a chase sequence for the ‘Run, Lola’ section worked to control the viewer’s eye, stabilising the audience with specific focal points in the space. Attention was also drawn to specific individuals and movement events throughout the space that might otherwise have been hidden in the overall movement pattern. The shards of hand-held mirror encouraged the audience to read alternate perspectives, other camera angles, of the action (a dancer’s face visible with their back turned) while adding to the metaphorical suggestion of the self, of the subjective, the interior of the performer. With this design element I sought to bounce attention back to the audience—the presence of mirrors meant the possibility of seeing themselves onstage or having light from stage reflected onto them in the auditorium.

Our fascination with films is now thought to be not a fascination with particular characters and intrigues so much as a fascination with the image itself, based on a primal ‘mirror stage’ in our psychic growth. Just as we were, when infants, confronted with the gloriously complete view of ourselves in the mirror, so now we identify with the gloriously complete presentation of a spectacle on the screen. (Andrew 1984: 149)

The costumes, too, had a three-dimensionality in their texture (using a fabric rendering technique that crushed and gathered the grey material) and the openings in the grey across the torsos revealing the red fabric beneath alluding again to a physical interior (blood), and specifically a female interior. The costumes were
physically ‘inscribed’ with a screen print of my handwriting of fragments of text from my choreographic journal, further layering the metaphor of how our bodies are inscribed by our history and prescribed by written language.

Into the unknown terrain of this ‘live screen dance’ I took some ‘known’ elements, including my collaboration with composer Mark Lang. Recognizing that my creative strengths include my connection to rhythm and musicality, and the connection that comes from a shared working relationship, I sub-contracted Mark to create the score.

*I think in all creative relationships you need to have a bond, and the more you work together the better you get at understanding each other and being able to understand, as you said, the language that we’re talking about... in our relationship we had more understanding about music which made my job a little bit easier, because we could meet together.* —Interview with Mark Lang (Reid 2001: 3)

This ‘bond’ allowed us to do a lot of our work over the ‘tyranny of distance’ between Melbourne and Perth by telephone and post. In the third week of the seven-week rehearsal period I flew Mark over for two days of rehearsals. At that time we played my material against his musical themes with Mark re-mixing sound options live with the dancers. He also recorded the dancers’ voices to use in the soundtrack. Reincorporating another ‘known’ from my previous works, I had each dancer contribute a personal verbal account of an incident in which they remembered a temporal shift, for example, how those last few seconds before a car accident, or a fall, seem to pass in slow motion.

_Fushia’s story:_

*That blissful moment of falling, vision blurred, still falling, face bursting with smile, still falling, the world spinning backwards without me, still falling, as I fell the world kept falling, bliss, falling, moments of fear, more of joy, the world falling away from me, falling for eternity, forever falling BANG cool water, still falling, mermaids, climbing, climbing for breath, climbing, climbing... A breath.*

Fragments of the dancers’ texts informed both the movement material and the soundscape, but also personalized the physical and aural landscape of the work for them, inscribed their performances with a body of history.

*It gives that movement a history. Even if you don’t use that material it has given what you end up with a history...it gives the movement a bit of depth*
Ch. 3: Cutting choreography

for them as performers, and I think that resonates in the performance for the audience. —Interview with Dianne Reid. (Norris 2000)

With 27 Seconds I wanted to layer moving bodies in space to infer a temporal shift in one body—showing past and future simultaneously in the present moment. Susan Leigh Foster’s article, Manifesto for dead and moving bodies, provided a creative stimuli for my work and reiterated the issue of ‘disappearance’ which confronts the choreographer working in a live dance context.

Her own body is seeking, longing to find, the vanished body whose motions produced it. (Foster 1995: 183)

Foster’s dilemma of writing (pen-pushing writing) a history of a bodily writing (physical action or performative writing) is the same dilemma facing live dance—how can an art form be seen to develop if it cannot be seen in its historical context and is having to constantly re-invent itself. I create dance film to preserve my own creative history, giving myself and my viewers access to my past fixed (on film or tape) in the present. With 27 Seconds I was looking to create a future for live dance, using the techniques of film (fixing the viewer’s eye as camera) to re-access the experiential ‘present’ of live performance. If film is an artificial space designed to create reality, then this ‘live’ choreographic challenge could be described as my use of ‘real’ space to create artifice that in turn suggests the ‘reality’ of film space. The hall of mirrors continues with my filmed document of the live performance of 27 Seconds and I ‘return with the elixir’—the simultaneously reflective and clairvoyant process of cutting choreography.

3.12 Return with the elixir

I went back a different way and ended up walking for a long time.

My first views of 27 Seconds performed for an audience were through the viewfinder of a camera (and an unfamiliar borrowed digital camera at that). I had only two opportunities to video the piece and had to work with the available theatre lights (sometimes too low for camera) and amongst an audience. I selected to position myself close to the action from each corner of the stage to maximize light, close-up detail, and for the shot options from downstage to upstage and across on the diagonal.

The video of 27 Seconds which accompanies this exegesis is an edit of those two performance shots on a domestic ‘imovie’ editing program to the soundscape imported from compact disc. With only two shot options available to me I had to, at times, find creative solutions (dissolves, manipulating the speed of shots) to match musical and movement cues or to compensate for errors in camera focus. These
compensations were minimal, however, and I think that I had performed the majority of the editing of the work in my application of cinematic techniques to the live work.

I’m sort of hovering between whether I like it on video or stage more. I’m trying to think why I found the video so successful. Possibly because I had to work less hard at choosing what to focus on out of so many interesting things that were happening on stage; on the video those decisions were more decidedly made for me. And at the same time the video was suggestive of other action that happens beyond what the camera revealed. Also there were some beautiful closer shots of facial expressions etc. that I missed on the stage.... I find in general when viewing works on the stage there is a sort of immovable hierarchy about locations on the stage...From your interviews I think you were implying that part of your choreographic challenge was to experiment with bringing this sense of the transposable nature of space from video and film to the stage. And I think this resulted in some fascinating and unconventional textures...definitely worth pursuing. But I never got the same feeling of ‘float’ as you achieved on the video.  

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The ‘12 stages of adventure’ is a framework I heard used by a film director discussing the patterns of development which can be traced through many ‘adventure’ narratives (filmic or literary). At the time of viewing this television documentary I was primarily interested in the ‘pattern’ as a potential creative source for choreography and did not record details of the source.

2 12 Stages choreographic journal, 6th March 1998.

3 Chinese philosophy divides the life span into 12 (conception, babyhood, infancy, childhood, adolescence, “Kuan Tai” meaning matriculation, adulthood, maturity, retirement, decline, final years, burial). Harry R. Moody and David Carroll in their book “The five stages of the soul” identify steps along the spiritual passages that shape our lives as the call, the search, the struggle, breakthrough, and return.

4 Hayden Priest’s narration for Stage 1 of The 12 stages of adventure drawn from Viviana’s personal adventure story, ‘I was six years old.’ (Refer Appendix Image 5)

   I was curious about the sun. It always looked so pretty and shiny. I decided one day that I would walk to it for a closer look. I woke up really early, packed some food and began walking in the direction of the sun. I must have walked for a while because my mother came looking for me. She found me sitting on the kerb of a major highway near our house eating my food. I didn’t cross the road because I was always told I wasn’t allowed.

5 My most recent experience of working as a dancer on another choreographer’s (Luke Hockley) performance project involved collaboration with dancers between the ages of 17 and 60. This project, folding on forever, was primarily concerned with the dancer’s experience and specifically with my contribution as an experienced artist. Hockley summarized the project’s charter when he stated that art and performance are about continuously seeing with new eyes, of having the receptivity of the novice without discarding the lessons of experience. (Reid, 2000)

6 I refer specifically to Western contemporary dance. Eastern cultures have a significant history of celebrating the mature performing artist; for example Kazuo Ono continues to perform at the age of 80 plus.

7 Yvonne Rainer states in interview with Rachel Fensham and Jude Walton that she clearly uses Freudian and post-Freudian ways of thinking in her work. Her film, The man who envied women, was based directly on the challenge sent up by Laura Mulvey and subsequent feminist theorists about the objectification of women in front of the camera. This objectification is delineated from the Freudian/Lacanian model. (Fensham 1991)

8 In section 3.8 I will extend my discussion from a feminist theoretical perspective in relation to Back & Forth..

9 Viviana Sacchero was a dancer in The 12 stages of adventure.

10 Dancer John Henry created a performance work with choreographer Ellen Bromberg before his AIDS-related death which became the subject matter of Rosenberg’s documentary. Through interviews and dance, this documentary uses and reveals the dancer’s body as a direct expression of the physical and emotional issues connected with living (and dying) with AIDS.

11 Hayden’s narration for Stage 2 of 12 stages drawn from my personal adventure anecdote, ‘Journey to Mont St. Michel.’ (Refer Appendix Image 6)

   We’re so close to Mont St. Michel, I have to see it. I’d read about it and I’ve seen pictures. I want to fulfill this childhood fantasy...
   I put all my belongings in a locker and I got on the train.
Decide to walk to it. **I could see it lit up in the distance** as we walked the road to the coast...

We sit down and open the bottle of wine we’ve carried here and discuss the story about how the tide comes in at a rate of six metres per second to surround it at high tide. Suddenly there’s **flashing lights** on approaching vehicles. We **panic**...is the tide coming in? Will we get trapped?

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13. I have worked as a musician, songwriter and music copyist.

14. ‘Grab, search, discard, measure, sob, ricochet, wait.’

