

ALINE NARI

DOUGLAS DUNN IN ITALY

Dance, Dancer, and Spectator

Translated from Italian by Joan Benham



Douglas Dunn on the cover of the first edition of Sally Banes's *Terpsichore in Sneakers* (1980). Photographer: Robert Alexander.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND the origins of contemporary Italian dance, Italian critics, dancers, and choreographers are now examining the American presence in the Italian dance world of the 1970s.¹ In 1969 Fabio Sargentini inaugurated The Danza Volo Musica Dinamite Festival (Dance Flight Music Dynamite Festival) by inviting Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, and Trisha Brown. At his Music and Dance USA Festival in 1972, Sargentini followed up, again hosting Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, and Yvonne Rainer, together with Philip Glass and Steve Reich.² Another figure of impact on Italian dance has been Douglas Dunn, a protagonist in postmodern dance since its beginnings.³ Dunn turned eighty on October 19, 2022—an important birthday for an artist who continues to be very active, and an occasion for offering a few observations about some fundamental aspects of dance experimentation during the last half-century.

In 1981 Dunn was invited to Milan and Florence to present his piece *Holds*.⁴ Over the years, Dunn's presence in Italy has been mainly con-

nected to his teaching at New York University's Summer Program on Music, Dance, and New Technologies in Pisa, Florence, Lucca and Genoa from 1995 to 2008. This past May, Dunn was invited to give a lecture at the National Dance Academy in Rome, where I had the pleasure of introducing him and interviewing him.

Here I draw upon my memories of his teaching and choreographing in Genoa in 2003 to reflect on Dunn's choreographic poetics. I will link his ideas on W. B. Yeats's famous question—"How can we know the dancer from the dance?"—to his thoughts on dance during the pandemic period, where he asserted the importance of the live spectator at a time when the very possibility of a live audience was compromised.

My first encounter with Douglas Dunn took place in 2003.⁵ To conclude a three-week workshop, he created a performance for his students and himself: *Disappearing Dancers*.⁶ This piece took the form of an interactive installation, using the EyesWeb Open Platform—at that time an innovative technology for developing real-time multimedia systems and interfaces.⁷ In those years, a research team led by Professor Antonio Camurri was doing similar work: investigating the possibilities of creating an interactive system able to recognize expressive movement.⁸ *Disappearing Dancers* was an exploration of creative technological interaction; movements generated sounds and evanescent abstract images on a large screen behind the dancers.

I was struck and inspired by the serene vitality of Dunn's approach with his students (of whom I was one) and by the flexibility of his choreographic work in adapting to different situations. His approach offered me an encounter with knowledge manifested, on the one hand, as the transmission of a technical skill and, on the other, as an innately experimental force in choreography. His verbal instructions were so elegantly compressed that they seemed to me at first vague or understated, compared to what I was used to. At that time, I was working with the Italian choreographers Raffaella Giordano and Giorgio Rossi; they often asked dancers to analyze movement and action in terms of imagery and motivation. I gradually discovered that Dunn's suggestions became clear, progressively and almost autonomously. Today we might call such instructions a "device"; his words had the capacity of assembling signs in a coherent and orderly fashion while also maintaining their generativeness, leaving them open to further transformations in terms of timing and spatiality (changing of placements and directions while dancing). As dancers, we thus had the opportunity to enjoy a

delicately supervised creative context, open to the constant inclusion of new choreographic elements—without, however, ever belying the sense of a recognizable formal rigor. In future years, this approach would influence my own approach to working with dancers as a choreographer.

In this liberating environment, *Disappearing Dancers* also engendered a unique relationship to the audience, and it is this relationship that I continue to build. The dance was at once an act of engagement, of trusting in the spectator's intelligence, and a balancing act between apparent indifference and playful seduction. As a relational strategy, it led to further possibilities of interaction and interpretation, and it did so without conditioning, much less requiring them. What initially struck me about Dunn—who, at sixty, took part in the performance, interacting with the group of dancers to the music of Esther Lamneck⁹—was his mastery in lightning-fast decision-making.¹⁰ At the same time, although he directed the dance ensemble technically, he encouraged us to focus on our physical awareness, ensuring that any new movements and gestures would be fully acceptable and that no one would veer off course toward solipsism or indulge in narcissism. Dunn has related this approach to dance-making to his early childhood experience:

The emotional cat and mouse game I played with my parents growing up made me familiar with the complexity of feeling that arises when one participates in activities without considering their attendant sentiments. To work at dance, I put my attention on the forms as they arise, without worrying, as one step leads to another, what they mean or what feelings bubble up along the way. I follow capriciously. . . what shall we call it, my intuition? Shape, rhythm, tempo, space, density: these are my chosen arenas for making decisions, with visual clarity as the always-present sine qua non.¹¹

