MOVING THROUGH STATES:
APPLYING THE SEVEN LEVELS OF TENSION

KAITLYN SEIBOLD

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DANCE

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

JUNE 2021

© KAITLYN SEIBOLD, 2021

Abstract

This thesis draws from Theatre Methodist Jacques Lecoq's and his Seven Levels of Tension to experiment with contemporary dance choreography and performance, and discusses the process and insights that unfolded during the creation of *Meeting at R9*: a short, contemporary dance film and my Masters thesis project. Focusing on ways a performer can access, experience, and recognize tension in the body, I explore ways in which choreographers can use tension levels (as well as mime and improvisation) to evoke a sense of urgency and different impulses in order to generate different physicalities (or physical capacities). Accessing and utilizing expressive, embodied movements inspired in this process, I argue, can serve to generate dynamic choreography and stimulate audience engagement. This thesis is intended for the performer, researcher, choreographer, or anyone who is interested in using the Seven Levels of Tension to craft movement for the stage and alternative locations.

Key Words: Jacques Lecoq, Seven Levels of Tension, Urgency and Impulse, Mime and Gesture, Choreography, Dance Film.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Claire and Richard. Thank you for the endless support and influence in my artist endeavors, and for teaching me the value of hard work and passion.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to recognize and thank all my collaborators for their dedication, hard work, and inspiration: Kye Marshall, Evan Web, Heidi Lorenz, Maria Riano, Rakeem Hardy, Brianna Clarke, Roberto Soria, Brayden Cairns, and Margeoux Labossiere. This project would not have been possible without you. I would like to thank my mentor Darcy Callison for his guidance in pursuing my passion with arts research. Thank you to my editor Nadine Ryan for your thoughtful, insightful work. And I'm endlessly grateful to my friends and family who have supported me during all my choreographic endeavors: Carly Nunweiler, Cecily Bradshaw, Robert Bradshaw, Giulia Battistella, Elise Butler, Elvin Bautista, and Cassandra Stupak. And of course, this journey would not have been possible without the guidance and support from my teachers and peers in the Graduate Dance Program at York University.

Table of Contents

Abstract……..ii
Dedication……..iii
Acknowledgments……iv
Table of Contents……...v
List of Figures……vi
INTRODUCTION……1
CHAPTER 1 | Communication is Key……5
The Importance of Impulse……10
Postmodern Influences……12
Why Mime?……13
Mime Meets Contemporary Movement……...17
CHAPTER 2 | Lecoq Who?……20
Informed and Inspired……20
Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension……24
CHAPTER 3 | *Meeting at R9*: Choreographic Process in Stages……30
Stump Series: *A Developmental Stage*……31
STRAP*: Second Stage of Development*……....37
Meeting at R9: *Final Stage of Development*..……39
CHAPTER 4 | Modes of Making……46
Film as a Medium……...46
Music Discussion……48
CONCLUSION……51
Future Work……54
Works Cited……..56
Appendix A: Presentation and Promotional Materials……60
Appendix B: Collaborator's Biographies and Headshots……66
Appendix C: Performances……70

List of Figures

Figure 1: Lecoq's Educational Journey Diagram (year 1)…….22
Figure 2: Lecoq's Educational Journey Diagram (year 2)…….23
Figure 3: Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, as a cycle…….28
Figure 4: *Stump Series*, circular choreography……..33
Figure 5: *Stump Series*, family portrait……..36
Figure 6: *STRAP*, wave tableau…….39
Figure 7: Playing with tension levels…….41
Figure 8: Jacques Lecoq's demonstration……..41
Figure 9: *Meeting at R9*, film day……..47
Figure 10: *Meeting at R9*, music rehearsal.……...49
Figure 11: *State Shift*…….54
Figure 12: Screenshot of Dance Ontario Film Festival Ticket……..60
Figure 13: Promotional item for *Meeting at R9*…….60
Figure 14: Screenshot of event details from Dance Ontario (1)……....61
Figure 15: Screenshot of event details from Dance Ontario (2)……....61
Figure 16: Contract……....62
Figure 17: Program……....63
Figure 18: Playground Projects advertisement……..64
Figure 19: Advertisement for *State Shift*……...65

INTRODUCTION

Tension and impulse, these are two important aspects of performance needed when it comes to creating engaging work. Whether it be a sporting event, the symphony, or any theatrical performance, spectators require a certain level of stimulation to engage with the work being presented to them. There is an implied agreement or expectation when you are engaging with performance work; as an audience member, you want to be fully invested in what you are witnessing, and elements of tension and impulse can help performers evoke this. In other words, being able to follow a storyline or message that the performance is offering is important for maintaining attention and engagement. When entering these engagements, as an audience member, you are agreeing to listen, observe, and engage in some way or another. The theatre is a space used to exercise the mind in ways that differ from everyday life. Viewing contemporary dance requires you to draw from aspects of the personal, to create meaning from the movement and performance.

In late April 2007, after exiting the stage from a singing performance in a local district Music Festival competition in Rosetown, Saskatchewan, my supportive grandfather, Herb Strutt, said to me "you couldn't hear a pin drop." As a young, seven-year-old performer, I may have not fully understood the meaning of this phrase but looking back on it now, I see the significance. What he meant was, the audience members were captivated, focused on the performance, engaged. There was no time to ruffle through your pocket to find a mint or flip through your program. Reflecting on this moment I shared with my grandfather, I recognize the importance of generating stimulation and engagement with audiences. Without engagement it is difficult to create a connection with the audience (which is important for generating interest in and commitment to a work). I think of going to the theatre as an educational and personal investment.

I pay for my ticket, take a seat, and wait to be entertained. Of course, people have different approaches to viewing performance work; there is no wrong or right way to view performance art. But I do believe there are ways you can train performers and craft work to enable a fruitful connection with the audience.

This thesis focuses on the importance of tension and the use of urgency, impulse, and improvisation in devising movement for the theatre and alternative locations. In referring to alternative locations, I draw attention to site-specific work and performance that takes place outside of the conventional theatre space. My thesis project, *Meeting at R9*, was created using film as a medium and can be considered a site-specific work, because the space and architecture of the parking garage the piece was filmed in was not a conventional theatre setting but played an important role in informing the movement of the dancers as well as the overarching aura of the film. During the choreographic process, I drew from the work of French Theatre Methodist Jacques Lecoq—I was interested in how his pedagogy can be utilized for the contemporary dancer and choreographer. Lecoq devised embodied training methods for the actor. Throughout his research, he developed a particular approach known as the Seven Levels of Tension that can be described as a body-based training methodology.

Primarily focusing on Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, this thesis discusses how the Seven Levels of Tension can be utilized in choreography, and how it can be useful for the performer to access tensions and impulses within the body. From this research and through the choreographic process, I came to interpret Lecoq's tension levels as a multitool for crafting movement, and I discovered how the sense of urgency and impulse that arise can be shaped into meaningful outcomes and tools when it comes to generating choreography. My interest in and use of mime, gesture, and improvisation complemented my exploration of the Seven Levels of

Tension methodology during the creation of *Meeting at R9*. Exploring these techniques served as an investigation of contemporary movement styles and training. I found that when moments of tension and impulse are engaged during performance, a sense of urgency is generated within the work. And that this, in turn, can be utilized for the creation of embodied movement, with the aid of improvisation. As such, *Meeting at R9* demonstrates the ability and practice of transformation, and the significance of honing physicalities (physical capacities, in other words)—using tension levels—as this enhances the ability to express oneself by using the body as a tool of communication.

Our lives are surrounded by tension and impulse. Humans are constantly engaging with active choice making, either suppressing these instinctual impulses or acting on them. *Meeting at R9* is a demonstration of how movement and choreography can be generated when a performer chooses to *act* on impulses, *engage* with tension, and *embrace* moments of play that come along with these. This seven-minute and thirty-six second contemporary dance film features four versatile and dynamic performers and one skillful musician. This work was devised during three major developmental stages that took place from January – December 2020. *Stump Series*, *STRAP*, and *Meeting at R9* are all outcomes of these developmental stages—as well as *State Shift* which is a fourth piece and extension of *Meeting at R9*.

Meeting at R9 features four talented and expressive performers, Rakeem Hardy, Maria Raino, Heidi Lorenze, and Evan Webb; the brilliant musician Kye Marshall (see Appendix B for their biographies and headshots); and serves as the outcome of my Masters research. Each performer in *Meeting at R9* was selected based on their unique improvisational abilities and collaborative nature. Having experience working with some of these performers prior to this project was an advantage because they were familiar with Jacques Lecoq's Seven Levels of

Tension theory from our prior research development stages that took place in the studio as well as the online video communication platform, Zoom. Moreover, we were finalizing this work during the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant we had to adapt to new and changing social and health protocols—such as meeting virtually. In retrospect, this added another layer of complexity, near the end of the work, and perhaps another level of tension, in a sense—nevertheless, the scope of this thesis does not explore COVID-19-related challenges and affects in depth. As a screen performance, *Meeting at R9* uses film as medium to display the movement research with Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, and experiments with impulse, mime, and gestural language within the contemporary dance form. This work premiered on May 1st 2021, as part of Dance Ontario's DanceWeekend'21 Film Festival.

CHAPTER 1 | Communication is Key

This chapter focuses on communication within performance spaces, and I address theatre histories and practices that influenced the creation of *Meeting at R9*. Movement in and of itself is defined as a means of communication. I first heard this idea from my mentor and professor Darcey Callison at York University, during my movement observation course in which we studied Rudolf Laban (Austro-Hungarian dance artist and theorist) and practices involved with observing and notating movement. Although it was professor Callison who taught me this, he strongly suggests that these are not his words, as many thinkers throughout theatre history have made their cases around this idea. Still, this idea he shared has stuck with me.

When crafting movement, I often come back to this concept when I need to take a step back and simply observe what I am constructing. As a choreographer, I find this a useful and leveling tool as it allows me to observe movement for what it truly is, in and of itself: communication. Setting aside abstract concepts, or storylines, and thinking about forms of communication helps me consider how the movement can stand alone without written or verbal explanation. I have come to recognize that with our physical bodies we communicate with the environments around us so that we may adapt to our surroundings. In this way, movement is connected with our behaviors and characteristics as human beings. We express our needs and desires by interacting with a vast range of emotions and emotional states that help us share and communicate our feelings with others. We express ourselves by using our physical bodies to convey and connect. And when crafting work for the theatre, I find, there is an investigation of subtle indicators in the physicality of the body that takes place. I believe that creators and performers take part in physical research to develop skills to produce these physical cues and bodily expressions in hope of captivating viewers.

There are several theories and pedagogies that have been adapted throughout theatre history to aid performers and choreographers in honing their communication skills (such as David Farmer, Marcel Marceau, Richard J. Kemp, and Richmond Shepard, who I will discuss in more detail). For example, Lee Strasberg (a Polish-American actor, director, and theatre practitioner) uses a method for preparing an act that has a lot to do with relaxation of the body in order to engage an active search for tension in the body to either eliminate it or take control of it (Strasberg and Cohen 8). Similarly, John Bulwer (an English physician and natural philosopher) published four volumes exploring the human body as a medium of communication and proposed that gesticulation was a natural human language (Kemp 3). From these examples we can see that the body has been considered and explored as an instrument and a medium.

One approach in particular I take influence from is that of theorist and teacher Jacques Lecoq, and his use of mime and gesture to influence the actor in training. As mentioned above, I also draw from mime practitioners and performers such as Richmond Shepard, who is considered America's foremost mime in the twentieth century (William, 3), and French actor and mime artist Marcel Marceau who is often recognized by his reference to mime as the "art of silence" (Patrizia 10; Willman 1). These artists offer structure to their mime and gestural practice which was inspiring and useful for my development of *Meeting at R9*, as I will explore later in this chapter.

Actor and educator Richard J. Kemp immerses his research in embodied acting. His work generally centers on ideas of Cognitive Embodied Performance, Lecoq's methodologies, and histories of the theatre. In *Embodied Acting: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Performance*, Kemp offers the following: "Performance demands a specialized skill of incorporating skills beyond those used to live everyday life. What are those skills? And how can we train them when

they seem to arise from unconscious impulse?" (Kemp 2). These questions seemed to correlate with the types of questions I focused on during my research and development of *Meeting at R9*, specifically the ways a performer can access and generate a vast range of tension to guide impulse and generate choreography. Discovering ways to approach choreography that focus on method, I addressed the following questions: How can Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension methodology be utilized for the contemporary dancer and choreographer to create choreography? How can we train impulse? And how can tension and impulse be shaped to help craft movement?

When looking at movement through a choreographic lens, there is an abundance of vocabularies that adhere to structural rules based on different genres and styles that are born from cultural and social aspects of history, that follow or respond to social and art movements and politics. Contemporary dance vocabularies are often structured around sensations, patterns in the body, relationships with gravity, and other moving bodies, primarily using the physical body as a tool to convey knowledge and to communicate. The contemporary trained dancer must concentrate on their body, remember a sequence of steps, possibly be responsible for carrying another moving body, and they may also be required to understand counts and timing while following a specific piece of music or soundscape. A performer must also execute these tasks while conveying an emotional or physical style that the choreographer or creator has laid out for them.

This is a type of communication that happens during performance and involves a connection between mind and body. This connection can be fostered by what is known as Cognitive Embodied Performance (Kemp 190). According to Kemp, Cognitive Embodied Performance is the application of cognitive science onto performance (190). This involves the scientific investigation of the mind and brain to understand the psychophysical processes

involved in performance (Kemp 15). We see this idea of working with body-based training structures being used in Lecoq's approach as well. These embodied performance methods are centered around using personalized experiences and facilities to draw out an authentic, meaningful approach for movement (Kemp 106). We often see these techniques applied to actors in training so they can be more comfortable moving and communicating with their bodies on stage (Hodge 31)—actually, Lecoq's methodology was created for actors originally.

Nevertheless, I take this same approach for *Meeting at R9* with contemporary trained dancers, extending from Lecoq and mime practitioners. As a contemporary dance artist, there lies an assumption of having these ideas of Cognitive Embodied Performance already mastered. If you are a dancer, you should already be trained to communicate non-verbally, using movement. But we forget that dancers too undergo training and learning to develop these skills; as a movement artist/performer training the body is a continuous, ongoing practice. This is where I use the Seven Levels of Tension as a tool to hone the abilities of recognizing and producing tension, approaching choreography with this specific method. In creating *Meeting at R9*, I worked with embodied research (using Lecoq's tension levels) and found that it proved to be useful for the dancer. Through my research and choreographic development, I found that it generates a thoughtful sense of self awareness, fosters the connection of body to mind, and guides communication.

Although contemporary movement is deemed subjective and open to individual interpretation, I argue that expression and gesture can be a shared communication and understanding between all bodies. A short documentary titled *The World's Oldest Mime: A Life in Three Acts*, produced by Riley Hooper and Noah Wagener for The New Yorker, features mime practitioner Richmond Shepard. In the film, he talks about his life experiences studying

mime; how his practices shaped his outlook on life and how he recognizes communication between human beings. At the end of the documentary he states, “A lot of communication can happen in silence, but you have to listen,” followed by a heartwarming wink—which, in a sense, demonstrates the point he is making. This statement highlights the power and significance body language holds, not only in performance contexts but in everyday life. Reflecting on this quote, I drew meaning from the words silence, communication, and listening, using them as inspiration for *Meeting at R9*.