15. Laban’s movement theory describes the quality ‘wring’ as sustained (temporally), strong (weight), and indirect (spatial pathway).


17. Hayden’s narration for Stage 3 of *The 12 Stages of adventure* drawn from my story, ‘Journey to Mont St. Michel.’ (Refer Appendix Image 7)

18. I began rehearsals with the dancers in January 1998 and shot the final footage in September 1998. After the location shoot in June, we returned to the studio and developed a live performance draft (presented in August that year). This included projected footage from location that informed the final shoot in terms of what ‘pick-up’ material was required, and a performance memory for the dancers to call on in front of the camera.

19. In 1997 I attended an intensive workshop with American improvisation artist, Lisa Nelson, which culminated in a performance entitled *Before Your Eyes*, at Dancehouse, Melbourne. Lisa, also a video artist and editor of the journal *Contact Quarterly*, is interested in exploring the connections between vision and kinaesthetic memory to inform her performance practice. She often works with eyes closed to recall the ‘sensation of the image.’ (Nelson, 1992)


21. My use of a male narrator for what may be viewed as an otherwise female experience (the other characters are all female, and dance, itself, traditionally has a greater female population) was more an attempt to de-emphasize gender, to ‘androgyne’ the human experience. Similarly, by setting up an ambiguity between Hayden and Viviana (intercutting between them, same red pants, their merger in shadow and conversation) I am alluding to the Yin and Yang of the human individual.


23. Hayden’s narration for Stage 4 of *The 12 Stages of adventure* drawn from his story, “‘Otway ranges.’ (Refer Appendix Image 8)

My adventure was in the Otway Ranges, a national park with temperate rainforests and rough untouched coast...

**I had this need** to find a greater power within myself, to disrupt my patterns and get to the centre, so a solitary journey was needed....

**I went back a different way and ended up walking for a long time.**

24. Some people are visual, some are aural, some are kinaesthetic...and you need to deliver the same bit of information a few times in those different ways so that people get it. Because often people don’t get something, not because they are incapable of getting it, but maybe they are a more kinaesthetic person. It is like that story about the man and the woman who have trouble in their marriage. The woman says to the counsellor, “I bought this new dress and I put it on and said to him ‘look at me, how do I look?’ and he didn’t look at me...all he did was come and touch the dress.” She is visual, he is kinaesthetic...Norris, V. (2000). *Interview 2 with Dianne Reid*, Perth, 9th November.
Ch.3: Cutting choreography

25 The dancer’s performance narrative relates to how each dancer connects and makes sense of their actions in performance. In a sense, it is a thought and felt storyline that locates and supports the performer in their performance reality. Drawing on imagery, memory, sensation, spatial connections, focal points of contact…it is the weaving together of physical and intellectual stimuli, reconciling the ‘steps’ into a journey, bringing an attentiveness to each moment of performance.

26 Quoting Steve Paxton, discussing contact improvisation during a workshop at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Adelaide, 1985.

27 Fiona McGrath interview, 1st February 2001.

28 I chose to shoot material in a studio with a white cyclorama to match the open iris (whited-out) of the exterior shots.

29 Paul and I performed together in a band (1995-97) and toured a street performance act (predominantly tap-dancing) through Europe and UK (1992).

30 Point of View excerpt can be viewed in Video Appendix 4.

31 Hayden’s narration for Stage 5 of The 12 Stages of adventure drawn from Viviana’s story, ‘I was six years old.’ (Refer Appendix Image 9)

32 February 1998 at Open Channel, an independent film organisation in Melbourne.

33 Refer Appendix B.

34 Julian Barnett is an Adelaide composer with whom I have collaborated on a number of live dance works both in Adelaide and in Melbourne.

35 In the early stages of rehearsal with the dancers I communicated (by phone) some musical ideas to Julian—Thresholds section: tango-ish, strings, mesmerising ‘like riding an elephant,’ doors slamming; The approach section: bassline like heartbeat, magnified sounds like hearing from the inside, things flying past (backwards sounds), distant rumbles, dogs barking in distance, doors opening. He then sent me some musical themes on tape inspired by our discussion that he named (eg. Dawn (Frazer-Eyeland), Whisper, Heartbeat, Awangana), and which I then asked for tempo, instrumentation changes and variations in duration.

36 Paul performed the foley for this and edited the final soundscape of music, live dialogue and post production sounds and effects.

37 In the “footstep” section Julian played the underlying drone chords while I embellished with keyboard effects, choosing the musical accenting as I sight-read the vision. He invited me to physically play it myself as the quickest way to translate what I wanted.

38 Refer Appendix Image 7.

39 Text from ‘I was six years old’ used in 12 Stages. (Refer Appendix Image 10)

40 A recent television commercial screened in Australia uses an athletic, bare-chested Afro-American man dancing to advertise an alcoholic liqueur, ‘Kahlua.’ He is shot at close and low angles, emphasizing his chest and arms, and the images are intercut quite rapidly and rhythmically. There are quite alarming racist and sexist inferences at play as the ‘pleasure’ of consuming the drink is linked to an imagined shared physical pleasure with the man pictured. The concept of sexual pleasure is underlined by a ‘primitive’ motif inferred by the rhythm, the race of the man, the ‘tribal’ vocabulary of the movement, his bare torso, and his role as ‘dancer’—on display in a passive, traditionally female position, inviting the ‘male gaze.’

Ch.3: Cutting choreography

42 School of Contemporary Arts, Deakin University, Rusden campus, October 1999.
43 Refer Appendix Image 11.
44 I chose to work with Mark rather than with Julian because of, apart from the advantage of
him being local (Melbourne) and accessible face to face, his compatible musical aesthetic,
his interest in dance, and his interest in exploring the collaboration.
45 At the age of twelve I performed a dance solo to Henry Mancini’s Pink Panther theme.
(Refer Appendix Image 17)
46 A novel by Arthur Golden that also was a creative source for a solo, “Lily” which I
performed in 2000, choreographed in collaboration with Dance Honours student, Damien
Hinds.
47 The following quotes from Memoirs of a geisha provided a creative starting point for Back
& Forth: (underlined sections as emphasized in my choreographic journal)
   “Those of us with water in our personalities don’t pick where we’ll flow to. All we
can do is flow where the landscape of our lives carries us.”
   “Water never waits. It changes shape and flows around things, and finds the secret
paths no-one else has thought about.”
   When we fight upstream against a rocky undercurrent, every foothold takes on a
kind of urgency.”
48 Fiona McGrath was a student of mine with whom I find I have some uncanny similarities
in appearance, personality and aesthetic. It was this recognition that initially sparked the idea
for Back & Forth.
49 This story relates specifically to the minute I spent waiting in the wings before stepping on
stage.
50 The emergence of the DJ as contemporary composer/pop star has generated a proliferation
of music that sources and references other musical recordings within new rhythmic
structures. Many artists overtly use vinyl recordings, recognisable by the surface noise (a
noise some artists artificially add to infer the use of vinyl recordings), and/or pieces of text
from movies or vintage songs. For example: recording artists Hoodlum Priest use sections of
dialogue from the movies Bladerunner and Terminator; English recording artist DJ
Shadow’s album Endtroducing is an album consisting entirely of samples. No live
instruments, drum machines or keyboards were used. (cited in album cover notes)
51 Refer storyboards in Appendix C.
52 “…My partner is a dancer and choreographer and I went along to a lot of contemporary
dance works…and created a few works for (her) and some of (her) friends” (Lang in Reid
2001)
53 “Text from Cara Mitchell’s story used in The 12 Stages. (Refer Appendix Image 12)
54 (Mulvey 1975)
55 Jerry Seinfeld in (Borns 1987)
56 There is a tendency for men to dominate the stand-up performance arena, both in number
and in reception. Often, while waiting backstage to perform at comedy venues, I was asked
which comedian’s girlfriend I was.
57 There were only three set movement sequences for this work: the central ‘trauma’ phrase;
and two phrases (choreographed by Fiona and myself respectively) based on specific phrases
highlighted in the soundscape (“Wait, focus down, make them move, back and forth,
waving, perfectly still, just the bows moving”). These latter phrases became the starting
points or anchors for improvisation on the day of shooting, and functioned in the same way
as the 12 stages’ “Grab, search” phrase in providing connecting dynamic/kinaesthetic
frameworks with personalized variations.
It is interesting for me on a personal level that at the point down the body where I would have referenced the lower body/sexual organs (rape at age 21) I chose to insert Fiona’s lighter anecdote rather than my own.

Dianne Reid, very dry and witty—excerpt from review of performance in Danceworks’ season *Breaking the silence*. (Fairfax 1993)

Reid is always a spirited dancer—excerpt from review of work *Point of view*. (Christofis 1993)

As a gentle softly spoken woman, Melbourne-based dancer and choreographer Dianne Reid seems just about the least likely to create a new multi-medium work about that grubby sin, deceit. –Excerpt from review of work *Betrayal*. (Crimeen 1993)

Peter Sellars, Director of the 2002 Adelaide Festival, addressed a meeting of the Tertiary Dance Council in Adelaide on July 5th, 2001.

Text from *Journey to Mont St. Michel* used in *The 12 Stages*. (Refer Appendix Image 13)

‘Prepared spontaneity’ is a term I came across in the context of stand-up comedy. For these performances it was important to have refined, strong sections of material which I could move in and out of (or past and back to) depending on the particular relationship and interaction with the audience at that gig. It was important to stay responsive to the audience and let them steer the material (attentive to their social, cultural context, energy and mood).