Games, unconscious impulses, intuition, visual clarity—all these provide the basic givens of Dunn's creative process. Yet, despite his emphasis on the here and now, I imagine Dunn in retrospect as a living encyclopedia of dance: both a historical witness and an inspiration for a different type of narration about dance in life still in the making.¹² By defining Dunn a living encyclopedia, I refer not only to the story of experiences he has lived through and people he has met, but also to the traces, the markings that his biographical journey has deposited in his body, in the rhythms, the posture, the particular placement of the torso and the fluidity of the lower limbs, a quality that in turn reveals the heredity of Dunn as dancer in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

I like to dwell inside the potential newness of each day, to keep up with the constant evolution of my own and everyone else's consciousnesses, including the minds of our fellow non-human creatures. If I don't want to end up working in a "signature style," I must make use of my "living archive" as a source of avoidance (deterrent?). Once in a while, while working, I recognize a move that reminds me of a move in a previous dance. Right away I give it up, or change it enough that the association disappears. As for the archive itself, the material one, the papers, videos, costumes and props, I'm ambivalent about it. Dancing is of the moment. It disappears. And it should, emulating human death.¹³

By stating that dance should emulate human death, Dunn offers an antidote to self-referentiality, to the temptation to accumulate meanings, and even to the insistence on novelty. Instead, he privileges *momentum*, the instant in which the gesture completes itself just before dissolving. Moreover, in addition to *Disappearing Dancers* of 2002 (whose title curiously uses Dunn's initials), another work in his repertoire also alludes to dance's inherent vocation of evanescence.

Disappearances (1994)¹⁴ is a street performance that was revived in 2016. If in *Disappearing Dancers* the titular evanescence is primarily that of the dancer (whose live movement, interacting with the technology of EyesWEB, appears and disappears on the screens), in *Disappearances* the dance denies recognition before it even occurs, that is, almost before the spectator (happening upon a street performance) can become aware of witnessing an out-of-the-ordinary event. The choice of these titles, together with the naming of the collection of his writings *Dancer Out of Sight*,¹⁵ reveals an attempt on the choreographer's part to investigate something that demonstrably presents itself and at the same time withdraws from perception, a sort of metaphysical question that underlies Dunn's poetics. From this perspective, not only the dance but also the body-archive of the dancer is always in a state of dissolution and re-creation, a body in instants, a body "to come,"¹⁶ in which the very fact of being ephemeral paradoxically defines the ontological state.

In a recent interview with the Italian scholar Virginia Magnaghi, Dunn himself cites Yeats's poem "Among School Children" directly, asking again its famous epistemological question.¹⁷ Problematizing the distinction between dancer and dance holds a seductive fascination for us insofar as it suggests that the dancing body may be the vehicle (and simulacrum) of consciousness. A real subject for postmodern dance, rather than an "instrument for expressive metaphor,"¹⁸ the body offers

for choreographic invention the whole gamut of human potential, in an array of possibilities that proceeds from athletic movement to the most minute everyday motions, thus nourishing a new and potentially limitless vocabulary.

Dunn's thinking about the dancing body, though never renouncing formal rigor, seems to be inspired by a "heroism of the ordinary,"¹⁹ a phenomenological notion of the body as a system of relations, and of a horizon beyond individual technical skill. He has described his interest in 'a degree of modesty' in movement:

What I liked right away about dancing was its physical rigor and its stylization of the body. Having early on seen many sorts of fabricated cavorting, I was attracted to versions where people moved with a degree of modesty. Not "performing." Not adding anything to the body's behavior. Letting unadorned action be just that. Dancing as just one more unselfconscious task for the day. A sort of deadpan? . . .] The emotions that emerge from such non-didactic playfulness being unspecified, they may appear as unfamiliar and ambiguous.²⁰

What Dunn defines as "unadorned action" may be a variation of the concept of presence in dance,²¹ a term which, even if we resist a proper definition in the choreographic and theatrical realm, is used in the historical-critical context (but also often by choreographers, dancers, teachers) to refer to "a being on the stage in total availability, in continuous search of equilibrium and resonance between the organic and anatomical objectivity of the human being, psychic experience, expression/representation, and relation to the spectator."²² When I asked him about the concept of presence, Dunn responded:

When I see the word *presence*, I wonder if that's what I sometimes call *demeanor*? Dancers throw off from their bodies vastly different feelings, even when moving in unison. Likewise, people walking on the street. This is one of the great fascinations for me of being alive and of dancing, to experience the differences among us, differences visible even when the bodies are not talking, even when presented in stylized moving. The dancer doesn't attempt anything beyond setting about to accomplish the shapes, rhythms, and tempos given by the choreographer. The combination of the body she's born with, her training, and the attitude with which she approaches the task of realizing the phrases, makes for a trail of subtle emanations a sensitive dance eye is pleased to follow.²³

Hence, in its indeterminacy, the concept of presence in Dunn's

words, too, evokes a dancing body “capable of reacting to the subtlest vibrations like a sensitive membrane,”²⁴ a body in flow, magmatic, transparent and vibrating like “a crystal envelope through which and in which to be able to partake in the ongoing process of giving meaning to the world, of placing oneself as an intentional center, in one’s ambivalent debate and oscillation between subject and object.”²⁵ An oscillation within which one may read the dancer-dance dialectic of Yeats’s poem, a dynamic in which the pleasure of dancing and of enjoying the dance is made possible by an opening of the senses and of sense, whereby a true identity between being and seeming is realized. Dunn’s dance is always engaged in this balance in an elegant, often ironic, way, whether he is improvising, performing while wearing a sort of cupcake costume (*Vain Combat*, 2014), or choreographing for his wife Grazia Della Terza and the Douglas Dunn + dancers in flowery decor (*Garden Party*, 2023).