Communication through movement happens all around us, every day; it is happening right now, while you read this thesis on your computer screen, or if you are holding a printed copy in your hand. Whether the communication is involved between humans, objects, or the spaces we inhabit, we are constantly engaging with movement as a way to connect and understand.

The Importance of Impulse

> *Deep down there is a child who has grown up in us, and which can no longer be expressed in our social relationships. They were with us when we were little, but it isn't the child that is in is… it's the child who has grown up in us. With their own gestures, their own voice and who is extremely personal to us. And which we sometimes show to our friends, in moments when we are freer*
>
> – Jacques Lecoq[1]

As human beings we strive to find meaning in what we engage ourselves in. It was in the collaborative experience of creation that I discovered how the performer can access expressive states of emotions using impulse as a guiding force for my choreographic process and development of *Meeting at R9*. Focusing on the Seven Levels of Tension in combination with contemporary movement styles, I explored how generating movement, while incorporating embodied training methods primarily used for actors, can be a useful tool for the contemporary dancer and choreographer. Before sharing the application of the Seven Levels of Tension, I discuss the significance of impulse and mime, and how these actions informed the creation of *Meeting at R9*.

The word impulse is defined as a strong and unreflective urge or desire to act ("Impulse" 1). As humans, we engage with our impulses in a variety of ways: we can choose to act on our impulses, demonstrating them with physical actions, reactions, and behaviours, and with our verbalizations. We also have the ability to suppress impulses and urges, resisting and changing the desired action, including those involving voice and gesture—as the opening quote demonstrates. As such, impulse can bring with it a negative connotation. Looking at the word

---

[1] This quote was taken from excerpts of a lecture-demonstration given by Jacques Lecoq at Wilhelmsbad in 1971, as part of the European Mime festival. With this quote he is talking about developing one's personal clown. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97e4ekBVn-M&ab_channel=JonDavisonJonDavison.

impulsive, which means acting or doing without forethought, seems like a rather reckless and unthoughtful quality or action. However, in addressing impulse in contemporary dance practices, I aim to contradict those connotations by bringing care and thoughtfulness into impulse. Indeed, Lecoq's methodology highlights how unique gestures are present in every individual and remain inside of us, even though we may not be able to express them due to our social norms. Therefore, a guiding question for this has been: How can we nurture and (re)train the performer and choreographer to work with impulse in an effective and successful way?

Impulse can be a frustrating yet rewarding tool when crafting choreography. Yet, some aspects of impulse are present when constructing movement for performance. There is the initial impulse that happens when the germ to create a work arises, it could be an impulse to set the work in a particular location or imagine a costume design. Being able to construct choreography in a successful manner, requires the ability to fine tune these initial impulses and shape them into meaningful representations so that they can be understood, interpreted, and reflected on.

Choreography from *Meeting at R9* was developed by working with improvised scenarios, constructed from movement observation during fieldwork and in discussion with the performers. Improvisation was utilized in ways to generate choreography and train the body by using prompts and task-based work to explore practices of mime and gesture, and by relating these prompts to everyday life scenarios to produce recognizable gestures, evoke impulsive movements, and utilize tension states for the audience to relate to. In turn, this produced personalized pathways and movement outcomes that supported the performers individually as well as the work as a whole (specific exercises and outcomes of impulse-based work will be discussed further in Chapter 3).

Postmodern Influences

Today we see modern and contemporary dance breaking away from confined, set structures or theories and shifting towards a postmodern approach. Postmodernism extended from the mid to late twentieth century and is seen as less of a cohesive art movement (Harrison 40); moreover, it is viewed as an approach and attitude toward art, culture, and society rather than a specific technique or influence (Wolcott 72). Postmodernism carries a refusal to recognize the authority of any single style or definition of what art should be, and it borrows from recognizable conventions and techniques of art, highlighting that there is no "correct" way to make it art (Wolcott 70). Influential visual artists that fall under this category of postmodernism include Jeff Koons, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol, who challenged the conceptualizations of "high" and "low" art (Karg 8).

In the twentieth century we see the arrival of Contemporary Dance, which follows these postmodern values (Guadagnino 2). Leading pioneers of this movement, such as Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham, broke away from the confined set structures of Ballet, creating their own definitions of technique and style (Guadagnino 10). As a result of these shifting views, today contemporary dancers are no longer required to have the sense of being completely the same. Instead, I find choreographers allowing freedom to the performers, engaging in collaboration and creating movement vocabularies for all types of bodies.

My choreographic approach to *Meeting at R9* was influenced by these postmodern ideas. I prioritized finding individual approaches to performance, borrowing from multiple techniques and styles of movement. What I am drawn to about this approach to art is the idea of individual experience, and the space for individual interpretations of that experience. This correlates with Lecoq's ideas about using everyday life to influence theatre training and personal approaches

("The Moving Body" 3). *Meeting at R9* reflects these ideas of the personal, by drawing from performers' individual impulses and life experiences to, in turn, create a more embodied performance and outcome that audiences can connect with.

Why Mime?

During my research and choreographic exploration, mime acted as a key component and motivator in the development of a movement vocabulary, demonstrated in *Meeting at R9*. Movement sequences generated for this film were often inspired from experiments with the face, body posture, and expression. The crafting of extreme emotion and expressive states was primary in the development of this choreography. Understanding concepts of mime was also important because Lecoq used mime techniques and theories to influence his training methods and teaching approach; he seemed to have a complex relationship with mime as a practice and concept (Murray 23). He distinguished his mime teachings by theorizing the practices of Marceau and Marceau's teacher, Etienne Decroux (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 78).

Etienne Decroux is a twentieth-century theatre reformer and formalist who took part in a lifetime dedication to the development and theory of mime (Leabhart, "Etienne Decroux" 26). He named his practice the "Corporeal Mime," which involved principles for articulating actions and dramatic situations through technique (Leabhart, "Etienne Decroux" 3). Marceau, who was a student of Decroux, was known as a solo performer of the white-faced pantomime. As a French actor and mime artist, he took inspiration from Decroux and the silent film acting of Charlie Chalpin to create his famous stage persona Bip the Clown (Leabhart, "Etienne Decroux" 18). What separates Marceau and Decroux, is the focus on storytelling. Marceau was more focused

on an obvious narrative, whereas Decroux presented an abstract, plotless approach to mime (Leabhart, “Modern and Post-Modern Mime” 77).

When thinking about the word mime, one often reflects on the painted white-faced man presenting an overdramatic smile/frown expression, trying to escape a box. Although that is a common trope, mime or pantomime in the theatre involves a rich history dating back to the ancient Greek theatre and Commedia dell’arte. Ancient Greek theatre is referenced as the starting point for the development of live performance (Hall 6; Wiles 21). In the 6th century BCE we see song, dialogue, chorus, mask work, and storytelling birthed at these outdoor theatre performances (Wiles 21). Commedia dell’arte was a form of live performance popular throughout Europe from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, mainly structured around improvisation and stock character work, demonstrating lively and eccentric movement (Leabhart, “Modern Post-Modern Mime” 15). This outdoor theatre event has strong connections to ancient Greek theatre, incorporating the work of a closely knit ensemble that produced shows constructed around both set and improvised dialogue (Leabhart, “Modern Post-Modern Mime” 20). These stock characters could be identified by their individual types of masks, characteristic postures, stylized walks, and gestures (Kemp 3).

Commedia dell’arte was primary to Lecoq’s creative process and the development of his pedagogy, and mime was considered essential for performance and communication more broadly. As Lecoq states: “To mime is a fundamental action, the foundation of dramatic creation, not only for the actor, but also for writing and for performance. For me, mime is central to theatre” (Qtd in Murray 81). Furthermore, he took inspiration from the playful and improvisational atmosphere following the phrase “le jeu,” which translates from French as “play” (Murray 20). Following Lecoq’s emphasis on the importance of mime, improvisation, and

play, the development of *Meeting at R9* engaged these actions by approaching the choreography through improvisational structures and prompts. I chose to work with mime for *Meeting at R9* because it was a helpful tool to unpack and explore the significance of nonverbal communication.

When we think of how a mime communicates, we think of gestures and the close relationship between language and nonverbal behavior (Kemp 24). While they may often be used interchangeably, mime (or corporeal mime) and pantomime are different, I came to realize. American (corporeal) mime and mime teacher Thomas Leabhart suggests pantomime primarily emphasizes the body's extremities and surfaces, displaying charming and entertaining vignettes (Murray 22). Furthermore, he points out that corporeal mime movements begin in the deepest part of the body (Murray 22). Lecoq also acknowledges the difference between the two, stating that the word "mime" does not connote the pantomime styles of Decroux and Marceau; rather, he envisioned mime as a broader mode of physical expression (Kemp 12). More specifically, with mime, a performer acts out a scene without saying a word, non-verbally; whereas pantomime follows a narrative structure (with a beginning, middle, and end) and makes use of bodily movements and facial expressions for the communication of feelings and emotions (Murray 19)—see table 1 below.

Table 1
This table displays the difference and similarities between Corporeal Mime and Pantomime (Murray 19).

Corporeal Mime (Etienne Decroux)	*Pantomime (Charles Deburau)*
Twentieth-century modernist	Mid-nineteenth-century Romantic
Non-narrative (symbolic or abstract)	Storytelling (linear)
Often tragic	Often comic
Emphasis on articulated trunk	Emphasis on expressive face and hands
Body uncovered, masked face	Body covered, face exposed
Physical causality replaces plot	Traditional beginning, middle, end
Gestures exist for themselves	Gestures replace words or show emotion (for G. Wague)
Lower center of gravity	Higher center of gravity

Lecoq suggests that in pantomime or mime the use of a gesture and movement with the physical body replaces the use of a word ("The Moving Body" 40). Like the way we use words in speech to communicate an idea, emotion, or story, in mime or pantomime a gesture or action signifies words (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 7). With this idea, a different logic is needed for the construction of phrases to achieve communication. It requires a social syntax which is different from that of the spoken language (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 7). The origins of this communication can be linked to histories of the fairground, where performers had to make themselves understood in noisy environments (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 107). This is where we see the over exaggeration of body language as a primary means of communication when looking at the technique and practice of mime itself.

Mime Meets Contemporary Movement

I utilized mime in the creation of *Meeting at R9* as a catalyst for displaying effective gestures, taking influence from multiple styles and techniques developed throughout the history of mime in theatre (detailed in the previous section). I wanted to explore how mime could complement Lecoq's tension levels and the use of impulse, through the connection between mime and everyday lived experiences (which I drew from as prompts during our rehearsal exercises). As Lecoq says, "Mime differentiates itself from mimicry in that it is not merely an imitation, but a grasp on the reality which is part of our lives (Murray 81).

Similar to the development of contemporary dance techniques, mime has multiple, codified vocabularies that can be defined as technique (Murray 35). These methods and theories of mime have been adapted and refined throughout theatre history; pedagogies have been structured around miming techniques, using the body and gesture to communicate stories, actions, people, and objects (Leabhart, "Modern and Post-Modern Mime 42). For example, a method called Action Mime stems from theorist Lieutenant George Hêbert (1875-1975) whose technique involved the embodiment of everyday actions such as pulling, pushing, climbing, and carrying (Murray 24). Similarly, Etienne Decroux and his abstract form "Corporeal Mime" involved precise techniques (Murray 24).

Like contemporary dance styles, we see the crafting of mime work is now free to reject earlier, established structural forms. Mime seems to be connected to various practices of theatre, whether they are acknowledged or not. The act of gesture and understanding gesture is a valuable tool for creating live performance as well as for other aspects of life—for example, today we even see mime and clowning techniques appearing in forms of medical and rehabilitation therapy (see Ofir and Haruv 4). As suggested earlier, the mime figure has deep roots in the theatre, going

back to ancient Greek theatre and the Commedia dell'arte (Chaffee & Crick 197; Wiles 20). From Decroux to Marceau to Shepard, this evolution of gestural language has led me to discover that the use of mime is present in many physicalized theatre practices. It is clear that practitioners such as Decroux and Marceau have made their marks in theatre, developing pedagogies and tools for the creation and study of mime. When asked to define the difference between mime and dance, Decroux once told Leabhart:

> Rhythm in mime is the exception, while in dance it is the rule. Rhythm might be imposed on a work of mime in order to unify it but the work itself is based on surprise, dramatic hesitation—the mime must be born and grow slowly. We see dance living onstage but we never know how it is born or how it dies. To dance is to not show us the birth of dance.... The traditional figure of the dancer is free and soaring; the typical figure of the mime is struggling and earthbound (Kisselgoff 8).

This quote is compelling as it compares the two things I am aiming to successfully merge in *Meeting at R9*: dance and gestural communication.

During my position with theatre company Frog in Hand, based in Toronto, Ontario in June 2020, I studied under professional clown and therapist Andrew Gaboury. He shared ideas about how mime and gesture played a part in the development of crafting a clown persona. While I worked in this position, we also studied Commedia dell'arte's various approaches, touching on the interpretation of their stock characters and how their postures, attitudes, and presence affected the movement styles of each character. I studied how these precise, unique postures presented an alternate way of looking at the body, recognizing how subtle details in the

body are used as indicators to display the physicalities of different characters. These details determine how the diverse characters carry themselves through space and interact with the world around them.

This discovery was applied to *Meeting at R9*, performers were invited to generate their own identifying qualities and postures in the development of their characters. In turn, this enabled another aspect of audience engagement. A witness to *Meeting at R9* may recognize a similar body attitude or presence that emulates themselves or someone they are familiar with. Furthermore, this act of embodied performance inspires reflection and creates a point of connection.

Today we see many contemporary dance companies around Canada, United States, and Europe borrowing from different forms of theatre and performance studies to create engaging work. Looking at the show *Revisor* (2019), created by Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young, we see the characters working with spoken word soundscapes, their bodies, and gestural language to actualize the script and performance. Although this would not be considered a classical form of mime, performers and choreography in this piece become an example of physicalized theatre—physicalized theatre is a perfect representation of how communication in the theatre borrows from many genres of live performance.[2]

[2] There is an uncertainty around the term "Physicalized Theatre" because it seems to be used as a miscellaneous category for performance work that does not directly fall into an exact form of literary dramatic theatre or contemporary dance. For this reason, contemporary theatre (including postmodern performance) devised performance and visual performance, and while having their own distinct definitions these are often simply labelled "physical theatre"—without any reason other than because it is unusual in some way (Callery 30). As dance and drama separated, they became art forms that could stand alone in technique and context. Dance is usually associated with physical interpretation, usually accompanied by some sort of soundscape, and drama is labeled as an exploration of vocal interpretation through text and written word (Callery 21). Thus, physical theatre is referenced as a cross pollination of these two forms, drawing from the use of body language (Keefe & Murray 22). I believe this term can be used to describe any mode of performances that pursues storytelling through primarily physical and mental means. As such, this definition is unique as it borrows from various techniques creating endless possibilities and representations. Categories of performance that can be represented as physicalized theatre Include: Clowning, Commedia dell'arte, Greek Chorus, Mime, and Image Theatre (Baillargeon 4).