Had a variety of angles (overhead, front, side) and colours (warm, cool gels or open lens).

Francis is a Senior Lecturer in the media department at Deakin University and my co-supervisor for this Masters research. In 2001 we collaborated on the teaching of a new Dance Video unit (*Dance Video: Choreography and the camera*) which we designed for the collaborative arts stream of the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts.

By ‘tag’ I mean that as one of us left the ‘performance’ space, the other had to enter, and that entrance had to pick up on and develop the dynamic or theme that the other had set up and then develop on that.

Text from *Otways* story used in *The 12 Stages*. (Refer Appendix Image 14)

Jog’ here refers to the manual control on video playback machines, which allows the editor to shift forward and back over small sections of tape, usually to isolate the starting point of a particular frame or sequence.

These fragments were drawn from two main phrases I had choreographed: 1) the ‘assertive driving’ phrase was a larger travelling sequence designed for the climax of the work in which the whole group crosses and interweaves in a more high risk fashion. The phrase which moved across from UL (upstage left) to UR, falls and cartwheels into a spin downstage, then hops/barrel rolls across to DL, before descending into a rolling phrase on the floor; 2) ‘Katie’s time shift’ phrase was a variation on images drawn from the ‘rewind’ phrase and images selected from personal stories offered by the dancers.

The ‘bin’ is the desktop folder in which the editor stores their separate shots or ‘clips’.

An audience member sitting on the extreme left of the auditorium had a choice or shots, either downstage right to upstage right, or the diagonal from downstage right to upstage left. (Note that the stage directions refer to the dancer’s point of view, i.e. opposite to audience). It is for this reason that I chose to shoot the performances from the extreme right and left of the second row of the auditorium.

Refer appendix Image 14.

This section used a section of music from the film soundtrack of *Run, Lola, Run*. This was the first and the most technically difficult section I choreographed with the dancers. It was also the last section that composer, Mark Lang, worked on in the score. The connection that
the dancers and I established between the movement and the music over the first few weeks (specificity of phrasing and musical cues) brought about a collective decision to work that track into the final score.

76 Reflecting in conversation with researcher Virginia Norris about my work 27 Seconds during its performance season.

77 Claire Granville was a design student assigned by Edith Cowan University to work with me on this project.

78 The cast was predominantly made up of women. The two male cast members did not have the red under-garments. The designer and I agreed to uphold a differentiation in gender in this aspect of the costuming to both underline our female authorship and, in something of a positive discrimination bid, to add significance to the female experience.

79 Text written by Fushia Carlino, dancer in 27 Seconds.

80 I picked out certain phrases...and often they were the embellishments around the actual facts, they were the hesitations or things they repeat, or the quality of their voice. And also some of the active things like the ideas of falling or the ‘searching beneath the skin to the bone’—(Reid in Norris 2000)

81 Text from Otways for The12 Stages. (Refer Appendix Image 16)

82 Cover letter from Virginia Norris that accompanied transcripts of her interviews with me in Perth.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

My adventure was never completed.

The challenge for the choreographer/filmmaker is to find the new form which is inherent in bringing together two forms...If the choreographer/filmmaker taps into this film language and understands the properties of the technology that penetrate so deeply into the web of the work, then the form of dance film, regardless of style, can suspend disbelief. (Simondson 1995: 149)

The journey of dance film as a distinct creative and communicative art form is not complete. Its development has enhanced and exposed new possibilities for the dance and film art forms encouraging a collaboration of spatial and temporal tools, technical and artistic roles, and approaches to ‘writing in movement.’ The development of dance on screen can present audiences with new contexts for and representations of the body and art which extend beyond ‘dominant’ readings or traditional narrative structures, and extend the intellectual, emotional and experiential landscape of artistic exchange.

During the course of this research, I have discovered numerous new intersections between artistic, technological and socio-political pathways that point to exciting new contexts for and outcomes from artistic practice. Specifically, I have discovered that the role of editor matches my choreographic aesthetic and facilitates my next stage of development as a choreographer, and artistic researcher. My identification and refining of my skills in ‘cutting choreography’ has, in turn, refined and redefined my skills, creative processes, and communicative capacity in the context of creating dance for the live stage. Furthermore, the tangibility of the dance film/video product, the immediacy of global communications, and the development of new platforms for creative exchange and critical discourse, provide me, the dance film artist, with both a palpable history and a multifarious future.

As the movements of dancer and dance are inscribed in film or video, that inscription becomes the artefact that endures over time. And by this process, as choreographers, dancers and filmmakers, future generations will have access to the marks we have made. (Bromberg 2000: 27)

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1 Text from “I was six years old’ used in The 12 Stages.
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Bibliography


Appendix A: Dance on screen

1. Stage to screen

Early representations of dance in film positioned dance as either high art ballet—in narrative films such as *The Red Shoes* (1948)—or as popular entertainment—in the Hollywood musical. In both cases dance was used as a diversion from or contribution to the narrative plot, the ‘spectacle’ of the dance always, to a greater or lesser degree, remaining anchored in the dramatic story-telling. The Busby Berkeley musicals of the 1930’s, with Berkeley’s trademark large-scale production numbers and imaginative camera work, provided escapism for his audience—the extravagance of the dance ‘numbers’ being an excursion from the realities of the Depression era. In Berkeley’s films both the fairly simplistic story lines and the dancing were secondary in importance and served as a framework for his unique staging of musical numbers. (Aylesworth 1984) The RKO Astaire-Rogers musicals of the same era tended to be equally simplistic in storyline but, in contrast, allowed the dance itself to take precedence, displaying its complexity and specificity as an art form. In these musicals dance became more than a divertissement to the narrative—their dancing was always a logical extension of the plot; their characters were dancers. Astaire’s insistence on maintaining the integrity of the choreography extended the vocabulary for the moving body on screen significantly. He, often in partnership with choreographer Hermes Pan, introduced an eclecticism that combined jazz, ballet, and African-American influences. However, the association between dance and fantasy was mostly maintained, with the act of dancing servicing the romantic narrative. Later musicals including *West Side Story*, (Wise and Robbins 1961) choreographed by Jerome Robbins, and *All That Jazz*, (Fosse 1979) directed and choreographed by Bob Fosse, presented sophisticated (and often, innovative and idiosyncratic) dance vocabulary, and entered thematically into more challenging socio-political terrain. Nevertheless, the dance in these films still served the literary narrative and used dance as a cinematic device rather than as an experiential position.

Outside of the structures of these narrative film genres, early productions of dance for film or television were mostly live broadcasts or documents of (predominantly ballet) stage dance. The extent to which these documents were (often not) able to reconcile the dance language with the cinematic language has had considerable impact on opinions regarding the success of dance on screen. The difficulty with the filmed ‘ballet’ is that it still operates within the three-dimensional stage space and leaves little choice for the camera to view it in anything but a long shot, assuming a contrived and remote position simulating the audience’s viewpoint in the auditorium. For the stage ballet the close-up will only serve to destroy the theatrical illusion as it interrupts the overall spatial patterning and stress(es) the sweating athleticism that is a part of dancing. (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 140)
Appendix A

The nature of contemporary dance—its deconstructive aesthetic that reveals the physical effort of the dancer and, often, the psychological journey of the choreographer—is better suited to the screen than ballet. The high art stage space of ballet is not easily reconciled with cinematic language.

In many of the early adaptations (pre 1980’s) of stage dance for television, the directors were attempting to adapt dance as they would a play or book. (Rubidge 1993: 188) While there was recognition that cinematic possibilities for dance needed to be explored, often these experiments with camera obscured essential elements of the choreography. In cases where the interrelationship of moving bodies in relation to each other is the intended choreographic feature, a close up of an individual dancer may dilute the overall aesthetic of the dance.

More recently, screen translations of stage work adjust the choreography or lighting for the camera, or totally change and shorten the choreography to suit the new medium. The latter has provided a means for many choreographers to ‘cut their teeth’…before embarking on work done solely for the camera. (Jordan 1995: 89) Bob Lockyer, Director of Arts and Entertainment at BBC Television and producer/director of a number of dance films, sees it as the job of the choreographer and director to find a way of putting the excitement back, while still being truthful to the choreography. (Lockyer 1993: 131) Lockyer has worked as director with most of the major British dance companies, including London contemporary Dance Company and Rambert Dance Company. He also commissioned and produced Merce Cunningham’s Points in Space in 1986 and has had a significant role in the development of contemporary dance video for television, specifically for the BBC and the Arts Council of Britain. I attended workshops he conducted in Australia in 1990 and probably owe much of my enthusiasm for dance as a screen art to his positive advocacy. His understanding of the language and working practice of contemporary dance, in addition to his experience in film and television, offers practical solutions for the melding of the dance and film art forms.

Some of the most successful translations of stage dance to television have been the full-length works of Lloyd Newson’s DV8 Physical Theatre Company. Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men (Hinton 1989) directed by David Hinton and edited by John Costelloe, was a rework of the 1988 stage production based loosely on the life of North London serial killer, Denis Nilson. The thematic content for this ‘physical theatre’ work already represents a departure from the usual subject matter and aesthetic of stage dance. The physical body is used to communicate social issues and how individuals relate to one another emotionally and intellectually, rather than being about movement patterns, design patterns, like moving wallpaper. (Butterworth 1998) Newson’s choreography/direction, stimulated by his background in the study of psychology, lends itself to the cinematic form in that it concerns itself with the ‘meaning’ in the movement. The work draws on the gestures and interactions of the real-life scenario, shifting between the stylized and the
naturalistic, between ‘art’ and life. Newson references behaviour and contexts that are both recognisable and evocative for a broader audience, than the dance educated, and more easily translated to the screen. He also works with specifically constructed sets for stage, which replace the stage proscenium with alternate locations. By exploring the physical range of these real settings—nightclubs, back alleys, bathrooms, and bedrooms—Newson is re-locating the audience in space as the camera would in film. The subject matter in *Dead Dreams* (the isolation of the homosexual male) is translated in black and white to the screen by director David Hinton, referencing the *sleazy social worlds...the semi-underworld* of the Film Noir settings of the 1940’s and 50’s. (Rubidge 1993: 204) Here, a direct link is made for the viewer between known film conventions and dance. The capacity for Newson’s work to live within a recognisable narrative structure enables the viewer to reconcile the more abstract danced sections within the work.

Cinematic tools are used pro-actively in *Dead Dreams*. Hinton’s use of different camera positions together with rapid cutting between images highlights the intensity of the dance physicality and, in doing so, amplifies the subject matter, the representation of links between oppression, sexual politics and violence. In the sequence where three men run at and scale a high bare wall, using each other’s bodies as ladders and supports, the camera cuts from behind, to close-up side, to an overhead view of the action. In this way we see the scale of the physical obstacle, ‘feel’ the impact and effort of participating in the action, and sense the futility of the activity as it falls away from the top of the wall. The rhythm of the editing heightens our involvement by cutting between angles just prior to the moments of impact—bodies hitting the wall, foot stepping on shoulder, hand grasping for the top of the wall, bodies falling to earth. The shifts through and around the physical action shifts the viewer through the corresponding emotional terrain, and compensate(s) to a certain degree for the lack of the tangible presence of those dancers endlessly throwing themselves against an immovable object. (Rubidge 1993: 206)

The 1996 screen adaptation of the live work, *Enter Achilles* (van Gool 1996), goes even further in localising the physical and socio-political content with the use of an actual ‘pub’ and street environs. Again, the setting is naturalistic and recognisable as a narrative location. Objects and other bodies are used in this setting as extensions of the actual; the behaviour from this male subculture incorporated and extrapolated to reflect the emotional and socio-political undercurrent. The pint glass, an actual object from this environment, becomes a metaphor for Newson’s social discussion around the subject of what is ‘acceptable’ male behaviour and interaction. The contact duet, in which two men wrestle to reach a glass on the floor, demonstrates the pretext drinking can provide for intimate contact.

Without the ‘game’ which focuses on the glass, on the drinking activity, the men would have no ‘excuse’ for this physical interaction—intimate touch between men seen as being subversive, homosexual. The choreography is slow and controlled; the
rolling and embracing of the two men has the sensuality of a tango. The sequence is shot firstly through the frosted pane of glass of the door, as though viewed by someone outside the hotel, outside that context—the ‘dance’ exposed as the glass, the object of their attention, is not in view. Then the shot cuts to the interior from the floor level perspective of the glass, drawing the viewer closer to the action as the men reach their target. The intensity of this intimacy increases as they cooperate in lifting the glass between their mouths, the proximity of the camera highlighting the proximity of their lips, the near kiss. Throughout the film the shifting perspectives and the movement of the camera within the pub interior adds to the immediacy and the tension of the scenes, the action sometimes concealed by bodies or walls then revealed from another viewpoint; the position of the ‘threat’ not remaining constant.

DV8’s commitment to making dance film reflects its ongoing interest in how the two primarily visual media can enhance one another and reach a crossover audience from within both forms. (DV8 2001) While Newson has used a number of different directors, it is probably significant that he has maintained a relationship with one editor, John Costelloe, for all his films. DV8’s films do have a trademark ‘look’ and, indeed, have become a role model for dance work on screen. If the constants in these films have been the participation of Newson and Costelloe it could be assumed that the collaboration of these two artists has formed this aesthetic, and that the contribution of the editor is significant.

Lockyer regards the more successful dance films to be those in which the choreographer uses or, at least, directs the camera herself and in that way we, the spectators...get the creator’s view first hand. (Lockyer 1993: 144) Interviewed in relation to Points in Space, Merce Cunningham always starts with the idea of working for the camera and thinks of the camera as moving. (Jordan 1987) By taking the camera into the studio and using the eye of the lens to view the dance as he choreographs, Cunningham has found that working for the camera has provoked him to think quite differently as a choreographer. His subsequent use of ‘close-ups’ in his stage work has been inspired by his experience of working with the camera. (Jordan 1987) The potential for the choreographer’s studio craft and stage choreography to transform as a result of working in film has, similarly, been a significant outcome of my own artistic practice. In chapter 3, I discuss the impact cinematic language has had on my choreographic practice and how the work 27 seconds is an example of how screen dance can redefine choreographic practice.

2. Television dance

Television is essentially a medium of information and narrative...dance, and abstract dance in particular, is difficult to present on television. Viewers start asking questions, making up their own narrative. (Lockyer 1993: 132)
The ‘difficulties’ referred to by Lockyer could be seen to stem from the television mediated representations of dance which exist in broader programming. The dancing body is most familiar to television audiences as appropriated visual imagery rather than as a medium in its own right. In advertising, in particular, the moving body becomes a means for enforcing values, articulating and reinforcing the current social and cultural condition. (Hanna 1983: 133) The dancing body has come to represent sexual desire, an almost unattainable ideal body image, and a fantasy that serves to seduce the consumer and deny the subjectivity of the dancer. Dominant cultural images of women and images of the dancer are inextricably linked here. Laura Mulvey’s assertion that cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire (Mulvey 1975: 17) reflects the objectification of dancers in media representations. The dancer is most often represented as female (or effeminate, in the case of male dancers) and the ‘object’ of the male gaze.

The spectacular dance of television also enacts and structures sexual tension. By making the sexuality of the moving female body public, well lit, and open, it legitimises our society’s views of the female as a sex object. (Fiske and Hartley 1993: 45)

Feminist theory and, in particular, feminist film theory, provides a framework for analysing the structures at play in the viewer’s consideration of dance on screen. In Rethinking Women’s Cinema, (de Lauretis 1987) Theresa de Lauretis argues that there needs to be a re-definition of ‘aesthetic,’ one which incorporates pictures of women’s experience that address the spectator as female.

The effort and challenge now are how to effect another vision: to construct other objects and subjects of vision, and to formulate the conditions of representability of another social subject. (de Lauretis 1987: 135)

It is equally a challenge for choreographers to dismantle the objectification of images of the dancer and the dance, to convey the sense of (the dance) experience that is subjective yet socially coded. (de Lauretis 1987: 132) That dance is ‘of the body’ exaggerates its perceived connection with desire and pleasure in ways that denies dance as a subject of vision with the capacity to reflect and shape cultural identity.

Filmmaker Chantal Ackerman describes her work, Jeanne Dielman, as a feminist film because it give(s) space to things which were almost never shown...like the daily gestures of a woman. (de Lauretis 1987: 132) Dance could similarly adopt feminist strategies when making dance for screen, giving space to the previously unseen perspectives on and gestures of the body. Yvonne Rainer uses a number of feminist strategies to disrupt the social hierarchy of film’s narrative structures. Her films appropriate and deconstruct both the documentary genre and narrative film. Rainer regards the narrative structure as an analogue for social hierarchy and asserts that a
disruption of or messing around with narrative coherence has a positive function in pointing towards possibilities for a more fluid and open organizing of social relations. (Finnane 1992: 273) Rainer also uses language to liberate and illuminate social relations, a device that, I think, could equally render the body and the dance audible.

*Giving my working class disenfranchised characters theoretical language that is only heard and read in academic and scholarly contexts is a way of empowering them within the fiction of the film.* (Fensham and Walton 1991: 13)

In television programs where dance features as the primary content it continues, in most cases, to function as a vehicle for diversion or escape. Fiske and Hartley (Fiske and Hartley 1993) see dance operating predominantly as a source of light entertainment in television programs like the long-running British Ballroom competition series, *Come Dancing.* They break down this program’s composition into two main codes—of sport as ritualized social conflict, and of dance as ritualized social coherence. In this instance, dance functions as a vehicle for promoting cultural identity. The viewer’s participation in this ritual of dance is a reminder of their membership in a competitive, hierarchical society. Here, dance becomes sport rather than art, functioning as a mechanism for tension management (echoed in the wartime popularity of dance capitalized on by the Hollywood musical). The ballroom dancing codes of dress and behaviour reflect those of a higher class and of a different period, and are used ‘in inverted commas’, the dancers...using a form of behavioural irony by appearing to act as one class while really belonging to another. (Fiske and Hartley 1993:41)

The *Riverdance* phenomenon took over from the Ballroom program in the mid-nineties following Michael Flatley’s spectacularized presentation of Irish dancing at the Eurovision Song contest. The popular interest generated from this presentation facilitated Flatley’s success with both stage and screen versions of firstly, *Riverdance,* and further with *Lord of the Dance.* These dance spectacles shifted traditional Irish ‘step’ dancing into an art form that was more las Vegas, more MGM, more Broadway musical. (Gilsenan 1999) While these productions did much to ‘sell’ the Irish cultural identity internationally, they still capitalized on the image of the dancing body as sexual.