CHAPTER 2 | Lecoq Who?

During developmental stages for *Meeting at R9*, my collaborators and I engaged with theory and methodology of Jacques Lecoq, particularly focusing on his Seven Levels of Tension: a theory and method that uses movement and emotional cues to generate and trace physical sensations and capacities that are used to aid in character development (Lecoq and Bradby 89).

Informed and Inspired

Lecoq was born in France in 1921 and passed away in France 1999 (Murray 7). He was a theorist and teacher of live performance who specialized in training the actor with a body-based approach (Murray 3). He is known for developing new ways of working with the actor and his ideas were informed by a range of rich influences, experiences, and opportunities (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 7). After traveling to Italy to further his knowledge about the origins of live performance, he returned to France with a set of Commedia dell'arte masks and a mission to share his newfound discoveries regarding ways of thinking and working in the theatre (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 8). He took inspiration from other leading French movement theorists such as Francois Delsarte, who sought the internal truth about the nature of man and how it is expressed in gestures and speech (Schiller 42)

Lecoq incorporated ideas of mask work, along with ideas of the clown, the buffoon, and mime into his methodologies (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 18). By the time Lecoq founded his theatre school and teaching program in Paris in 1956, known as the *L'Ecole Internationale de theatre Jacques Lecoq*, he had been influenced by some of the most prominent intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, Merleau Ponty, and Jacques Derrida (Lecoq and Bradby 12). He founded his theatre in a time when many mid-twentieth century French movement theorists were challenging

methods of embodied research and cognitive thinking (Murray 7). Reflecting on the traditions of the theatre, they reimagined histories and techniques in a way that they could bring significance to the present-day actor (Murray 10).

In addition to inspiration from prominent thinkers, Lecoq's practices and theories were influenced by numerous opportunities and experiences from traveling and conducting research, as well as from ordinary, everyday life (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 3). In his book *The Moving Body*, Lecoq discusses how his pedagogy and philosophies originally stem from an interest in the world of sports and physical education where he noticed a geometrical relationship between moving bodies and space/architecture, and how they complemented each other ("The Moving Body" 10). Lecoq states: "At seventeen I discovered the geometry of movement through exercising on the parallel and horizontal bars at the Paris gymnastic club known as En Avant. The movement of the body through space demanded by gymnastic exercise is of a purely abstract order" ("The Moving Body" 4). With an interest in gymnastics and physical exercise, Lecoq discovered extraordinary sensations that could be carried over into everyday life (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 3). This interest in the moving human body developed throughout his career and eventually led Lecoq to research the body as a means of communication and expression. He examined the body and the mind in congruence (Murray 40). The realization, and deep understanding, of the body and its possibilities guided Lecoq into the world of live performance, and he decided to dedicate his life to teaching and finding ways to aid the emerging performer (Lecoq and Bradby 116).

When training in a specific method, it is common to immerse yourself into theories and practices that pertain to that method. And, while immersion is important for learning, it is also important to recognize that all training and experiences influence one another. Lecoq used his

physical education and physiotherapy experiences in combination with a rich knowledge of theatre history to create his own understanding of the body (Murray 8). Situated in these experiences and efforts, Lecoq became known for encouraging his students to take their own approach to the work and practices he would introduce during the two-year program designed for his theatre school (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 18)—see figures 1 and 2 below. It seems as if Lecoq's goal was to create an encouraging space that held opportunities for the theatre world. He wanted to generate a theatre culture that contained endless possibilities, relying on human nature, perspectives, and experience (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 21).

Figure 1: Lecoq's Educational Journey Diagram (year 1)
Figure 1 depicts the learning focus and outcomes for the first year of Lecoq's two-year program, and nicely frames his influences and methods (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 18).

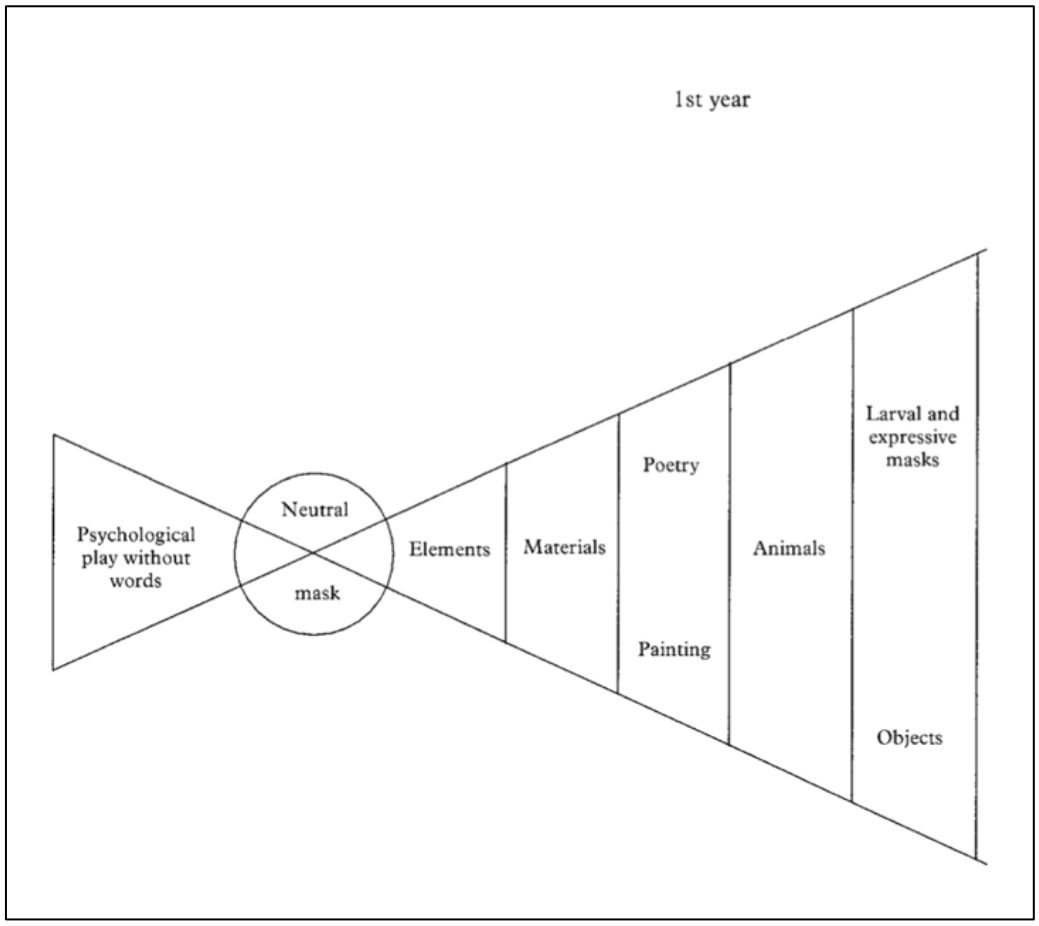
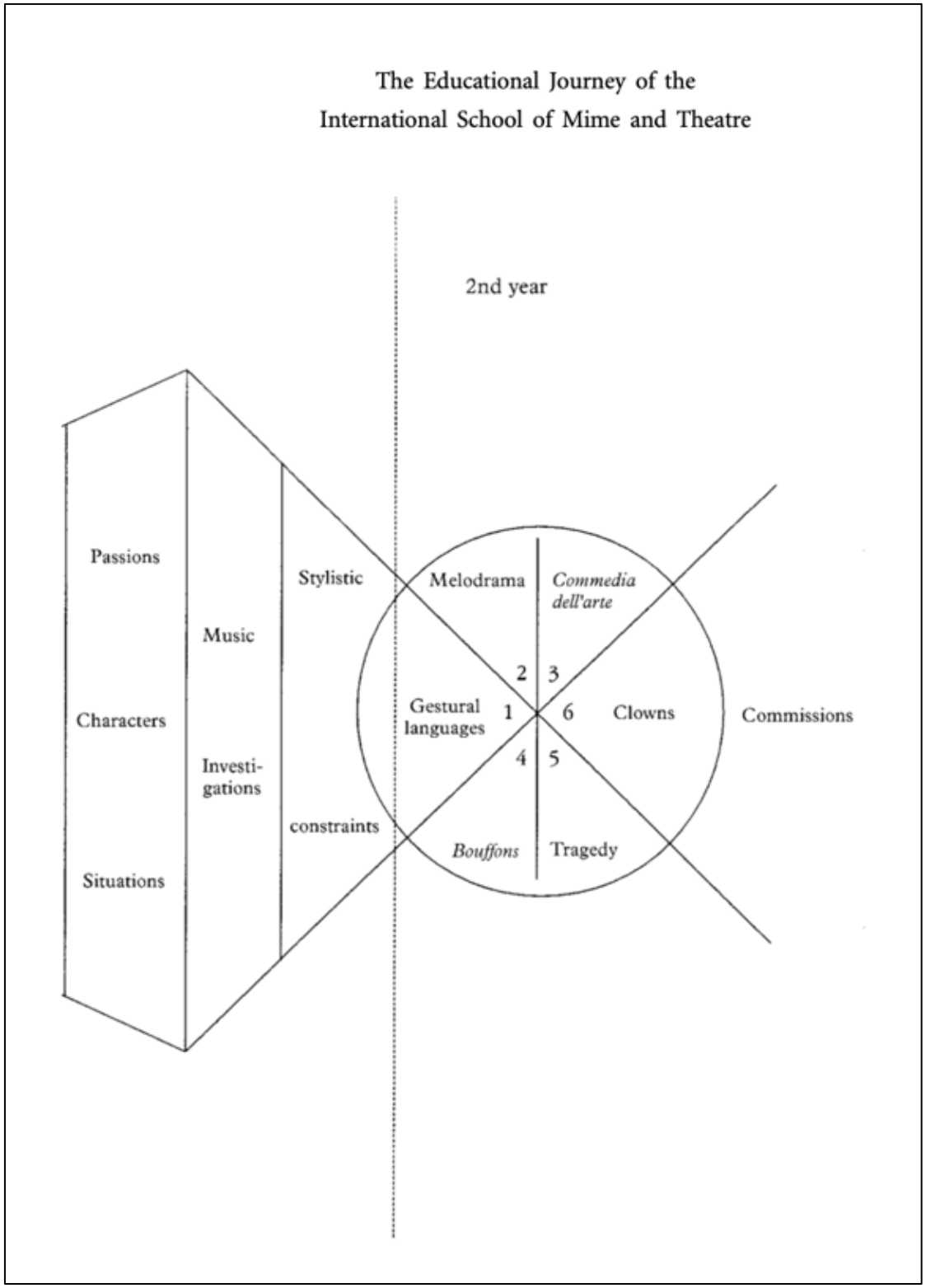


Figure 2: Lecoq's Educational Journey Diagram (year 2)
Figure 2 depicts the learning focus and outcomes for the second year of Lecoq's two-year program, and nicely frames his influences and methods (Lecoq, "The Moving Body" 18).



A general, overarching theme in Lecoq's practice is his broader understanding that movement, for the theatre, is an embodied experience and a system that can be created and formed as theoretical representation (Murray 153). I believe the theories he incorporated into his two-year training program are not only useful for the actor, but any type of performer using their body to communicate. One of the things Lecoq is well known for is his training approach called the Seven Levels of Tension.

Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension

The Seven Levels of Tension aims to help actors transition into different emotions and to connect with and develop their characters (Lecoq and Bradby 89). Specifically, the Seven Levels of Tension consists of a structured list of various tension levels that are applied through improvisational exercises to aid actors, and to identify and map a range of physicalities, and these different tension levels are used to trace physical sensations and muscular tension in the body for future utilization (Lecoq and Bradby 90). Tension levels are believed to be an important device to express the emotion and character of a performer; thus, they are used to access dynamics and hone the skill of transiting from one state of being to the next. The technique draws from real-life experiences and emotions to evoke and trace the physical experience (Kemp 113).

Lecoq was interested in experimenting with different levels of muscular tensions. He states: "Everything can be placed on a scale, on a dramatic climb that is rhythmically organized. The levels are not located at an equal distance from each other, but in a living rhythmic relationship. The actor must within himself feel the different nuances of the passions which make for a richness in his performance that can only be attained through exercise" (Qtd. in Lecoq and

Bradby 91). In line with this view, he developed a scale and exercises that are used for teaching at his theatre school (Kemp 114)—see table 2 below.

Table 2
Table 2 displays the scale and descriptions used in Lecoq's training school. This table was constructed from one that is listed in *Theatre of Movement and Gesture* (90), originally published in the French edition *Le Théâtre du Geste: mimes et acteurs*.

1.	Sub-relaxation: an expression of survival, like just before death; the image of sea birds that are tarred up on the beach; one speaks with difficulty, for oneself, incoherent, using swear words.
2.	Relaxation: a smiling expression of the 'body on holiday,' leaving the arms to swing freely and playing on gravity's pendulum, the body rebounds on itself. One speaks to others and seeks out groups of friends.
3.	The economic body: neutral, as if programmed for a minimum of effort for a maximum return. Everything is said, politely but no more than that, and without passion.
4.	The supported body: one carries the weight of one's own body. This is the first sensation of the space under pressure: discovery, interest, suspicion, one calls, one designates, a sort of state of alert. One seeks a partner. There is no relaxation. Themes are at the level of the realistic theatre, sensitive to situation.
5.	The first muscular tension is decisiveness. I go. It is action that starts it. Words are precise, clean. In the theatre this is the level of realistic acting, in action.
6.	The second muscular tension is the arrival of passion. Anger is the natural state. Put an angry person on stage, and he will be at the level of play-acting. The actor must also have this level but without getting angry, or shouting. It must be play. This theatre is close to mask and one cannot replay this level in life. It is already stylised theatre at this point.
7.	The third muscular tension is the maximum. The gesture plays to resistance, slowly and without a trajectory, as in Noh. One can only simulate the tension of this level, which is close to asphyxiation. Words are no longer spoken, but inter-cut with sounds that lengthen them.

The Seven Levels of Tension that Lecoq outlines progress on a spectrum of extremes, and include: 1. Catatonic, 2. Laid Back, 3. Neutral, 4. Alert, 5. Suspense, 6. Passionate, and 7. Tragic (Farmer). By associating concrete and specific numbers and names to these tension levels, the performer begins to recognize and differentiate these tensions into a skillful outcome (Lecoq and Bradby 89). Even though the Seven Levels of Tension are engaged and explored in a physical manner, these tensions can be accessed through emotional and visual prompts such as

imagery, suggestions of recognizable characteristics, and/or familiar situations (Kemp 115). Drawing from Lecoq's, Rick Kemp's and John Wright's descriptions of the Seven Levels of Tension, I introduced a reworked scale including specific names associated with the numbers (see table 3, below). This description and scale were used during the developmental stages of *Meeting at R9.*

Table 3
This table displays Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, the associated emotional and physical sensations and states, and a visualization prompt for each. This table was constructed by gathering information from different discussions (Farmer; Kemp; and Lecoq and Bradby).