Television documentaries on dance could be attributed with contributing to a re-education of viewers of dance on screen. By revealing more of the dance process and the ‘off-stage’ persona of the dancer and choreographer, these programs can offer insights into the nature of the dance profession. Some of these documentaries do function, however, to glamorize and advertise their dance product in much the same way as the ever-increasing occurrence of ‘making of’ programs icons Hollywood films. Documentaries that deal with the contemporary dance artist can reveal an
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alternate aesthetic, based on process rather than product, and assist in personalising dance artists and their work. *Dancing to the Promised Land* is a documentary about Afro-American choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones (and specifically about the creation of his work *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land*). (Scorer 1994) It reveals aspects of the personal which are intrinsically linked to the socio-political themes (racial and sexual) that underline Jones’ work. He describes *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a work that attempts to deal with (his) own personal history and that history interfacing with social history. Jones’ subject matter and his choreographic imagery and vocabulary is, on stage and screen, overtly confrontational and is directly aimed at showing alternate representations of the body as a personal inscription of physical and emotional experience. The documentary, in its interviews with Jones and its filming of the rehearsal/creative process, adds an even deeper exposure of the personal in dance as it examines issues of ‘difference.’

*Top of the Pops* or *Solid Gold* or *Bandstand* (depending on your era and TV channel preference) dancers offered choreographed social dance and visual ‘distraction’ in much the same way as the MTV music video does today. Here, the dance supports and services the musical composition while at the same time offering identity for consumers of youth subculture, *making the tensions of the individual communal and thus legitimate*. (Fiske and Hartley 1993: 48) A combination of ‘commercial’ dance vocabulary and low or close camera angles reinforces the notion of dance as sexual display—the sexual regions of the body are emphasized visually and rhythmically. The rise of the music video as an art form over the past decade, however, has significantly contributed to the increase in alternative representations of the moving body and *augmented the accessibility of dance via the media*. (Buckland and Stewart 1993: 53)

Buckland and Stewart, in their chapter on dance and music video (Buckland and Stewart 1993), find there has been little theoretical consideration of dance within the music video. The music video format offers interesting structural models for dance film and a ‘way in’ to contemporary dance as a screen medium for non-dance audiences. Music videos are constantly playing the postmodern territory between high art and popular culture/commercial product. The majority of ‘clips’ today mimic the narrative structures of film, presenting condensed ‘plots’ complete with front titles and end credits. The distinction between movie promo, music video, and commercial has blurred to the extent where they could function as either or, indeed, cannot function in isolation. An example of this would be the 2000 film re-make of the 70’s television series, *Charlie’s Angels* which incorporates the song *Independent Women* by music artists, *Destiny’s Child*. This true postmodernist example consists of a trio of female musicians singing about a trio of female film characters, who in turn are representing a trio of female television characters. The music video references the film in the lyrics and uses selected footage from the film, switching between female singer and female actor in a way that bestows both film star status on the singer and popular musical star status on the actor. The music clip (and the
consequent playing of the song on radio) functions as advertisement for the movie and for their CD, while the movie reciprocates in marketing *Destiny’s Child*’s musical product.

This ambiguity of authorship or identity continues in the overlap between professional dancer and pop artist evident in the music videos of Madonna, Michael Jackson and Kate Bush. Kate Bush’s music videos pioneered the use of dance as art, using *carefully crafted dance sequences as an extension of the lyric content of her songs.* (Buckland and Stewart 1993: 55) Bush draws her movement vocabulary more from high art dance sources—the balletic pas de deux in *Babooshka* (1980); the pioneer modern dance vocabularies of falling, rolling, and articulating the torso in *Wuthering Heights* (1977) and *Breathing* (1980)—than from the popular culture social dance landscape. Her costuming, too, which often incorporates leotards, footless tights, or even Duncan-esque flowing chiffon, is referencing and linking dance as art with pop music. Her video stylizations may have been a means for Bush to legitimize her musical compositions as artistic and not simply commercial product.

Madonna, who began pursuing an artistic career as a contemporary dancer, uses dance as a means to embody both her music and herself as popular cultural icon. She seems to have recognized, as has academic debate, that dance *provides an ideal display site for the rapidly changing face of current fashion* (McRobbie 1984: 140), and has used images of her dancing body to reinvent herself as an icon of ‘current fashion.’ Madonna’s music videos conform to McRobbie’s cultural analysis of dance as social experience, namely dance as image, as fantasy, and as social activity. Moreover, dance is presented *as an assertive act linked to protofeminist lyrics* (“Express Yourself” lyrics), *female appropriation of male movements* (body building poses, the crotch grab made famous by Michael Jackson) or *a validation of female dancing.* (Goodwin 1992: 69–70)

The viewer of music videos is reading the dancing body as a site for social identity and action, and as an element of the postmodern context. The rapid cutting of images, shifts of angle, and camera movement generates an excitement that pulls the viewer into the action, while simultaneously locating dance as part of their ‘normal’ media-viewing life. The form of these fast and fragmentary images—the pastiche—displaces the content and transforms the original meaning of the dance. The viewer, overwhelmed by this saturation of mass-mediated images, cannot *interpret their meaning rationally, resulting in a more sensuous mode of reception.* (Harms and Dickens 1996: 211) The viewer becomes a decentred subjectivity that is dispersed in time and space and responds to the *sensuality of surfaces.* (Fiske 1991: 59)

### 3. Dance films
The past ten years has seen a significant development in the production, promotion and visibility of dance film, with the emergence of many international dance film festivals\textsuperscript{13} and with joint initiatives from arts funding bodies and broadcasting networks in creative development programs and television programming.\textsuperscript{14} In the following survey of dance films I have elected to concentrate on a small number of specific artists with whose work I have felt a synergy, either stylistically or politically. These include pioneering artists in experimental filmmaking using dance as a major feature of the vocabulary—Maya Deren and Shirley Clarke; dance films directed by Australian choreographers—Tracie Mitchell and Michelle Mahrer; and dance films ‘choreographed’ by international directors—Douglas Rosenberg and Thierry de May.

### 3.1 Experimental pioneers

**Maya Deren**

Maya Deren was an experimental independent filmmaker who produced cine-dance films and psychodramas during the forties and fifties in the United States. Although never a professional dancer herself, Deren’s broad artistic interests\textsuperscript{15} drew her to the creative potential of dance while touring with the Katherine Dunham dance group in 1942.\textsuperscript{16} At that time she met Alexander Hammid with whom she made her first film *Meshes of the afternoon* the following year.\textsuperscript{17} *Meshes* has become recognized as a significant landmark in the history of American independent film, and is famous for its *four-stride sequence (from beach to grass to mud to pavement to rug)*. (Unterberger 1999: 115) It was after the making of her first ‘cine-dance’ film in 1945, *Study in choreography for camera* (Deren 1945), that Deren’s choreographic use of movement and gesture became apparent and her earlier films were regarded in that new light.

*Somehow, the core was centred around movement and dance, of everything she did. Those movies...they’re examples of choreographies.* (Clark, Hodson et al. 1984: 264)

In *Study* Deren collaborated closely with dancer Talley Beatty discussing *very very closely what the camera will see, what the dance design should be.* (Clark, Hodson et al. 1984: 264) In her program notes Deren describes the film as *a duet between space and a dancer—a duet in which the camera is not merely an observant sensitive eye, but is itself creatively responsible for the performance.* By exploiting cinematic techniques Deren made space itself *a dynamic participant in the choreography.* (Clark, Hodson et al. 1984: 629)
Deren synchronizes the movement of the camera with the movement of the dancer, allowing her to invisibly cut a sequence in which the camera makes a slow continuous turn while the dancer appears four times in four different stages of his movement. With this technique, Deren has exploited the moving field of vision, interrupting the camera to conceal the methods by which the illusion is achieved. The continuous pirouette sequence in front of the four-faced Buddha is an example of how the camera can actually collaborate in creating dance movement (Deren 1945: 4). In this scene Beatty’s head is in close-up, enabling him to turn on both feet (derwish turn) and consequently continue the turning action beyond what would be possible in the balance of a normal pirouette. Beatty maintained his relationship to the camera (the position of his head in the close framing) for a relatively long period of time allowing the camera to gradually change speed, from extreme slow motion to extreme acceleration. This effect, which sees the turn shift from a dream-like state to a mechanized blur, could not be produced by the dancer alone.

Deren’s use of cinematic techniques (wide-angle lens, reversed film) enabled her to choreograph the body in the new space of film and create a new range of dance vocabulary. Her attention to matching the rhythm of the dancer’s movement across the cuts creates the illusion that the dancer’s movement continues through different locations—Beatty’s leg extending from one shot into the next creates the illusion that he has stepped from the woods directly into the apartment.

I intend this film mainly as a sample of film-dance—that is, a dance so related to camera and cutting that it cannot be “performed” as a unit anywhere but in this particular film. (Deren 1945: 4)

My particular interest in Deren’s work is her attention to the choreography of editing. She was an innovator in her consideration of and technical proficiency in all aspects of film production, and in her investigation of the relationship between the moving camera and the dancer. Ritual in transfigured time (1946) was my first viewing of a Deren film and one that may have, in retrospect, influenced my use of freeze frames in The 12 Stages of Adventure. I was struck by her combination of dramatic framing—framing characters in foreground and background diagonally through doorways—and her stylistic and articulate use of the moving body. Deren manipulates space and time to create dream-like collages—the ‘party’ scene with people moving in and through frame intercut with freeze frames as people reach for or turn to one another, and the leaps of moving characters from location to location. Her use of post-production effects (slow motion, repetition, freeze frames, and negative, or reverse black and white for the final ‘drowning/falling’ scene) is the choreography, her ‘dances’ exist only as films.