LEVEL 1: CATATONIC	- A complete state of relaxation or exhaustion. - IMAGE: Jellyfish
LEVEL 2: LAID BACK	- Cool, calm, relaxed. Many people live in this state of tension. - IMAGE: Suntanning on a lawn chair.
LEVEL 3: NEUTRAL	- An "economic" state, nothing more, and nothing less. Having just enough energy to accomplish a task. Totally present and aware. - IMAGE: The contemporary dancer.
LEVEL 4: ALERT	- A curious, indecisive state. Having urgency to complete a task. Looking at things, sitting up, sitting down. - IMAGE: Mr. Bean's character.
LEVEL 5: SUSPENSE	- Unpredictable, impulsive movement. Intense and reactive, like a crisis is about to happen. - IMAGE: Melodrama.
LEVEL 6: PASSIONATE	- Difficult to control actions. Intensity, anger, hilarity, despair. - IMAGE: Explosive.
LEVEL 7: TRAGIC	- Maximum muscular tension, the body is in a solid state. - IMAGE: Petrified.

For Lecoq, working with these tension levels would foster physical capacities that could be used and replicated to help actors connect with, and develop, their characters (Wright 159-186). The initial concept of this training method was introduced in a single session, and Lecoq's students built from it over the course of their two-year training (Kemp 171). Students typically

approached this method in an improvisational, task-based manner while following instructions to progressively adjust their muscular tension with each of the successive levels (Kemp 171). In this way, each level serves as an experiment with dramatic potential, aiding the performer to discover new physicalities (Kemp 171).

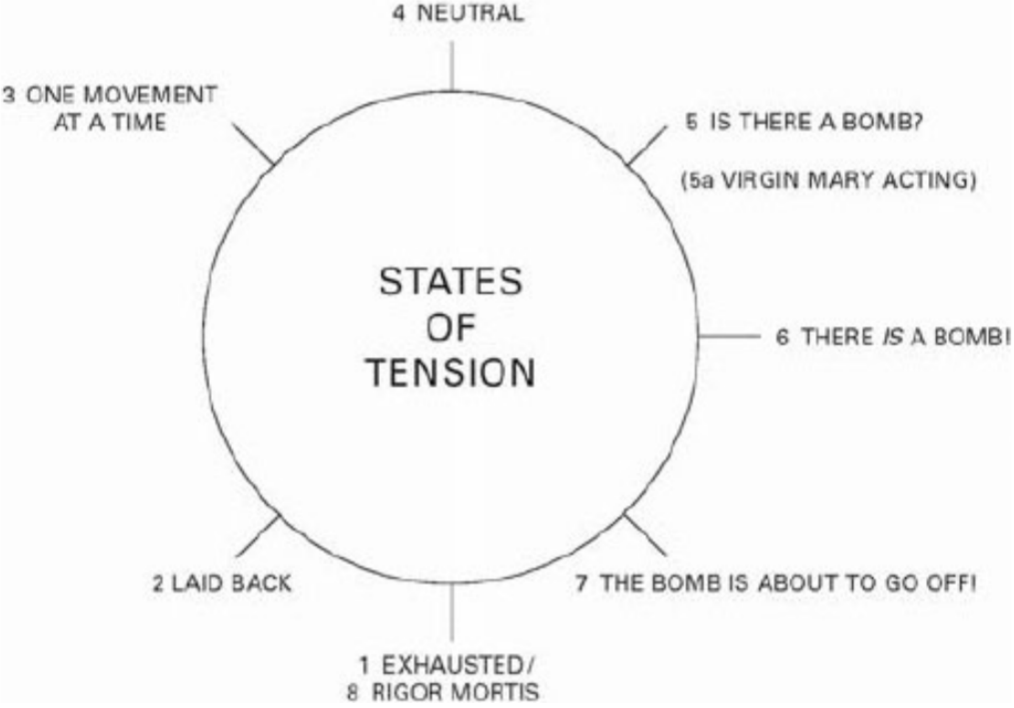
Although Lecoq did not record the Seven Levels of Tension in his writings, I drew inspiration from Rick Kemp and John Wright,[3] who are both actors, directors, and scholars, and who resourced information from Lecoq's prior students, such as Perry Scheiderman, and teachers, such as Alessandra Fel.[4] As mentioned, the Seven Levels of Tension listed above are an adapted version, utilized for the contemporary dancer. It seems that these states or levels have been adapted and reworked many times during Lecoq's practice and have been further developed by other practitioners such as Kemp and Farmer. It is important to note that Lecoq did not mention emotion specifically in relation to this exercise, he focused on drawing out the physical behaviors that can assist the actor in making voluntary choices and that affect physiological cues for emotion (Kemp 172). Through this process, I notice that the performer gains the ability to control and identify physiological features that stimulate feelings and communicate emotion to an onlooker.

Another important thing to note with the Seven Levels of Tension is that there does not have to be exactly seven levels; there can be as many levels as desired or needed (Farmer). To

[3] Rick Kemp is a researcher, educator and creator who has worked as an actor and director focusing on ideas of Cognitive Embodied Performance as a method for training performers. He has several publications surrounding Lecoq's Training and histories of Commedia dell'arte ("Rick Kemp"). John Wright is an international director and teacher of theatre who co-founded Trestle Theatre Company in 1980 and Told by an Idiot in 1993 ("John Wright").
[4] Perry Scheiderman is a former professor from during my BFA at Ryerson University. He notes that "Lecoq was a brilliant Cretiqour, who I have tried to emulate in my teaching. He was harsh at times but very focused and economical, pinpointed and very specific" ("Mentor Stories Ep. 16"). Alessandra Fel explains "during the training we go through each level and each level allows you to discover percentages, levels and energy you put in your body. Once you recognize this you are able to use it. Each level corresponds with different theatre territories such as commedia, melodrama, tragedy" ("Jacques Lecoq Actor Training").

highlight this, Wright indicates that at first look the tension levels are presented as a linear scale, but after experimenting they seem to be represented as a cycle, and this is because the lowest and highest states of tension are levels of intensity where action is impossible (Wright 159)—see figure 3 below. This suggests that you can create your own personalized scale of dynamic tensions.

Figure 3: Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, as a cycle
Figure 3 displays an image representing the Seven Levels of Tension as a Cycle (Wright 186).



The levels are merely a guideline to aid the performer through many different states of being in the body that different people experience and live. Lecoq guides students to enter different levels by using descriptions of situations, characters in film and history, and by describing feelings and imagery to inspire a range of possibilities in the performers' body (Lecoq

and Bradby 90). And these levels are meant to be adapted and changed according to each scene or character (Wright 159).

Lecoq's idea of generating tension levels in the body was interesting to me because it resonated with my previous realization about the value of creating stimulating work and engagement using tension and impulse. My collaborators in *Meeting at R9* applied the Seven Levels of Tension through task-based, physical work. I wanted to discover ways the performer could access and create choreography. I wondered, in what ways could performers and choreographers make the work a more personal, interconnected experience, and what training methods could affect the development of the choreography? For Lecoq, making successful theatre was about harnessing the dynamic qualities of play, improvisation, curiosity, risk, voice, and movement to serve the dramatic territory in question (Lecoq 84). And these are all qualities that correspond to the values and approach that aided in the development of *Meeting at R9*. Thus, with my interests involving impulse and gesture to craft choreography, when I came across Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension I was captivated and inspired.

Meeting at R9 uses influence from the history that led to Lecoq's method, as well as Lecoq's methodology itself, specifically focusing on ideas of mime and The Seven Levels of Tension to further explore frameworks of embodied experiences. Expanding on Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, I found that this method (and the theories it stems from) can similarly aid the performer (and/or dancer) in accessing different physicalities and emotional states to train the body. Thus, Lecoq's work can be influential in generating choreography for dance and can help evoke active choice-making among dancers during performances.

CHAPTER 3 | *Meeting at R9*: Choreographic Process in Stages

This section outlines how Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension methodology was foundational in the creation of my thesis project, *Meeting at R9.* Although this theory was used for training the actor, I applied Lecoq's theory to my contemporary dance vocabulary and used different levels of tension to create choreography.

Meeting at R9 is a seven-minute and eleven-second dance film that begins with four seemingly ordinary characters, dressed in dark business suits meeting in an underground parking lot (see *Meeting at R9* in Appendix C). They are bringing along a rolling rectangular, black metal table. After entering the subterranean environment, the characters begin to display strange and suppressed inner impulses. The metal table is a central object in the work, meant to be interpreted individually. It acts as a versatile and interchangeable symbol. The performers in this work use it as an object to separate or divide themselves, as they are often equally spaced around the table, but it is also used as a point of connection. A table is often perceived as a gathering place that aids conversation and communication, and as a versatile symbol in the piece, it could represent as a dinner table, work desk, private study, or conjure images of a boardroom for instance. Particular spaces come along with preconceived connotations and meanings that influence expectations for behavior.

This work was set and filmed in Yorkville, Toronto Ontario, in an empty, underground parking lot to inspire the feeling of secrecy and privacy. The reasoning for this is the characters are meant to display the impulses that are constantly suppressed by codified social terms of behavior (norms and expectations). I was able to utilize the architecture and space to create multiple perspectives, using convex mirrors to reshape the body, the long driving lane to play

with perspective, and large hanging fluorescent lights as spotlights for the performers that framed the parking space number "R9"—inspiring the title.

During the rehearsal process, we also had the additional element of following COVID-19 protocols, which was challenging and added another layer to the choreographic process—moving and creating with a limited number of performers, and using space and communicating differently than we had before. We held rehearsals using the online communication video platform Zoom when we first began the piece, discussing the process, objectives, and proposed outcomes. We then proceeded to develop choreography making use of space to move while socially distanced, during our in-person rehearsals. After developing remounted choreography from an earlier piece called *Stump Series* (which served as a developmental stage for this work, as discussed later), we started to apply the Seven Levels of Tension, discovering how focusing on tension levels would affect and inform the choreography.

Meeting at R9 premiered in Dance Ontario's DanceWeekend'21 Film Festival that took place from April 29 to May 1, 2021. This work was part of the Saturday program, on May 1st that live-streamed at 2:00 PM (see figures 12-17 in Appendix A).[5]

Stump Series: *A Developmental Stage*

Stump Series, *STRAP*, *Meeting at R9*, and *State Shift* are all products of my choreographic research involving the application of Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension. These research phases and (re)iterations of the choreography have been re-mounted on multiple dancers (who differ in

[5] DanceWeekend'21 was Dance Ontario's first online festival, featuring twenty-one Toronto based movement artists from various backgrounds and styles of dance. This online event began on April 29th, International Dance Day, which showcased uniquely captivating, globally-inspired dance works. In previous years, the event was hosted in Toronto, showcasing and welcoming dance enthusiasts from around the province. This online festival included contests, digital dance creations, and interactive workshops. Nine hundred and twenty people tuned in to the live-stream event ("Dance Ontario DanceWeekend").

facilities and movement quality), adapted (based on setting and soundscape), and presented in various ways such as a black box theatre setting, a site-specific location, and films. It was during the rehearsal process of *Stump Series* that movement was originally generated for *Meeting at R9*.

At this time, I was enrolled in various courses during my studies in the Dance, Choreography, and Collaboration MFA program at York University that influenced my methods of facilitating rehearsals, crafting movement, and creating a healthy environment for the work. Evan Webb, and Maria Raino, Brianna Clarke, and Margaux Labossieré took part in the first developmental stages of the project in January 2020. *Stump Series* later featured as a live performance in Melanie Old Dance Project's "Works in Progress: Energy Exchange," hosted at Dance Makers in Toronto (it was also presented at Playground Projects Entwined Together, see figure 18 in Appendix A)—see *Stump Series* in Appendix C. This six-minute piece also contains choreography used in *Meeting at R9*—the portion in *Meeting at R9* that takes place while circling around the rectangular table at (1:46) (see figure 4 below). The original choreography in *Stump Series* unfolded around the outside of a string of lights that were placed in a square shape, and this movement sequence was remounted for *Meeting at R9*.

Figure 4: *Stump Series*, circular choreography
Figure 4 is from *Stump Series*, taken during the circular choreography. From left to right: Brianna Clark, Maria Riano, Margaux Labossiere. Photo by Maxim Bortonwski.



Stump Series involved the use of two small wooden stumps throughout the two sections of the piece. These stumps were used to create objects, shapes, and scenarios, while also supporting the performers' weight; they were used to create scenes; and they were used to depict a multitude of objects. At the time that I created this work, I was immersed in readings about Lecoq's theories and I began utilizing mime work in my choreography. The stump was also an example of the possibilities of object utilization in the theatre. I was inspired by an exercise during my Movement Observation course at York University which directed me to think about using an object for something that it is, something that it is not, and as a metaphor. This idea is

significant, because it had influence on the utilization of the rectangular table used in *Meeting at R9*.

In the earliest stages of this research, movement was inspired by conducting field research. Observing interactions and behaviors between people, I intentionally searched for unseen and subtle communications. From there, I began constructing scenarios, writing down what I had witnessed, and forming meaning out of gestures and body language I witnessed (see examples 1 and 2 below). The below examples are two excerpts from a working observation log, and these scenarios were interpretations of witnessed interactions taking place in various locations around downtown Toronto.

> Example 1: Research Diary January 24th, 2020
> Grey haired man picks up dropped glove of the woman standing in front of him, he smiles politely, she turns around, takes the glove and says nothing. The grey-haired man looks left, looks slightly diagonally right and back down, the smile exits his face.

> Example 2: Research Diary February 12th, 2020
> A small child is looking at its reflection through a tall metal pole. They see their face represented as a humorous shape because of the convex reflection of the pole. They make a face like a chipmunk showing their front teeth and let out a verbal, short, staccato laugh. In a squatting position they slowly turn away from the mirror, until they are finally out of peripheral vision, they sharply turn back to their reflection, making the same staccato laugh.

These observation sessions are where my focus on gesture and impulse took root. I shared these journal entries with my performers, and they were instructed to reenact these scenarios, physically, similar to how you would approach scene work or dramaturgy. I allowed freedom for the performers to adapt these written scenarios, add on to the scene, and interpret meaning within the scene however they felt inclined. I also asked the performers to conduct their own field research, with the task of writing their own observations to generate more personalized material.

By studying mime, observing previous mime performances, and examining gesture in detail, I began to craft a movement vocabulary for *Meeting at R9*. We used the scenes to reconstruct and craft a range of physical and visceral movements that required a strong technical background and skill level, borrowing from Ballet and Modern techniques. Although I would not classify *Meeting at R9* as a Ballet or Modern work, these techniques are the foundation of my dance training and influence my movement as a dance artist. Vocabulary used to communicate with the performers during rehearsal reflected a classical Ballet structure, using terminology to describe and direct gestures such as "attitude," "arabesque," and "second position." My movement vocabulary respects the techniques and aesthetics of these dance forms, which can be noticed in many of my prior works created for both the theatre and film. Although this language was used, the execution in technical form was more focused on movement quality rather than "technique."