It can serve, not only as an instrument for conveying the artist’s vision, but it can itself contribute a view of the world created by the intelligence inherent
Deren’s contributions to the development of independent film, and dance film in particular, extended to theoretical debate and research support for the field. She toured colleges to lecture and wrote articles on the concept of “personal films.” (Smith 1975: 34) She pioneered exhibiting her films commercially by renting theatres herself, and was one of the first filmmakers to distribute her own films. Her support and advocacy for experimental film (she was a co-founder of the Creative Film Foundation) helped to create platforms and audiences for new developments in film as an art form.

Shirley Clarke

Shirley Clarke began her career as a dancer with modern dance pioneers Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey. Her documentary-style underground films that she started making in the fifties, made, like Deren, breakthroughs in the potential of filmmaking. While only a small number of her films actually used dancers, all her work displayed an attention to the movements of the body through landscape, which is choreographic. The 1955 film Bullfight (Clarke 1955) juxtaposes footage of a bullfight with studio footage of dancer Anna Sokolow. Sokolow’s choreography alternates between a stylized representation of the matador’s movement—with attention to the upward, open-chested posture and extension of arm as cape or sword—and the rolling death of the wounded bull. The studio footage of Sokolow is mainly in close-up while the arena footage incorporates long shots of both ring and crowd. Closer shots of Sokolow in the crowd provide a crossover point to cut between the locations, to shift from the mass event to the personal experience.

This juxtaposition is heightened at the moment when the bull is killed—close shots of Sokolow’s head rolling on the floor are intercut with fast moving pans of the crowd, as though she embodies the dying bull. Clarke’s play between naturalism and abstraction, between the physical and the emotional, is achieved through her combination of cinematic devices with choreographic material. A Moment in Love (Clarke 1957) uses a number of long dissolves, superimposing different angles of a couple embracing, laying, lifting and turning, or shot-mixing the couple with their reflection in water. These dissolve effects suggest both an otherworldly or sensual quality and an elongated sense of time, both metaphors for the emotional relationship between the characters. Much of the movement in this film is naturalistic or pedestrian (laying, walking, standing, looking) with Clarke providing a development of the movement with her movement of the camera. The camera tilts and pans up from a still pose to create movement through space. In a lifting turning sequence Clarke dissolves two shots of the couple turning in opposite directions adding to the kinaesthesia of the image and suggesting some kind of emotional struggle or complex intimacy. Clarke’s postproduction techniques directly reflect choreographic
devices working with overlaid shots of the two dancers to create the patterning, canon, and variety of angles of a larger ensemble.

From 1958 onwards Clarke shifted from an attention to the architecture of the body in landscape to the ‘dance’ of architectural spaces and buildings with the films *Skyscraper* (1958) and *Bridges-Go-Round* (1959). The latter film is considered to be her experimental film masterpiece using leftover footage of New York city bridges from her film loops on American life for the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels. Using camera movement, colour tints and editing strategies, Clarke was able to ‘choreograph’ the inanimate—to turn naturalistic objects into a poem of dancing abstract elements. (Unterburger 1999: 85)

### 3.2 Choreographers who direct

**Tracie Mitchell**

Tracie Mitchell is one of my peers in the Melbourne independent dance community who trained at Deakin University where I now lecture. A current recipient of an Australia Council Fellowship, Mitchell has spent several years lobbying for recognition of dance film as a viable and separate art form worthy of funding and public forum/exposure. She first secured funding for her film *Sure* (1998) after many unsuccessful applications to the respective dance and film funding committees. Since then Tracie has been funded by the Australian Film Commission to appear as a guest at the 1999 IMZ festival in Cologne, and curated Australia’s first major dance film festival, *Dance Lumiere*.

My interest in discussing Mitchell’s work, apart from my familiarity with both the work and the artist’s development, is in her approach to a merging of the film and dance languages (in terms of both her use of form and aesthetic, and her technical vocabulary). In addition she celebrates the way in which women move—displaying the sensuality of movement (Reid 2001: 8) in a way which can potentially reclaim concepts of ‘beauty’ and ‘sensuality’ for women and for dance.

> I think that women are amazing and are divine and I don’t feel like they’re celebrated enough in that place...and I think dance is sexy...not sexy like the way we’re selling our sports people, it’s organic...the sexual politics thing is difficult...I feel that for some reason dance is...the ownership of it is women’s business. —Interview with Tracie Mitchell (Reid 2001: 8)

*Sure* does communicate an elegance and a sensuality in its stylized use of black and white, its shifts from out of focus long shot to in focus close-up, and its dance vocabulary of slow motion falling, reaching, and unfolding. By having her dancers looking directly into the camera in close-up, Mitchell makes their softness or
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openness powerful. The visual style is influenced by the work of photographer Lillian Bassman\textsuperscript{23} (Mitchell 1998) and plays with shifts from black to white in background as Bassman did in her experimentation of burning negatives from dark into light and vice versa. (Reid 2001)

Mitchell seems to use her developing exploration of the aesthetics and possibilities of the film form to steer her dance content, creating a dialogue between the dancer and the camera. In \textit{Thread} (1996) Mitchell uses a fixed camera in what she describes as \textit{an exercise in editing}. In the opening images the dancer’s body fills the frame almost entirely, with only a slight swaying revealing slashes of light and clues of the location. This echoes the opening images in Jane Campion’s \textit{The Piano} (Campion 1992) in which the camera occupies the point of view of the protagonist looking through her hands as they cover her face.\textsuperscript{24} In \textit{Thread} bodies dance between filling the frame in foreground to revealing three whole bodies travelling along a beach. Mitchell (who edits with Ioannis Ioannou) intercuts repeating fragments of dancers moving through frame, and from close range to moving away from the camera, to gradually reveal the three-minute progressive journey into the distance. This journey, intercut with alternate entry points, resolutions and interactions between the dancers, implies a much longer temporal framework, a sense that this journey is a daily ritual.

\begin{quote}
...That was my thing, responding to environments...movement as a lived body as opposed to a series of steps...where did the screen and where did the movement connect...that whole exploration of the frame, the balance of all the elements. —Interview with Tracie Mitchell (Reid 2001: 3)
\end{quote}

Michelle Mahrer

Australian filmmaker Michelle Mahrer has worked internationally in dance film, documentary, music video and commercials. Although she does have a dance training background she came to filmmaking through studies in stage design (National Institute of Dramatic Art) and then cinematography and direction (Australian Film and Television School). For Mahrer, choreography is \textit{gesture and movement, not necessarily steps...seeing the world through this rhythmical sense of movement}. (Reid 2001: 2) Mahrer is another example of an artist who has hands on experience across the range of film production roles—editing, camera operation and direction—and this broad technical understanding gives her work a strong kinesthetic and rhythmic signature.

\begin{quote}
I really like to work with the dancing camera, where the camera becomes part of the dance...the camera is like a dancer, moving and interacting in a hand-held way...dancing with the dancer...making the dance come alive through the screen. —Interview with Michelle Mahrer (Reid 2001: 3)
\end{quote}
Although Mahrer’s first film, *Xidu* (1985), uses dance performers, it is really a choreography of editing. It was approached as a film about rhythm, what Mahrer calls *visual music*.

*I was very interested in rhythmical structure...visualising the music through the movement, so the sound and the picture are simultaneous.* — Interview with Michelle Mahrer (Reid 2001: 3)

Mahrer uses the relationships between the camera and the body—circling, moving with the dancer, framing specific close-up fragments of the body as landscape—and between the frames in editing—cutting with the beat as a foot stamps to earth, building the rhythmic dynamic by intercutting between locations on the body or directions through space—to create films that dance. While her work is not exclusively dance film, there is a common movement aesthetic and attention to physicality which is definitely choreographic.

*Dance on film is about the movement of a finger, the movement of an eye, a gesture...you’re working with a much bigger vocabulary than the whole body. through the lens of the camera...the body transforms and can become an abstract landscape.* — Interview with Michelle Mahrer (Reid 2001: 7)

In *investigating different dimensions and different realities* Mahrer is exploring new definitions for both dance and film. Her full-length documentaries about Meryl Tankard (*The Black Swan*, 1995) and Bangarra Dance Theatre’s Page brothers (*Urban Clan*, 1998) weave interviews, rehearsals and performances into her own creative artwork. Her use of close moving camera in rehearsal, her attention to a gesture of someone’s hand while being interviewed (or intercutting images of associated objects or locations), a connection between a word in voice-over and an image of another body or action (Meryl’s ‘joy’ heard over a dancer’s smiling jump), and her juxtapositions of person and place (the Australian desert against the urban environment of Bangarra’s home in Redfern), create her own ‘danced’ interpretation of the subject. Her music video work, including the MTV ‘artbreak’ *Sand and Mercury*, extends her alternate and artistic representations of the body into the context of popular television and potentially extends new images of dance to a broader and younger audience.

### 3.3 Directors who choreograph

#### Douglas Rosenberg

As dance film begins to appear in the global market—as Universities and funding bodies support research and development, and television networks, publishers and festival curators support the production and distribution of dance film and video—the accelerating development of quality dance film becomes apparent. I came across
the work of American video artist and director, Douglas Rosenberg, in an American Dance Festival library catalogue in 1999 which led me to the increasing range of work that is emerging from cross-disciplinary research in Universities. While ‘collaboration’ may have become something of a catch word in artistic and academic circles recently the reality is that dance and film artists are establishing ongoing relationships with each other’s tools and languages which are giving rise to some mature and sophisticated developments for the dance film form.