The exploration of gestural language was present throughout *Stump Series*. It was primarily explored in the second section of the work where the dancers eventually unplug the string of lights, opening the box up to the audience, and then finally stepping inside the string of lights. From there, they began interacting with each other for the first time, performing small vignettes that composed a recognizable (live) tableau, referencing the idea of a "family portrait" (see figure 5 below). These small vignettes were accompanied by corresponding pieces of music, such as "Watch What Happens" by Chris Montez and "I'm On the Outside (Looking In)" by Little Anthony and The Imperials. When the songs abruptly stopped, the characters stepped back into the "family portrait" that would change slightly each time.

Figure 5: *Stump Series*, family portrait
Figure 5 displays a family portrait moment, from the second vignette section of the piece. From left to right: Maria Riano, Brianna Clark, Evan Web, and Margaux Labossiere. Photo by Maxim Bortonwski.



I consider this earlier choreographic exploration, with *Stump Series*, an initial stage of development that became the "skeleton," for *Meeting at R9*, because it led to the structure of movement for the choreography. Lecoq used the Seven Levels of Tension primarily when working within a scene, or piece of writing/dramaturge that already exists, and this is where I replace "scene work" with "choreography." Adjusting this framing helps me position Lecoq's method as a base for exploration, a point from which to extend, and a guideline for choice making.

STRAP: *Second Stage of Development*

STRAP is a five-minute contemporary dance piece featuring three dancers: Brianna Clarke, Braiden Carins, and Roberto Soria. This piece served as the second developmental stage for *Meeting at R9*. This live performance was presented at the Playground Projects Entwined Together Platform that took place at Woodbine Park on September 12th 2020 (see figure 18 in Appendix A; and *STRAP* in Appendix C). This piece included one stump, a chair, and a long strip of turf. Again, incorporating the same circular choreography originally developed for *Stump Series*, this process was primarily focused on implementing and experimenting with gestural languages and expressions. In remounting the circular section developed in *Stump Series*, I took inspiration from Marceau, focusing on how gesture could aid the storytelling aspect within the choreography.

We explored Marceau's pantomime "The Maskmaker," performed in 1975 ("Marcel Marceau: The Maskmaker"). This pantomime was originally seen in Paris, in 1959, but was recreated by Marceau ("Marcel Marceau: The Maskmaker"). It is one in a series of twelve films in which Marceau performs various works from his repertoire. In the introduction Marceau explains: "The mask maker has different meanings. The mask maker is the man who represents humanity, with all the faces that humanity can persist, many people hide behind masks, others use masks to recreate symbols of life. I wanted to do both, but the last mask is revealed men, in its only and real moment of truth" ("Marcel Marceau: The Maskmaker").

As the performer puts on mask after mask, he finds, to his horror, that one of them has become stuck. What is particularly impressive about this performance is Marceau's ability to switch facial expressions in an extremely quick manner, while maintaining his character. This ability to change expression, in such an extreme and effective way, was something that I wanted

to incorporate into the development of *Meeting at R9*. I felt that the ability to shift and move through various states of being, as demonstrated by this act, would serve as an opportunity to explore the Seven Levels of Tension. While focusing on facial expression, we explored how tension levels could be represented in the face.

Starting at level one, Catatonic, and graduating slowly through successive levels, performers moved through each specific tension level, focused on the muscular tensions that arose in the face. We then called out random levels, in a quick manner, to experiment with and practice abruptly switching between states. We discovered that initiating these abrupt shifts in the face aided the physicalites in other parts of the body. For example: When switching from Level 4 (Alert) to Level 2 (Laidback), you could see a relaxation or drop in the shoulders, which translated to the adaptation of different postures.

In this second stage of development, I explored the use of objects in performance further. Having three items to utilize, we were able to create sets and images with the use of tableaus. For example, we used the long green strip of turf to depict multiple things such as a dinner table, coffin, blanket, runway, and wave. When the dancers moved the objects around the stage to create a new setting, they would enter a tableau that also acted as a “reset button” to begin the next vignette (see figure 6, below).

Figure 6: *STRAP*, wave tableau
Figure 6 displays the wave tableau from *STRAP*. From left to right: Braiden Carins, Brianna Clarke, Roberto Seraio. Photo taken by Kaitlyn Seibold.



Meeting at R9: *Final Stage of Development*

During the creative process of *Meeting at R9*, I investigated the application of Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension by providing visual and sensory images that the performers utilized to access different tension levels within the body. *Meeting at R9* is a demonstration of how the Seven Levels of Tension can aid in the creation of dramatic and dynamic choreography. As discussed earlier, Lecoq's original purpose was to use the ideas of creating muscular tension in a set scene to aid actors through different physicalities. During my application of the Seven Levels of Tension, I replaced the word "actors" with "dancers "and "scene work" with "choreography" to explore the potential of the method in choreography.

By having a set piece of choreography developed from my explorations with, first *Stump Series* and then *STRAP*, we were able to apply the tension levels to this already constructed "skeleton" for the creation of *Meeting at R9*. It was challenging to articulate the movements through communication strategies that involved specific structural placements of the body. Therefore, building from Lecoq's theory that movement can be analyzed and broken down, the Seven Levels of Tension enabled us to reconstruct particular movements and give emotional significance to the choreography being executed by the performers. However, I still faced challenges with the application of the Seven Levels of Tension; directly applying these onto the remounted choreography was challenging when solely focusing on the physicalities that were based on muscular tension (without considering the emotional and narrative element that tension levels can help evoke and develop).

For example, executing certain movements in the remounted choreography (from *Stump Series* and *STRAP*), utilizing the first level, a catatonic state, seemed nearly impossible. This is where we took the initiative to redefine and redirect the meaning of "tension." To generate new meanings, I asked my collaborators prompting questions, such as: How can you represent a catatonic state while executing a movement that requires a lot of energy and physical strength? How can you identify various states of tension in your body? How can you reproduce or replicate these states of tension? We learned that developing tensions in the body was a personalized experience (see figure 7 and 8 below, for a comparison between my collaborators' exploration and Lecoq's demonstration). Discovering that one body's tensions at a certain state may be represented or feel different in another body. No matter the outcome, it was the urgency that was appealing. Applying Lecoq's method when generating choreography and movement vocabulary

aided this sense of urgency in the performative qualities of the dancers. Rather than focusing on aesthetics of the movements, I was interested in the embodied execution of the choreography.

Figure 7: Playing with tension levels
This figure shows Rakeem Hardy playing with and exploring various levels of tension. Image taken by Kaitlyn Seibold.



Figure 8: Jacques Lecoq's demonstration
This figure shows Lecoq demonstrating an exercise of weight shift in a singular stance, which we used for reference when exploring tension levels. This figure was taken from Cathia Engelbach's "Jacques Lecoq, Un Point Fixe En Mouvement."



From there, we began the process of applying different tension levels by conducting exercises, and importantly, reflecting on each level after we felt through it. Furthermore, we explored these from a muscular approach, focusing on the bodily experience. Starting from a place of no tension at all, we worked through levels one to seven, using improvisational, task-based exercises. The performers started out on the ground lying on their backs, and we explored all seven levels with various restrictions, such as not coming up from the floor, sitting in a chair, or applying it to a loosely constructed scene (see the Example 3 below).

Example 3: A constructed exercise
Create a scene using a chair as a prop: Enter stage left, sit on chair. You realize your chair is wet, you get off the chair onto the floor. Exit stage right. Dancers were invited to improvise with the set scene while applying the Seven Levels of Tension.

We experimented and improvised with this scenario in a variety of ways: we used this exercise applying one continuous level; we tried working through two levels, with the ability to change between them at any time; and we worked with multiple levels in any order at any time. Exploring these scenes in an improvisational manner before applying it to the remounted choreography from *Stump Series*, allowed space and time for the performers to grasp onto a bodily understanding of changing and adapting through tension levels—what it meant and felt like to connect to the different levels, using different indicators for recognizing the levels, and demonstrating them.

We then began to bring in individual, personal contexts into the exploration of the levels of tension. The performers brought forward experiences and memories that could help feel through and embody the levels of tension. For example, when prompted to recall a situation or event that correlated with the sixth level of tension (passionate), Heidi Lorenz reflected on a moment of being late for a flight navigating her way through an airport. We looked at the physicality associated with this level (difficulty controlling actions, intensity, anger, hilarity) and she gave a demonstration of what she recalled herself looking like while rushing through the airport. Urgency, a sense of anxiousness, and uncertainty emerged while she acted out rolling a suitcase with haste and in a panic. We then interpreted this newfound movement that arose and its gestures as the "choreography" of Heidi's walk, which was important for her character development. Shepard supports this idea, suggesting "performance in theatre demands skill in developing full characterizations including a character walk, physical behavior, and general physical presence, as well as a clear and expressive gesture" (Shepard 3).

Although every person was given the same prompt at the same level, the tensions manifested differently in each performer. For example, Evan Webb's walk consisted of quick, small steps with limited bend in the knee, whereas Maria Riano demonstrated long, low strides with a strong forward focus. No matter what the outcome was, the interest was in the performative qualities that the levels evoked, and connections created with the body.

A helpful approach in initiating the applications of the Seven Levels of Tension was to start simple and slow, taking time to identify the different physicalities each level presented. Like with Action Mime (discussed in Chapter 1), I utilized descriptions of everyday actions, borrowing from Shepard and Hêbert, such as pushing, pulling, and climbing. We used these actions to experiment with each action at each level and to develop the characters and foster embodiment.

Working with Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, mime, and improvisation produced personalized pathways and movement outcomes that supported the performers individually as well as the work as a whole. Using the impulses that arose from our exercises and experiments to craft, I explored ways the performers could replicate specific phrases or sections of choreography or maintain consistency within the work by experimenting with the replication and/or reproduction of impulse-inspired movements. With the use of technology, during rehearsals of *Stump Series*, I used a video camera to record performers experimenting with a task-based exercise. We viewed the video immediately after the task and began to disseminate it and replicate it. Although this was a useful tool for the performers to reflect on the gestures and movement qualities they were displaying during the prompts or tasks, as we explored this approach I discovered that an exact reproduction of the initial movements generated from

impulse was not primary to my choreography or any of the ideas I was proposing. Instead, I found something more interesting: a sense of urgency that the movements generated.

Moreover, during the initial improvisation of these tasks, I began to identify a quality of urgency that was created within the movement. It was a specific urgency that seemed irreplicable and thus became most intriguing within the impulsive movement. To explore this further, I created exercises with prompts. In one exercise, I instructed the performers to visualize smashing an ice cream cone onto their heads, and building from this I offered a few prompting questions to the performers. I asked: How big was your ice cream cone? How do you react to smashing it? How are you holding the ice cream cone? These multiple factors play a part in the outcome of the movement being created for this specific task. We noticed when focusing on details in the descriptions of imagery, scenarios, or sensations, new pathways emerged, and development of the descriptive scenario took place. Each performer had the opportunity to react differently to the outcome—maybe ice cream is their favorite treat and they begin licking it off the floor, maybe they hate the feeling of the cold cone and brake out into a rage of tears.

Approaching choreography with the idea of utilizing tension and impulse means you are taking part in a constant collaboration with your performers. There is a certain amount of trust and choreographic freedom you are providing within the work. This comes along with the realization and acceptance that the outcome may not look the same every time. Directing the performer to draw from lived experiences, allows freedom and choice making, cultivating a greater sense of urgency within the performer and the performance itself. What is valuable about this sense of urgency is the performative qualities within the choreography. There is something unique about the sense of surprise or uncertainty that comes with engaging urgency. It allows the performer to stay present within the work, enabling active choice making. Live performance

involves experiencing the work differently each time it is performed. It relies on several factors such as audience engagement, the types of spaces you are presenting the work in, and the mediums you are using to present the choreography.

Even during the editing stages of *Meeting at R9*, I found myself engaging with ideas and moments of tension and impulse. There is an entire second layer of choreography that happens when piecing together footage and constructing a storyline out of captured movements. Working with film enabled me to disseminate the choreography with endless possibilities and opportunities to change the order and narrative sequence. Having over four hours of raw footage allowed a vast range of possibilities when assembling the work. I was able to apply the Seven Levels of Tension to my editing process as well, by organizing footage based on tension levels that were being displayed in separate clips—I even created multiple folders to organize the footage, labeling them based on different tension states.

Chapter 4 | Modes of Making

Film as a Medium

In the process of creating *Meeting at R9*, I used character and mime work in collaboration with contemporary dance styles, and combined these with Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension theory which served as a choreographic tool and inspiration for the development of the film. I have always enjoyed working with film for choreographic endeavors, utilizing it as a tool for communication within dance. There is a certain relationship that you begin to develop when working with technology and movement. Working behind the camera, I learned how to interact with movement and frame the body in different ways from approaches to theatre and stage presentation. Because I have a close relationship with the work, as the choreographer, I find it served as an advantage to the outcome of the film.

I chose to use film as a medium for this work because it opened up a larger range of possibilities for displaying the details of the characters' facial expression and emotional range, which were central in the development of the choreography. The medium of film adds another layer of control and complexity to the direction of the audience gaze; it allows the filmmaker to limit and guide what the viewer sees within the choreography. With film, you have the additional ability to design atmospheres, utilize architecture, and work with site-specific locations (see figure 9, below).

Having taken multiple courses throughout my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Performance at Ryerson University and my Masters of Fine Arts in Dance studies at York University, I was able to develop a strong skill set for filming movement, using equipment such as stabilizers and gimbals, as well as using software such as Final Cut Pro and Premier for editing. Prior to *Meeting at R9*, I created over fifteen works for film, and digital performances,

that honed my techniques in using the medium for contemporary dance. These experiences enabled me to choreograph, film, edit, and direct this project.

Figure 9: *Meeting at R9*, film day
This image was taken during our film day and represents the range of possibilities available with camera technology. Photo taken by Giulia Battistella.



Meeting at R9 utilized multiple camera angles and camera movement to display a vast range of framings of the body and expressive movements. For example, at (1:04) you see Rakeem Hardy who begins to push the rectangular table. The camera is placed directly on the

table while filming to give the effect of the viewer being on top of the table. Another unique camera moment is displayed at (3:07) where the camera is, again, placed on the table, enabling a mid-body shot that frames the dancers in such a way that you are only able to see the torsos of the performers unless they choose to move towards the camera. When filming I often think of my lens as an eyeball, and I ask myself: Where do I want the eyeball to go? What exactly do I want it to see?

I drew inspiration from Marceau's performance videos available on YouTube. Particularly focusing on "The Maskmaker" and "Bip As A Skater," I noticed how the camera angles framed the body using mid-body and close-up shots to capture the details in the facial expressions, hands, and upper body. Marceau is displayed in front of a white background, a simple set design that supports the importance of the facial expressions and gestures of Marceau's mime work. I utilized a space in the parking garage to create this same focus. In moments of *Meeting at R9,* such as at (4:36) and (5:14), I used a white concrete wall as a background and the same mid-body framing to focus on the importance of the gestural communication.

Music Discussion

The soundscape for *Meeting at R9* was composed and recorded by cellist Kye Marshall. Kye Marshall is a professional cellist and composer of classical and jazz music, specializing in jazz and avant garde improvisation. She is also a photographer who focuses on abstract and representational nature images. I believe Marshall's unique combination of art forms served as an advantage to the composition of the score. She has developed a skillful eye in observing, which correlates with creating a score for a visual arts performance. Having the pleasure to work

with Marshall previously, we were able to develop a system for successfully and productively collaborating on a contemporary dance film. Using a back-and-forth method for sharing ideas, images, and video and sound exchange, we communicated through phone calls, email exchange, and with in-person development sessions.

During the development of this score, I held a rehearsal at the Heliconian Club in Toronto with cast members and Marshall. Constructing improvisation prompts, we aimed to create a connection between the movement and music that would further influence the score (see figure 10 below). Through the use of task-based exercises, I experimented with adapting and applying the Seven Levels of Tension for a musician. After sharing the Seven Levels of Tension with Marshall, I asked her to interpret the tension levels in her sound quality when cued with a specific level. We then experimented with a call and response improvisation method. Dancers would demonstrate a phrase in any tension of their choosing, the musician would observe and then respond with a matching (musical) tension.

Figure 10: *Meeting at R9*, music rehearsal
This image is from our rehearsal at the Heliconian Club in Toronto, ON. From left to right: Kye Marshal and Rakeen Hardy. Photo taken by Kaitlyn Seibold



In experimenting with tension levels during the musical composition, I started to notice similarities with dance. When reading a piece of music, the player will examine a multitude of directions given on the score. They will look at the tempo, key signature, address the legates, robots on the page. All the ingredients are needed to compose and execute an interesting piece. Without these directions the piece would be mono-paced and lifeless. Much like music relies on these aspects to create an interesting and engaging outcome, movement does as well. The choreography or developed movement can be compared to the notes on the sheet and the indications on the composition can be related to the Seven levels of Tension. Therefore, I argue that Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension can be compared to the directions that you receive for a piece of music and can be used at various stages in the creation of a performance piece—all adding interesting states, tensions, structures.

Through these exercises, Marshall composed a six-minute score using a cello, loop pedal, and synthesizer. The score was divided into two sections and was further developed using a sound editing program called Logic Pro to layer in different recordings on top of each other. The final score for *Meeting at R9* contained dissonant sounds in a minor key which created an atmosphere that reflected the secrecy of the underground parking garage.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on this research as a whole, I recognize the many histories and practices that influenced the creation of *Meeting at R9*—the contemporary dance film and the result of my MFA research. Focusing on Theatre Methodist Jacques Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension, I researched how his ideas around tension (specifically muscular tensions associated with different physical and emotional states) could work with mime, gesture, and improvisation to generate choreography. Lecoq was influenced by mime and Commedia dell'arte practices, and postmodern movements and thinkers more broadly, and so I combined these histories and approaches to inform the development of *Meeting at R9*.

I was interested in how these ideas of creating, tracing, and understanding tension in the body could influence and transform the performance qualities in movement. Because Lecoq's focus was on devising embodied training methods for the actor, I wanted to see how they could be useful for the contemporary dancer and choreographer, and I was interested in how ideas of embodied training could help create engaging choreography. From my experience as a young performer, I recognized the importance of audience engagement in my choreographic endeavors, which highlights the importance of communication in the theatre. These interests and experiences were primary in my creation of *Meeting at R9*.

My interpretation and application of Lecoq's tension levels ended up being a successful tool for crafting impulse-based movement; I discovered multiple techniques to generate choreography using tension and impulse, mime work, and improvisation. With the use of task-based work, we identified various states and tension levels within the body and used Lecoq's theory as a method to (re)produce different physicalities. By using constructed exercises, from human observation and discussion, I was able to connect to these tension levels, investigating the

subtle details in gesture that can be accessed through interacting with a range of emotional and physical states. With my collaborators (the performers in my piece), I was able to redefine and redirect the meaning of "tension" to highlight the personal, individual experience. Associating specific numbers to tension levels created in the body aided the performer in recognizing and reproducing these states.

Not only did applying these levels work for generating choreography, but it also enhanced the performers' qualities and strengthened the presentation of the work as a whole. Using improvisation to perform task-based research in the studio, I was able to hone my skills for working with impulse in a choreographic situation as well as with film. Impulse was a catalyst for generating the movement vocabulary for *Meeting at R9* and supported the idea of gesture and communication. By studying gestural communication in performance, I discovered that working with mime and gesture (posture, expression, movements) connected the performers to the concepts and histories of choreographic language, therefore creating a stronger connection to the Seven Levels of Tension. When experiencing these expressive states using the face and body postures, I was able to explore how movement creates meaning and acts as nonverbal communication.

Using these expressive, impulsive states of communication generated a sense of urgency in the work, which led to creating connections between the performers, the choreography, and the viewer, and ultimately creating an engaging movement vocabulary. Through this work and research, I learned that approaching choreography with the idea of utilizing impulse involved an ongoing collaboration with my dancers. I realized that working with these ideas meant the choreography was able to live in a state of transformation and adaptation. When allowing this choreographic freedom to my performers, I discovered that tension and impulse played a key

role in evoking an urgency in the performative qualities, which, in turn, generated individualistic, personalized, and engaging movements. In this way the performers were able to bring out detailed gestural qualities (languages even) through the work to communicate in the performance space.

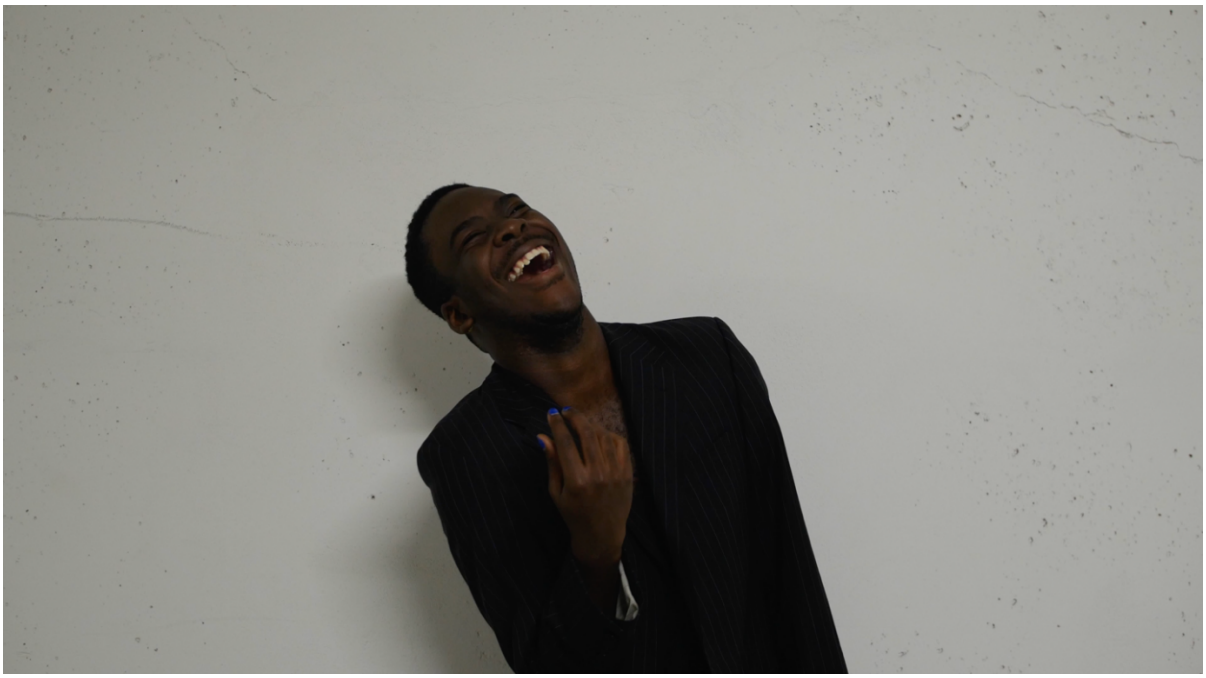
It is clear that collaboration served as a key component in my creation process. I invested time and was thoughtful about creating strong relationships with the performers involved in my work. I choose to allow choreographic freedom, choice making, and task-based work to generate material, during the rehearsal process for *Meeting at R9*. Even though COVID-19 resulted in many restrictions surrounding human interactions and presented many challenges to the rehearsal process, I was able to adapt and embrace the tensions.

Stump Series, STRAP, and *Meeting at R9* are all outcomes of this choreographic research surrounding tension and impulse. By using *Stump Series* as an outline or skeleton for the movement vocabulary in *Meeting at R9,* I had a starting point for the application of Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension. *STRAP* evolved as an exploration on how the tension levels would affect and inform the choreography. *Stump* Series and *STRAP* were developmental stages for *Meeting at R9* and thus acted as a set of guidelines that the performer used while having the freedom to play within the choreography in a structured, purposeful way that allow for a sort of purposeful play. Although these works are able to stand alone as separate investigations and performance outcomes, they are all developmental stages that informed the making of *Meeting at R9.*

Future Work

Using the raw footage from *Meeting at R9*, I created a four-minute and forty-one second film, featuring Rakeem Hardy that serves as a close-up look into one of the characters from *Meeting at R9.* This film is entitled *State Shift* and premiered in York University's 50th Anniversary Film Festival on Tuesday March 30, 2021 (see figure 20 in Appendix A; and *State Shift* in Appendix C). This piece was created using a single exercise from the Seven Levels of Tension, zooming (visually and metaphorically) in on a particular scene form *Meeting at R9*. Although this film used the same footage from *Meeting at R9,* they were presented at two separate online events. Although both pieces have the ability to stand alone as two separate works, I consider this work, *State Shift*, an extension of *Meeting at R9* (see figure 11 below).

Figure 11: *State Shift*
A still of Rakeem hardy, from *State Shift*, displaying a moment in tension, focused on the sole character in the piece. Photo taken by Kaitlyn Seibold.



Even Though *Meeting at R9* and *State Shift* were never intended to be shown simultaneously, in a future work it would be interesting to see how they could work together, and communicate with one another, shown in sequence. I am interested in the possibility of utilizing the two films together, while also adapting the work for live performance. I would like to explore how the choreography and performance could change and develop by having *State Shift* projected on a screen, while a live performance of *Meeting at R9* unfolds in front of the screen.

Working with these ideas of embodied performance and tension levels, I hope to further investigate ways of training impulse to craft movement. This choreographic research enabled me to refine my collaborative work with the performers and their impulses to create instinctual, expressive movements and dynamic choreography. By reflecting on the various outcomes and modes of performance this research has presented, I am confident that this method of creation will be successful in the future. As stated earlier, there is always work to be done in training the moving body, and as artists we have a responsibility to create work that communicates and connects with audiences so that we may engage with our viewers.

Works Cited

Baillargeon, Renée. “The Art of Physical Theatre and It's Beginnings.” *TheatreArtLife*, 7 May 2020, www.theatreartlife.com/artistic/the-art-of-physical-theatre/.

Busi, Frederick. “Use of Character Names and the Commedia Dell’Arte.” *Romance Notes*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1977, pp. 314–319. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43801449.

Callery, Dymphna. *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*. Routledge, 2001. Print.

Chaffee, Judith and Oliver Crick, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’arte*. Routledge, 2014. Print.

“Dance Ontario DanceWeekend.” *Dance Ontario*, n.d. https://www.danceontario.ca/activity-detail/dance-ontario-dance-weekend. Accessed May 1, 2021.

Engelbach, Cathia. “Jacques Lecoq, Un Point Fixe En Mouvement.” *Théâtrorama*, 15 Dec. 2016, www.theatrorama.com/actualites/jacques-lecoq-point-fixe-mouvement/.

Farmer, David. “Seven Levels of Tension.” *Drama Resource*, 8 Feb. 2021, dramaresource.com/seven-levels-of-tension/. Accessed October 27, 2020.

Guadagnino, Kate. “The Pioneers of Postmodern Dance, 60 Years Later.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 20 Mar. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/t-magazine/postmodern-dance.html. Accessed May 4, 2021.

Hall, Edith, and Rosie Wyles, eds. *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

Harrison, Sylvia. Pop Art and the Origins of Post-Modernism. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Hodge, Alison. Twentieth Century Actor Training. Routledge. 2000.

Iovine, Patrizia. *Marcel Marceau*. Intereuropa Produktion, 1971.

"Impulse." The American Heritage Science Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2011, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/impulse. Accessed May 22, 2021.

"John Wright." *The Wright School: A place to make theatre*. thewrightschool.wordpress.com/john-wright/

Karg, Alexandra. "Examples That Define Postmodern Art." TheCollector, 23 Oct. 2020, www.thecollector.com/postmodern-art/. Accesses May 4, 2021.

Kemp, Rick. *Embodied Acting: What neuroscience tells us about performance*. Routledge, 2012. Print.

Kisselgoff, Anna. "Is Mime Moving Closer to Dance?" Dance View, 1 Jan. 1984. https://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/01/arts/dance-view-is-mime-moving-closer-to-dance.html. March 7, 2021.

Leabhart, Thomas. *Etienne Decroux*. Routledge, 2007. Print

Leabhart, Thomas. *Modern and Post-Modern Mime*. Library of Congress, 1989. Print

Lecoq, Jacques. *The Moving Body*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987. Print.

Lecoq, Jacques. Le Théâtre du Geste: mimes et acteurs. Paris: Bordas, 1987.

Lecoq, Jacques, and David Bradby. *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*. London: Routledge, 2010. Print.

"Jacques Lecoq Actor Training" YouTube, uploaded by Haque Centre of Acting & Creativity (HCAC), 31, December 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYC1-IEDGMU&ab_channel=HaqueCentreofActing%26Creativity%28HCAC%29HaqueCentreofActing%26Creativity%28HCAC%29. Accessed October 3, 2020.

Keefe, John, and Simon Murray. *Physical Theatres: a Critical Reader*. Routledge, 2007.

Little Anthony and the Imperials. "I'm on the Outside (Looking In)." DCP Records, 1964.

"Marcel Marceau: Bip As A Skater." YouTube, uploaded by CIRCOFRENIA, 28 June 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONBg9g9w2qU. Accessed October 27, 2020.

"Marcel Marceau: The Maskmaker." YouTube, uploaded by CIRCOFRENIA, 6 September. 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLpWaicALjg. Accessed October 27, 2020.

"Mentor Stories Ep. 16" YouTube, uploaded by Theatre Curation Project, 24, November 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Enl-XrXORnU. Accessed December 11th 2020.

Montez, Chris. "Watch What Happens." A&M Records - SP 4157, 1968.

Murray, Simon. The Routledge Companion to Jacques Lecoq. Routledge, 2003.

Ofir, Shoshi and Haruv Kfar. "The Therapy Beneath the Fun: Medical Clowning." Peb Med. vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 56-65, 2015.

"Rick Kemp." Indiana University of Pennsylvania. https://www.iup.edu/theater/faculty/rick-kemp/

Shepard, Richmond. *Mime: The Technique of Silence*. Vision Press Ltd., 1972.

Strasberg, Lee, and Lola Cohen. The Lee Strasberg Notes. Routledge, 2010.