Douglas Rosenberg’s videos feature strong solo dance performers and/or choreographers (Molissa Fenley, Anna Halprin, Li Chiao-Ping, Ellen Bromberg) who trust (him) enough to not hinder (his) vision and who won’t hold onto ‘choreography’ as if it is sacred. (Reid 2001)

I am a very selfish and uncompromising person when it comes to my own personal vision. So, when collaborating I insist on an absolute equal footing with a choreographer. I also insist that a dance when translated to film or video is no longer the dance it was and that, in that translation, the method of recording has certain properties that may force the choreographer to remake parts of the work or even destroy the original in creating a new hybrid. — Interview with Douglas Rosenberg (Reid 2001)

Rosenberg’s combination of camera work and editing, together with the particularities of his choices in dance performers, produces dance stories that reveal personal and cultural aspects of his subjects. My Grandfather Dances (Rosenberg 1998) reveals, in Anna Halprin’s simultaneous verbal and physical telling of an anecdote about her grandfather, her cultural history, her spiritual and emotional landscape, and her present-day relationships with her family, the dance community, and with herself as a dance artist. Rosenberg adds to these narrative layers by dissolving between her narration to camera and her ‘dance,’ connecting verbal and physical language, memory and embodiment, specificity and universality. His close-up tracking of Halprin’s fingers stroking the fabric of her costume, or intertwining her fingers, draws attention to the kinaesthesia of the dance, to the textures and touch that contribute to Halprin’s memory of her grandfather. Within his mise en scene, Rosenberg positions Halprin with upstretched arms and raised focus in the lower half of the frame, opening the space above as she references ‘God.’ He tends to favour the placement of Halprin ‘remembering’ (covering her face with her hands) in the down right corner of frame—perhaps referencing the past as he leads the viewer’s eye from right to left, from present to past. I was particularly struck by the arms outstretched with hands clasped gesture which echoes my ‘wait’ gesture in The 12 Stages of Adventure—as viewer I was able to connect with the tactile and emotional landscape of that physical gesture.

In contrast to Halprin’s direct engagement with the camera, Li Chiao-Ping engages in a very private, yet vigorous physical journey in Periphery. (Rosenberg 1999)
Rosenberg’s use of repetition in the edit, his close chasing of her feet with the camera, and the mirrored and bright studio location, makes comment (perhaps more so for me as dancer) on the duration and intensity of dance practice. The entire six-minute video maintains the same horizontal plane, the camera never tilts or turns but tracks or holds its ground in slices across the body parallel to the floor (feet, torso, head and shoulders). The relentlessness of this plane, and the sound of the dancer’s footfalls and breath (which develops into a fast, rhythmic musical score), begs our involvement as viewing participants of the dance. It also draws attention to the contradiction that exists for an art form (dance) that demands an intensely physical investment from the dancer and a generally motionless consumption by the viewer.

I think that dance for the camera is at a critical crossroads. It is a genre that has been practised for a hundred years but only now is it finding a broad audience. It is however being pulled in two directions, one being the advancement of the art form, the other entertainment. —Interview with Douglas Rosenberg (Rosenberg 1999)

**Thierry De Mey**

Like Rosenberg, Thierry De Mey’s filming of dance creates a new choreographic interpretation, refined by his attention to close-up detail, moving camera, and rhythmic editing. De Mey’s screen interpretation (De Mey 1997) of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s 1983 choreography *Rosas Danst Rosas* uses the striking and labyrinthine location of the RITO School in Leuven, Belgium to add new spatial juxtapositions to De Keersmaeker’s rigorous, repetitive dance vocabulary.

Although the film version follows the original choreographic design very closely, the very fact of a different location, in Leuven, produces an entirely new artistic product...All the dancers’ neurotic energy is given a fresh compulsive dimension in the new spatial setting and the rhythm of the montage. (van Schaik 1997)

The camera traverses, emerges and inhabits the space as another participant in the ever-increasing population of dancers. With long, smooth tracking shots De Mey keeps pace with one dancer as she passes through halls, past windows, between walls, meeting and passing new bodies which provide echoes of or continuity to De Keersmaker’s walking, turning, and falling phrases. The opening sequence of the film involves an extraordinarily long (three minutes) continuous panning and tracking shot following a relay of four dancers as they wind their way through the deserted building. The only still camera shots are near the start of this sequence—one to bring the camera inside the building, another pausing as a dancer rests for a moment in a doorway. These shots give the viewer a sense of the real time it takes to traverse the location, and introduce the location, the four main characters, and the
somewhat foreboding mood of the dance. The quartet that resolves this opening journey uses low side camera angles, close-up detail of body parts, intercutting between solo and group, with rhythmic repetitions of the percussive unison floor sequence, accompanied by the live sound of the dancers’ breath and movement. The hypnotic musical score that accompanies the majority of the film is also written by De Meys, echoing and supporting his rhythmic editing style.

4. Films that dance

*I think the idea of making a dynamic film is a primal urge for filmmakers. That's why action films are so popular: because film can get across the sense of speed. Film can transport emotions.* (Tykwer 1999)

The physicality and communicative range of the moving body is informing the content, aesthetic and cinematic processes of a number of recent narrative films. Dance does not have to do all the work in the development of embodied film; film practitioners are, more and more, sourcing kinaesthetic approaches to telling stories.

Apart from films which show explicit connections between dance and film, a number of ‘action’ or ‘arthouse’ films are featuring physicality in their content and rhythm and musicality in their use of camera and post production effects. *Baraka* (1992) photographs locations and ritual against an entirely musical soundscape, using dramatic framing and manipulations of speed to contrast natural phenomenon with man-made production. The Cohen Brothers’ films play on the subtlety and comic rhythms of their characters’ physicalities; special effects in *The Matrix* (1999) permit the characters’ bodies to defy gravity and anatomical limitations in elegantly choreographed slow motion action sequences.

A recent German feature film release that I regard as a dance film, and which has influenced the thematic content for my work, *27 Seconds*, is Tom Tykwer’s *Run, Lola, Run*. (Tykwer 1999)

*This dance is portrayed with all the tools of filmmaking at hand: an array of camera angles/motion; incredibly varied cutting styles; animation/computer effects; and the visceral sense that the filmmaker sought to capture this dance by any cinematic means necessary.* (Hall 1999: 1)

My fascination for the film, apart from its focus on the relentless effort of Lola’s running, is its attention to ‘time’ as both an intrinsic narrative theme and as a rhythmic pattern for the construction of the non-linear montage. A twenty-minute scenario is played out three times over the course of the film, using recurring images and interactions but with different resolutions. Tykwer’s musical score exaggerates and guides the urgency of the recurring sequences and ‘drives’ the kinaesthesia of the action. His imagery is like a musical reprise as he reincorporates physical
Appendix A

sequences to signal the beginning of each new pattern, each version of ‘reality.’ The first loop begins with a domino falling sequence, then a shot of a clock that triggers the slow motion journey of a telephone receiver through the air before it slams into place in real time. The second time Tykwer uses a parallel montage of the phone and the bag of money flying through the air; and lastly, the flying bag crosses sight paths with an overhead plane until it collides with the camera (or the character, Manni’s, point of view). In a way Tykwer has used the rule three of comic timing—setting up a repeating sequence that takes a surprising turn on the third repeat. The film cuts between realities, too, in its use of animated sequences, stop motion cuts, and combinations of film and video formats. Run, Lola, Run indicates the potential for dance film to find a strong place within the context of progressive narrative filmmaking.

My viewings of Run, Lola, Run appease my fears and instil in me a new hope that the future of this cross-fertilised medium is brighter than its generally stymied present. As soon as definitions widen, dance will be catapulted into a new kind of motion, spoken and understood by a numerous, diverse, and devoted audience of moviegoers; the definition of cinematic language will have broadened with it. (Hall 1999: 10)
Berkeley’s trademark overhead shot transformed masses of dancers into kaleidoscopic patterns. He was an innovator in his use of alternate camera angles and moving camera in combination with large, custom-built sets.

RKO was, in the early thirties, a smaller American film production company (than Berkeley’s company Warner Brothers) which gained box office success with the Astaire-Rogers musicals.

DV8 was the first company to coin the term ‘physical theatre’ (a Grotowski-based term) to describe its work. Over the past fifteen years, since DV8’s formation in 1986, the term has been appropriated by a broad range of movement-based art forms—from dance to acrobatic and circus work, in short, by almost anything that isn’t traditional dance or theatre. (Luckhurst 1997)

Clara van Gool for Enter Achilles, David Hinton for Dead Dreams and Strange Fish, Bob Bentley for Never Again.

The Australian equivalent, The Australian Dancesport Championships, came to prominence after the success of the Australian feature film, Strictly Ballroom.

Jones’ work Still/Here (1995) which concerns the plight of terminally ill people and includes video footage and the recorded voice of an HIV-positive patient was condemned by critic Arlene Croce as “victim art.” It sparked much public debate about the function of dance as art or as dance as social practice. Croce wrote in The New Yorker: I have not seen Bill T. Jones Still/here and have no plans to review it…I can’t review someone I feel sorry for or hopeless about. Manning, E. (1995) “From the heart.” Dance Australia, (October/November) pp.16–18.

‘Commercial’ dance has become a blanket term for movement that draws on jazz, funk, and current street or club dance styles—that is, dance which is associated with youth subculture or social ritual. As suggested by the term ‘commercial,’ the dance is used as ‘display’ or acts as a secondary support for a product or personality, for example, back-up dancers for pop stars or advertising products.

Michael Jackson’s Thriller could be seen as the forerunner, with a more recent example including Robbie Williams’ Supreme (2000).