"The World's Oldest Mime: A Life in Three Acts." YouTube, uploaded by The New Yorker, 12 July 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qepk-12IbUc&ab_channel=TheNewYorkerTheNewYorker. Accessed March 16, 2021.

Wiles, David. *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction*. Cambridge. University Press, 2000. Print.

Willman, Chris. "Richmond Shepard, Celebrated as 'The world's Oldest Mime,' dies at 90.

Variety, July 8, 2019." *Variety*. https://variety.com/2019/legit/news/richmond-shepard-mime-dies-1203261922/. Accessed May 10, 2021.

Wolcott, Anne. "Is What You See What You Get? A Postmodern Approach to Understanding Works of Art." *Studies in Art Education*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1996, pp. 69–79. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1320508. Accessed 23 May 2021.

Wright, John. *Why Is That so Funny?: a Practical Guide to How Comedy Works*. Nick Hern Books, 2006.

Appendix A: Presentation and Promotional Materials

Figure 12: Screenshot of Dance Ontario Film Festival Ticket.

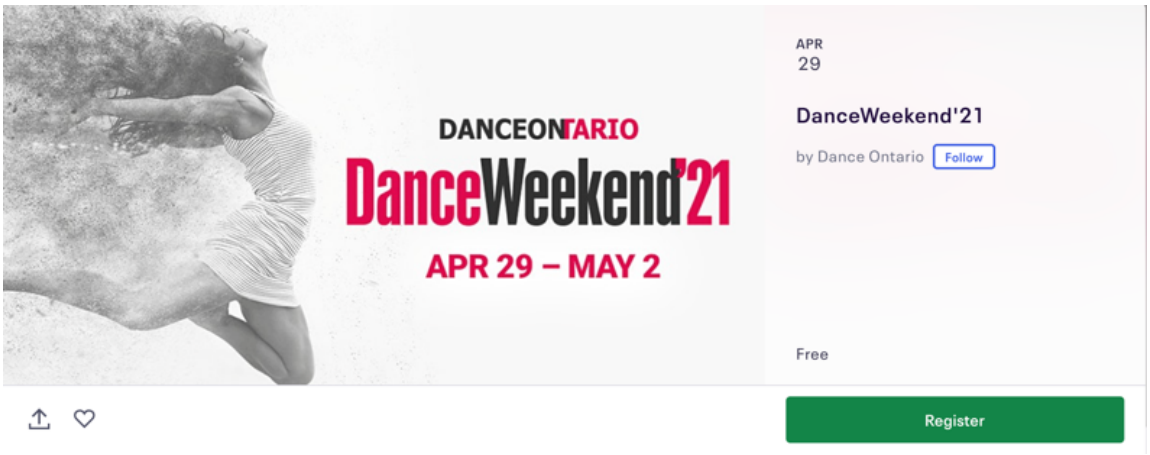
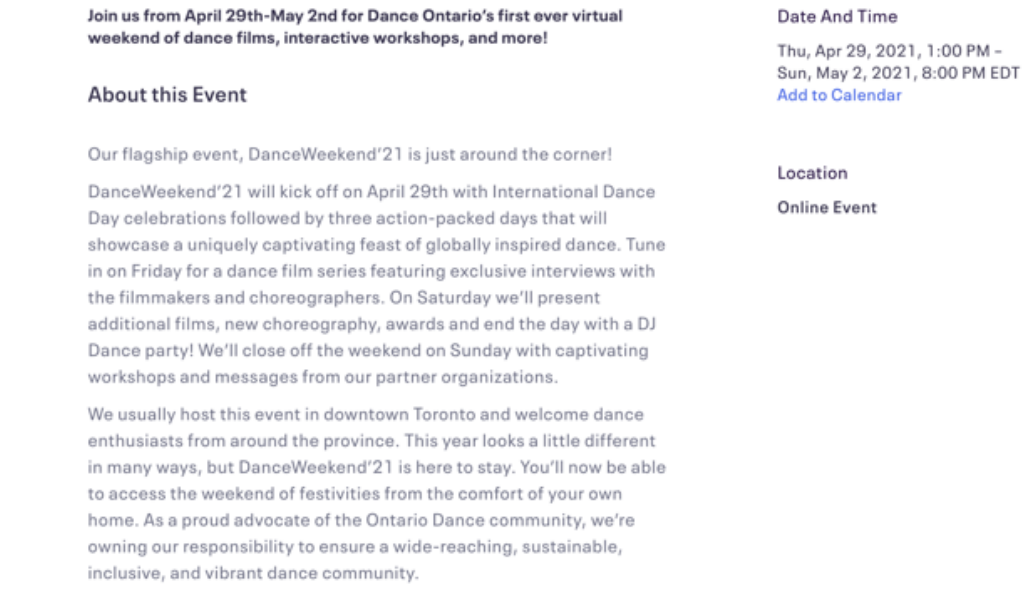


Figure 13: Promotional item for *Meeting at R9*.



Figure 14: Screenshot of event details from Dance Ontario (1).



Join us from April 29th-May 2nd for Dance Ontario's first ever virtual weekend of dance films, interactive workshops, and more!

About this Event

Our flagship event, DanceWeekend'21 is just around the corner!

DanceWeekend'21 will kick off on April 29th with International Dance Day celebrations followed by three action-packed days that will showcase a uniquely captivating feast of globally inspired dance. Tune in on Friday for a dance film series featuring exclusive interviews with the filmmakers and choreographers. On Saturday we'll present additional films, new choreography, awards and end the day with a DJ Dance party! We'll close off the weekend on Sunday with captivating workshops and messages from our partner organizations.

We usually host this event in downtown Toronto and welcome dance enthusiasts from around the province. This year looks a little different in many ways, but DanceWeekend'21 is here to stay. You'll now be able to access the weekend of festivities from the comfort of your own home. As a proud advocate of the Ontario Dance community, we're owning our responsibility to ensure a wide-reaching, sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant dance community.

Date And Time

Thu, Apr 29, 2021, 1:00 PM – Sun, May 2, 2021, 8:00 PM EDT

Add to Calendar

Location

Online Event

Figure 15: Screenshots of event details from Dance Ontario (2)



With prize-packed contests, new digital dance creations, and interactive workshops, you don't want to miss DanceWeekend'21! Register to attend here!. #ComeDanceWithUs.

There is a recommended donation of $15 per person for unlimited access to DanceWeekend'21 performances and events. Donations can be made directly on our website: danceontario.ca/donate.

View the schedule of events for DanceWeekend'21: https://www.danceontario.ca/activity-detail/dance-ontario-dance-weekend

Thank you to our sponsors, partners and funders that have helped make this event possible.

Sponsor: The Dance Current

Partners: Dance Immersion, Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance , TD Salsa in Toronto, The Dance Current

Funders: Business / Arts, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts , Toronto Arts Council, Government of Canada

Business/Arts

Canada Council for the Arts Conseil des arts du Canada

Canada

Figure 16: Contract
An image of the contract for Dance Ontario's Film Festival, 2021, presenting *Meeting at R9*.



15 Case Goods Lane Ste 304 | Toronto ON M5A 3C4
www.danceontario.ca | 416. 204. 1083

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

This agreement made this 12 of April 2021 by and between

DANCE ONTARIO Association
15 Case Goods Lane #304, Toronto ON M5A 3C4

and

Kaitlyn Seibold (ARTIST)
55 Bay Street, Unit 2708
Toronto ON M5S 0C6

DANCE ONTARIO wishes to screen the ARTIST/COMPANY's film series ***Meeting at R9***
as part of **DanceWeekend'21** running April 29 – May 2, 2021. The film will be broadcast digitally and open to the public, and made available for viewing on www.danceontario.ca for an additional 3 weeks following the event.

In consideration of the promises set forth herein, the parties agree as follows:

A. The ARTIST agrees to provide the following:
1. Digital screening copy of the film
2. Program notes and required credits
3. Promotional material as requested
4. Permission for Dance Ontario to use up to 30 seconds of the film for promotional purposes

B. DANCE ONTARIO agrees to provide the following:
1. Guaranteed Honorarium: The sum of $200.00
2. The screening platform and hosting
3. Promotion of the event including website listings, press and presenter mailings, flyers, press kits for the event and contact with the media to arrange advance publicity, reviews, etc.
4. Program order and detailed schedule

D. The ARTIST also agrees to the following:

1. Publicity photographs provided to DANCE ONTARIO will become the property of DANCE ONTARIO to be used for archival and general promotional purposes. Efforts will be made to ensure that proper credit will be given to the ARTIST and photographer if photographs are printed or displayed.

2. Rights - The ARTIST(S) shall at their sole cost, be responsible for the payment of any and all royalties, license fees, performing rights fees and similar payments which may be required in connection with the film provided under A. 1 in this agreement. This to include SOCAN & RE:SOUND.

4. Minors – The ARTIST agrees to take full responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of any and all minors who are participating in their work at DanceWeekend'21.

E. Dance Ontario also agrees to the following:

Figure 17: Program
An image of the program for Dance Ontario's Saturday Program.

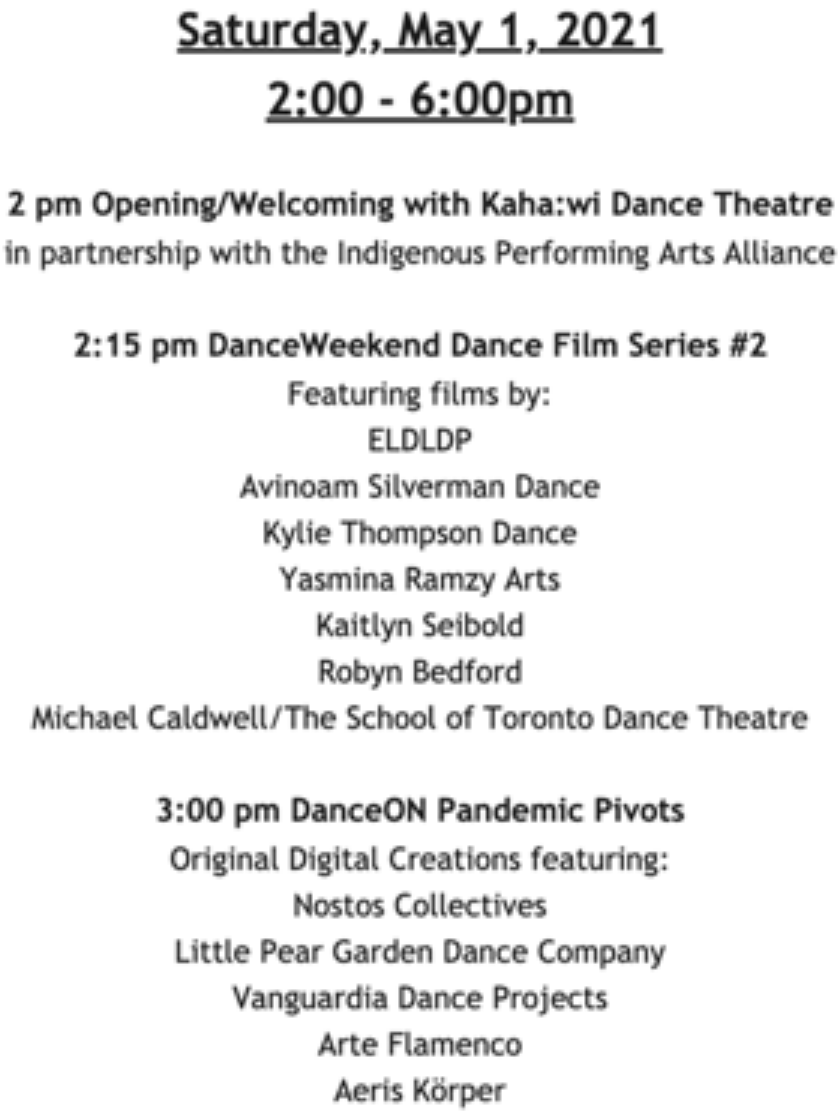


Figure 18: Playground Projects advertisement
An advertisement Playground Projects Entwined Together Platform, where *Stump Series* was presented.

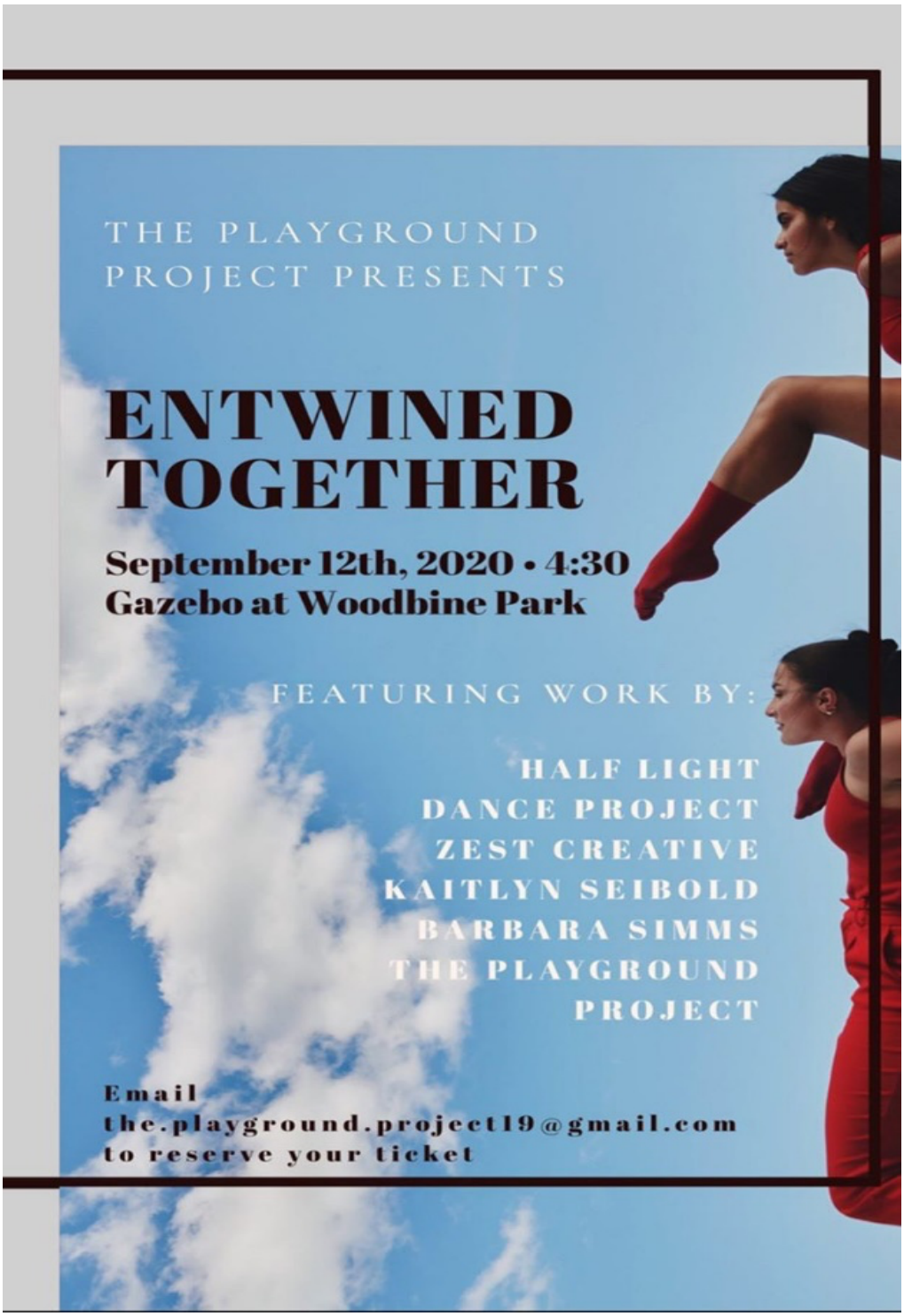
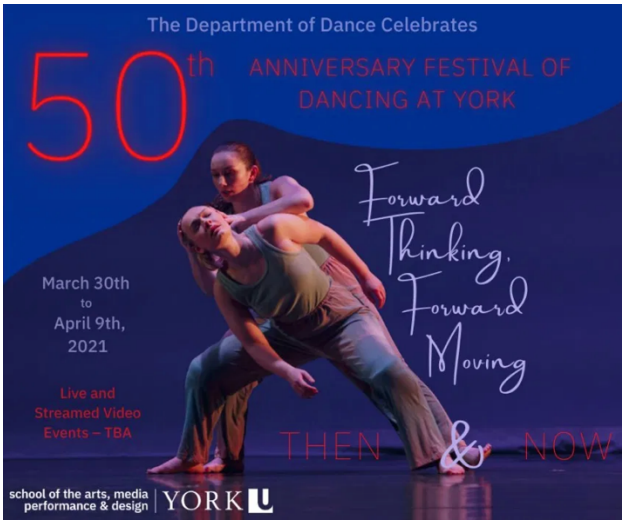


Figure 19: Advertisement for *State Shift*
An image from York University's 50th Anniversary Festival of Dancing at York, where *State Shift* was presented. Taken from https://yorkdanceensemble.ca/upcoming-performances/" https://yorkdanceensemble.ca/upcoming-performances/



Tuesday March 30th – *Dancing with 2020*

7:30pm

Covid Chronicles Part 1: Melding Vistas, *Escape*, *Detached Existence* – Three livestreamed collaborative works by members of the YDE and Digital Media Students

Isolation, a dance film by Meera Kanageswaran, MFA candidate

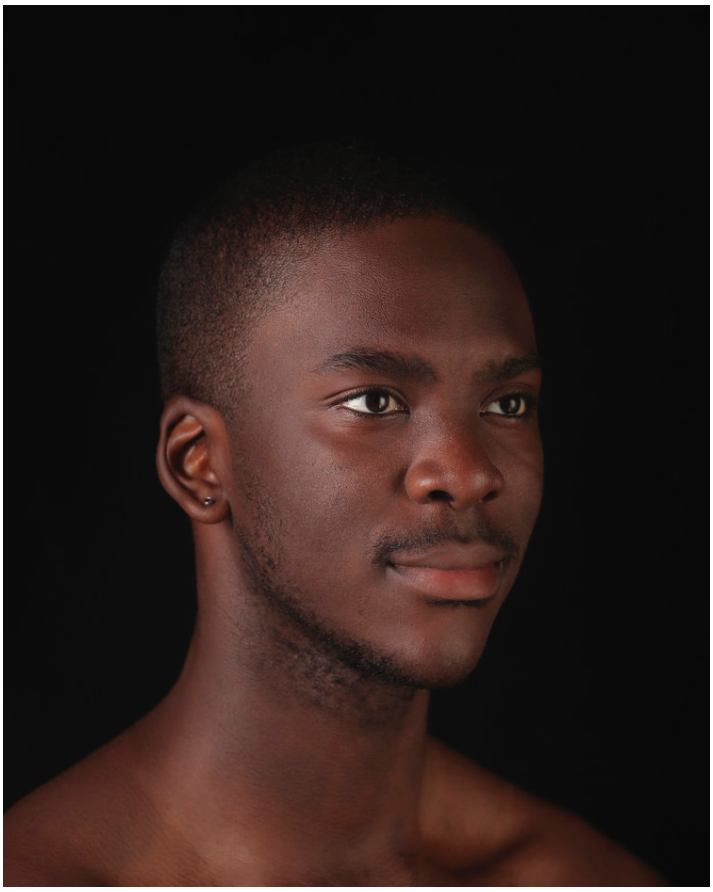
State Shift, a dance film by Kaitlyn Seibold, MFA Candidate

Link to watch coming soon.

Click here for the program!

Appendix B: Collaborator's Biographies and Headshots

Rakeem Hardy



Originally from Toronto, Rakeem Hardy received his BFA from the State University of New York at Purchase College. In 2020, he was the recipient of the Thayer Fellowship Award, awarded by SUNY. While there, he performed works by many, including Ohad Naharin, Doug Varone, Sidra Bell, Norbert De La Cruz III, and Roderick George. Through his education at Purchase, he was also selected to study abroad at the Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan, and performed as part of the Kuandu Arts Festival. He has received additional training at Springboard Danse Montreal, performing pieces by Crystal Pite, Alejandro Cerrudo, and Aszure Barton. Rakeem has worked as a guest artist with Gallim Dance (under direction of Andrea Miller), Loni Landon Dance Projects, and was part of the 2019 Madame X Tour Workshop with Damien Jalet and Megan Lawson. Most recently, Rakeem was a company member with A.I.M by Kyle Abraham.

Heidi Lorenz



Heidi Lorenz is a professionally trained dancer, teacher, and performer based in Toronto, Canada. Heidi specializes both her training and teachings in modern contemporary and ballet contemporary practices. Heidi graduated from Ryerson University's Performance dance program where she received her BFA and was awarded the *Pamela Hackett Excellence in Dance* scholarship. Upon graduation, Heidi had the privilege of dancing and performing with a ballet contemporary company in Toronto called *ProArteDanza*. Heid has performed on various performance platforms such as the *Fall for Dance North Festiva*l*, Dance Made in Canada, Aeris Korper* and *The Night shift,* to name a few. Heidi also has performance experience in commercial work and can be seen in episodes of Disney channels "*The Next Step,*" "*Backstage,*" and most recently in a short dance film titled "*Shafer's labyrinth*" choreographed by *Angela Blumberg*. Heidi has worked with well-known choreographers and creators around Toronto such as Hanna Kiel, Kenny Pearl, Kate Hillard, Louis Laberge-Côté, Matjash Mrozewski, Alysa Pires and many more. Heidi continues to refine her teaching and movement practices by attending numerous programs such as *Movement Invention Project* In New York City, *Kenny Pearls Emerging artist intensive* in Toronto and *Nuova Officina della Danza* in Italy.

Maria Riano



Maria returns this fall to complete her final year in the BFA Performance Dance program at Ryerson University where she has worked with many renowned choreographers and distinguished instructors. Aside from her endeavours at school, Maria has her own project based company called The Playground Project, co-directed alongside Dominique Tersigni. Maria loves to connect and create opportunities with emerging artists in the community and continue to grow and learn from artists that inspire her.

Evan Webb



Evan Webb (they/them) hails from Calgary, Alberta, and is currently based in Toronto Ontario. Before focusing on becoming a dance artist, Evan was well versed in various movement practices and visual art forms, lending to a desire to naturally perform authentically and idiosyncratically in all aspects of movement expression. They attended Ryerson University in the Performance Dance program. While at Ryerson Evan has had the opportunity to work with William Yong, Matjash Mrozewski, Anne Plamondon, Peggy Baker, Jera Wolfe, and Dylan Crossman in the repertoire of Merce Cunningham. Outside of academia, Evan has furthered his training by participating in Rubber Band Dance Group Winter Intensive, and Springboard Danse Montreal 2019. Experiences of being ostracized and abused as a member of the LGBTQ+ community have given them a unique perspective, and influenced their artistic values. Evan has always been fascinated by the ways in which people interact with each other. They continue to research gender, sexuality, and politics in Art practice.

Kye Marshall



As a photographer Kye Marshall has had solo shows at at the Yorkville Library, Axis Gallery and Grill, Richview Library, Fairview Library and has been in group shows at Propeller Gallery, Praxis Gallery, IndexG, Window Box (Gallery1313), Aird Gallery, Tayriver Gallery, Gallery 44, and Gallery 1313. Her work was also chosen for Show Your Ontario contest and for the Yes Art Gala. An eclectic musician, Kye has performed jazz, classical and free music with many ensembles including the O. Keefe Centre Orchestra and the New Chamber Orchestra (as principal cellist), the National Ballet Orchestra (as assistant principal cellist), the Kye Marshall Jazz Quartet / Duo and the Epic String Quartet. She has five CDs to her credit. Her compositions have been performed in numerous Toronto venues including the Glenn Gould Studios, Royal Conservatory of Music, Harbourfront, NorthYork Centre for the Performing Arts, Markham. Centre for the Performing Arts, Four Seasons Arts Centre etc., in the United States and Austria, on TVO and on numerous Radio Stations in Canada and Europe including CBC and Jazz.FM. She has written a Concerto for Bass Trombone and for different combinations of instruments including string orchestra, string quartet, brass quintet, choir and published piano works. Marshall has also written four film scores, for theatre and dance and for CBC radio drama.

Appendix C: Performances

Stump Series



Circular choreography from *Stump Series*. From left to right: Brianna Clark, Maria Riano, Margaux Labossiere. Photo by Maxim Bortonwski.

Details

Stump Series was a six-minute contemporary dance piece featuring Evan Webb, and Maria Raino, Brianna Clarke, and Margaux Labossieré. It was presented as a live performance in Melanie Old Dance Project's "Works in Progress: Energy Exchange," hosted at Dance Makers in Toronto, and at Playground Projects Entwined Together. There is no video of this performance, instead see the description below.

Description

Stump Series is an exploration of mime and contemporary movement and serves as an investigation of Jacques Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension theory. A quartet of dancers enter the space, a string of lights is arranged in a square. Carrying with them two stumps, the characters begin moving around the string of lights in a clockwise formation facing away from each other. In the first section of the piece the dancers do not interact with one another, and never face the square of lights. At the end of the first section, they unplug the string of lights, shifting the small opening at the back of the stage to the front, and inviting the audience in. The dancers move inside the square for the first time and begin interacting with one another, performing a series of four vignettes. These vignettes are accompanied by four contrasting pieces of music and utilize

the objects on stage in a variety of ways. The piece ends with the dancers carrying off the props, leaving the audience with an empty stage and taking their small world away with them.

STRAP



Wave tableau from *STRAP*. From left to right: Braiden Carins, Brianna Clarke, Roberto Seraio. Photo taken by Kaitlyn Seibold.

Details
STRAP is a five-minute contemporary dance piece featuring three dancers: Brianna Clarke, Braiden Carins, and Roberto Soria. This live performance was presented at the Playground Projects Entwined Together Platform that took place at Woodbine Park on September 12th, 2020. There is no video of this performance, instead see the description below.

Description
STRAP is an investigation of mime and contemporary movement that explores Jacques Lecoq's Seven Levels of Tension. This work features a trio of performers who utilize the space using a variety of objects such as a stump, a chair, and a long strip of turf. Incorporating the same circular choreography originally developed for *Stump Series*, this work builds from experiments with gestural languages and expressions—taking inspiration from Marcel Marceau—and focuses on how gesture could aid the storytelling aspect within the choreography.

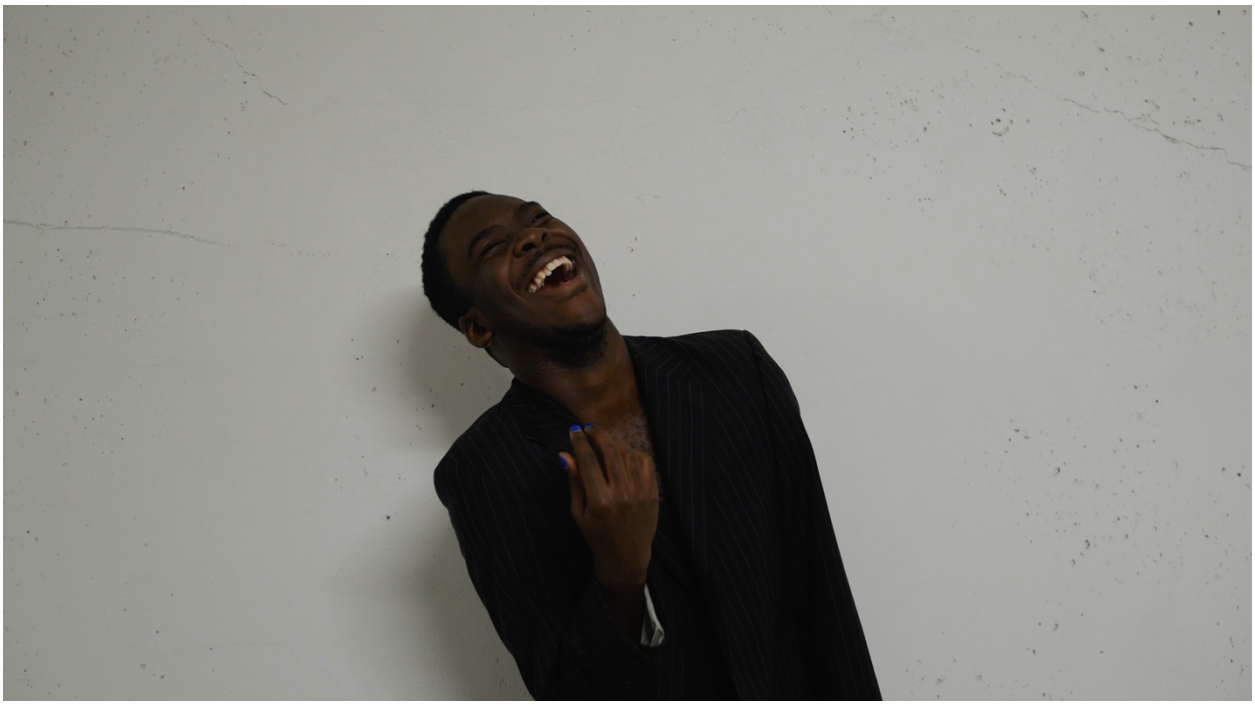
Meeting at R9



Details
Meeting at R9 is a seven-minute and eleven-second dance film. It premiered in Dance Ontario's DanceWeekend'21 Film Festival that took place from April 29 to May 1, 2021. This work was part of the Saturday program, on May 1st that live-streamed at 2:00 PM. See the video, linked below.

Meeting at R9 video:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wZZUWnNQzo_K4WUAY74aUzKN2QdqWGbk/view?usp=sharing

State Shift



Details
State Shift is a four-minute and forty-one second dance film, featuring Rakeem Hardy and premiered in York University's 50th Anniversary Film Festival on Tuesday March 30, 2021. This film serves as a close-up look into one of the characters from *Meeting at R9.* See the video, linked below.

State Shift video: https://youtu.be/NFFutZHPUok