Kate Bush’s references to and incorporation of literary narratives in her lyric content introduces another example of her appropriation of high art cultural imagery.

Isadora Duncan, pioneer of modern dance in the early 20th century, created a controversy by dancing in chiffon tunics modelled on Grecian tunics which revealed her bare legs.

Before embarking on a singing career, Madonna took up a dance scholarship at the University of Michigan, then worked with the Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe in New York, and was assistant to choreographer Pearl Lange.

The lyrics of Express Yourself support images of women as independent and intelligent (“he needs to start with your head…second best is never enough, you’ll do much better on your own”) and encourages male ownership and expression of emotion (“you’ve got to make him express himself”). Madonna is sending a pro-feminist message to her (teenage) female audience albeit situated in the context of romantic love. The video clip is specifically modelled on Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1926) and is making a literal link between self-expression and German Expressionism.

Some 20 festivals currently exist internationally which feature dance film programs, including: Dance on camera (New York), the oldest annual festival running since 1971; IMZ Dance Screen (Vienna), since 1990; Dance on screen (London), since 1995; and most
Appendix A

recently in Australia, Dance Lumiere (Melbourne), since 1996, and Reel Dance (Sydney), since 2000.

14 In Australia in 1997 the Microdance project was an initiative of The Australia Council and the Australian Film commission. In Britain in the mid-eighties, Channel Four’s Michael Kustow developed the regular series, Dance on 4 (television adaptations of stage works) and in the late-eighties with Terry Braun, developed the Dance-Lines programs that produced contemporary dance works for television.

15 Deren studied Journalism at Syracuse University. Accounts of her school and University activities point to her artistic potential, listing her involvement in theatre productions, school newspapers and magazines, and her interests in photography and fashion design. (Clark 1984)

16 Deren had approached Dunham with the proposal to write a book on dance.

17 Cinematographer (and Deren’s second husband) Hammid shot Meshes which Deren performed in and they shared the filmmaking credit. In her following films, Deren took over direction, camera operation, direction and editing.

18 Deren incorporated slow motion close-ups of herself holding the unravelling wool while tossing her head and laughing, which she intercut with the second woman motionless, except for winding the wool into a ball, at normal speed, or 24 frames per second.

19 Clarke co-choreographed with Sokolow for Bullfight and A Moment in Love.

20 The Australia Council is the Commonwealth Government’s principal arts funding and advisory body. It aims to enrich the life of the nation by supporting and promoting the arts. The ‘Fellowship’ grant provides artists with financial support for two years ($40 000 pa.) to give them the opportunity to create work or to develop their skills. It is aimed at artists with a record of outstanding achievement or who can demonstrate outstanding artistic potential. (Australia Council 1998)

21 Australia Council Dance Fund denied support because there was no policy for the form...so they didn’t fund film, and in film funding rounds dance had to compete with a large number of short narrative and experimental films.

22 Dance Lumiere is part of the Bodyworks program curated by Dancehouse—Centre for Moving Arts in Melbourne. It involves three weeks of live performances and, until Mitchell’s 1999 involvement (three days at State Theatre, a film theatre), one day of dance film screenings at Dancehouse (dance performance venue).

23 Lillian Bassman was a photographer for Vogue and Bizarre magazines in the pre-war period.

24 Refer Appendix Images 3a and 3b.

25 ’Collaboration’ has replaced ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘hybrid’ over the past few years in the language used in the criteria for eligibility in guidelines for funding from organisations including Arts Victoria and the Australia Council.

26 I have discussed Rosenberg’s collaboration with Molissa Fenley on the work Bardo (in extremis) in chapter 2.3.3

27 More on Rosenberg’s collaboration with mature dance artists in chapter 3.1.

28 What I interpreted as a dance studio location is in fact an ice-skating rink—both, however, are locations designed for physical training and display.

29 Designed by Henry van de Velde.

30 De Meys joins the extensive list of film editors with musical backgrounds, including Paul Hirsch (Star Wars), Carol Littleton (E.T.), Maury Winetrobe (Funny Girl), Dany Cooper (Angel Baby).

Refer to chapter 3.11

Not unlike the current music video editing style which freezes then skips frames of the action to manipulate the visual image in the same way as some musical sampling distorts the temporal continuity.
Stage ①: Where you are—something is missing

I was curious about the sun

3/55
hide in, shoes fade out

4/42
Hayden's hit

1/21
Viv stands

4/14
Hayden stands and raises up

4/49a or 3/49
Nat pans up

3/55
pans up, Viv toward face

1/3a
do profile

3/55
moves around behind Viv

1/21
sunrise

3/55
Over shoulder to walk

Super 8 walking to sit
Stage 2: The call
I'd read about it... seen pictures.

Hayden
4/63

[Diagram of a process involving characters and actions, with notes and timestamps like 3/8, 4/11, 1/17, 4/12, 4/4, 3/12, 5/20].
Stage (3) : Response to the call

I put all my belongings in a locker and got on the train.

follows up his body

“locker”

“train”

Nat’s measure (head shake precedes)

Viv’s Nat measure

Dr. Measse to 300 ppm

Nat - bend sob hand

Nat - recycle sob hand...

try to measure pressure to hit

viv reach into pocket make out

miracle poses - bend hands out of flat

Still but with hand

fall backwards into chair

slow

to face a hand on chest

Nat chest day spin

Nat overhead arm - spin

head measure - fall

head turn laying

all head turn

plat head up / profile

H profile chair
Stage 4: Meeting with the mentor.

I had this need.

4/35

"I had this need.

3/36

squat in forest

3/33

head turn

look at back arm

3/34

move lid into

hands walking

y2

3/43

close hands

walking

3/45

wand (hands leave slot)

3/34a

Sign hands

(deck turned)

a move away

then to push from

3/35a

moving backwards

inside

a spin from

behind tree

3/41

bow

+ skill

Sideways
duck (slow) still or

eye blink
Stage 5: Crossing a threshold into the new world

I must have walked for a while.

I'm a bit scared.

Shadows.

Viv leaves.

Out of work to go in shock. I'm void.

Foot into waist. Watch your step.

Hands, watch your step.

Watch your step. (Viv runs) (Viv police car)

Viv aims to pull H. back.

Viv... no... here, here.

Gardens... where in here.

Here, here.

Gardens... I shine. (moving in to it)

Found stair.

Handfuls back twice. Before closer, darker.

Stab closer. (Leave form)

Before circles up around.

"12"
Stage (5) continued....

1/28
Are you alright (garden)

4/44
...No

3/62
Pill elbow into chest

1/33

3/14

1/32

1/38
Rise opening arm in garden

out of "no" (some circle)

Looking for (shovel & catch)

Elbow into chest - exit
Stage (6) : Tests, allies & enemies

I hadn't learned the theories about time, space & distance yet.

4/6-7

"I hadn't learned the theories"

"about"

... yet"

4/5

All enter sideways, up to to not drop over

4/8

Not squat to ½ standing

Not stand to frame to drop leg

4/5

Detail: head in Posh, out of frame
Stage 7: The approach - facing the fear

1/64: Slow
Viv walking to quartet

1/80
Viv step out of frame

3/63
Quartet seg. on back

4/82
J over Viv's arm (sideways)

2/2
J over Viv's arm (front)
Continue
4/82
Viv's arm off
And Viv throws head back

3/65
Closer on road

2/4
Viv crawl out into cam.

6:02:06

Viv
Super 8
Viv not visible

Distance road —> beach
Stage (8) : Supreme Ordeal

I was angry at myself for being afraid... frustrated.

4/69 & 4/70

"I was angry... afraid... frustrated"

4/27

after arm drop into elbow called a thrust back

4-33

4/44

Catching J

fall

to she hits ground.

4/11

3/7

Sideways falls in studio

Sideways fall on beach

3/25

3/15 or 4/6

Nat sob fall out of frame/

falls in dissolve

3/3

Insert

Shadows arms up.

F.34:18 done.

put up.
Stage 9: Reward

I could see it lit up in the distance

about to jump

...lit up...

on board

searching

in the distance

panelling N

panelling D

panelling N

N land
Stage 10: The road back
I was alone.

Hayden

"I was alone."

Viv reading
Cut long shot into feet & mid.

Hayden

end of
4/72

"I was alone."

Viv finger exit
4/72+

Hayden

4/59

Hayden

4/76

4/74

long shot walk off
4/29

long shot squat
4/29

close up rear end

Stage 11: Resurrection - another ordeal

Flashing lights ... panic

1/2

3/2

4/22

1/12

1/10

1/15

3/30

3/42

3/2+6

1/2

Insert

Hand over camera

I fall onto

our

I insert these before N.5 and

It over camera

High in action

Washes

I turn into wash

Hand over wash

Washes

Hayden - beach
Stage 12: Return with the elixir

I went back a different way & ended up walking for a long time...

Hayden's line (First 1/2)

I went back a different way....

Second 1/2

H in forest insert?

H walking

Viv post H

H running after Viv

Viv puts on glasses

H walks around

out of Nat's costume

Viv walks to answer

Super 8 Viv

up to shadow

Super 8

Viv looks at shore

end of 14/98

up body to face from "reading"

"My adventure was never completed..."
13
move

back 3

forth

waving

Fi close paws

PC-paws/arms

fly up from Fi's bows

"waving I was " perfectly " fly back down"

end on bows

"still"

Fi 126 1/12
in to eye
side lens
"In the dark"

black (dissolve)
50 → 100

"just the bows"

"moving"

loth Me bike

slow
Trauma phrase: circling

on back: pull in close to body for a second & back out to proximal space