A MIRROR WITHOUT REFLECTION: THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VIRTUAL SPECTATOR

ANOTHER KEY ASPECT of Dunn’s poetics is his particular relationship with the spectator, a theme which his work reflected on more urgently during the COVID period. After the four years of global pandemic, during which social restrictions led to many innovative ways of producing and accessing dance, it is important to look back and reflect on the particular nature of the communication between performers and audience. Online classes and workshops, shows recorded in empty theaters for streaming on digital platforms, and performances conceived for direct access on social networks were a few of the solutions conceived in the attempt to offset the missing co-presence between dancer and spectator, adapting to the limitations where, for the first time in recent history, the collective dimension of participating in a live event had to be renounced.²⁶ Dunn, as we will see, saw this crisis as a limit as well as an opportunity both to ask himself if his “love story with Terpsichore,”²⁷ jeopardized by the absence of relating with spectators, was flagging, and to concentrate on certain personal exigencies which might allow him to rediscover the generative force of a life dedicated to dance.

From this perspective, in which the performer and spectator mutually support and validate each other, the absence of live spectators during the lockdown resulted in the impossibility of understanding and being understood, a semantic and sensory mutilation that threatened the on-

tological status of the performance itself. If, for some artists, the forced virtuality of the pandemic period actually provided opportunities and creative developments (perhaps to be studied in further variations on the poetics of absence),²⁸ for Dunn it was an occasion for rediscovering the fact that dancing live before other people is an activity whose opaqueness is compensated for by the sense of completion that comes from it.²⁹

Thus, a poem published at the end of the essay for the first time will be of particular interest. Dunn's list poem "A dancer without a live spectator is" (2021) achieves its definition through a string of metaphors placed in a graphically vertical progression, demonstrating the sense of precarity ("a bird without a twig [or air]"), of absence of purpose ("a shoe without a foot [or sole]"), of lack of reciprocity or complementarity (a heart without a loved one [or an aorta]), and then of the mutilation and estrangement which that "without" implies. Dominating the list is the use of synecdoche, whose etymology (from the Greek *συνεκδοχή* through the Latin *synecdōche*) supports us in seeing that an "understanding together" grounds the relationship between dancer and spectator, a being for one another: as the part for the whole, the container for what is contained, the action as well as its reaction. The result of this rubric of privations, which does not exclude certain playful concessions in Dunn's style—such as, for example, "a planet with no rotation (or elephants)"—is moving for both its lucidity and for the absence of any real *climax*.

Inverting the title of the poem, we could say that "A dancer 'with' a spectator is": Dunn's work is in large part distinguished by its dialogue with the spectator, so much so that, even in his first works, Sally Banes saw that "veritable catalogs of ways to make contact with the audience" could be found.³⁰ However, in contrast to other colleagues his age who preferred more aggressive or even hostile stimulations, the relationship that Dunn established with the audience, even at that initial phase of his career was "cooperative, assuming a sensitive spectator with whom he initiates a dialogue on structure and decision—embellished with humor, surprise, elegance, economy, and most of all grace."³¹ This subtle communicative strategy—useful for focusing attention on the choreographic process in order to let the dance reveal itself as an antidote to interpretive access keys—is an issue which Dunn returned to many times during the course of his career:

In radio interviews with artists, a question often comes: What do you want the audience to take away from the experience of your work? The query assumes a lot: that an artist wants to communicate X, and so makes a form that embodies X. But, embodied for whom? Does the artist think that all viewers are the same, so that the message will affect them all equally? Is the purpose to teach? To please? To incite? Another possibility is: the artist ignores viewer expectation and begins to investigate the elements of the medium she's working in. Perhaps we shouldn't call this approach "communication." It is a simpler, less "personal" way of relating. It means putting out into the world an object, a book, a dance, that is just there, that is not trying to "do" anything. It's useless, it's not insisting, it's not aggressing. It's quietly waiting to be discovered.³²

Here Dunn describes a relationship with the spectator that is at once essential, involving reciprocal but not narrowly personal being, an approach where the choreographic work is presented (that is, made present) to the spectator for her to make of it an object of discovery through the activation of her own cultural and somatic resources.

As already with Cunningham, the performance experience for Dunn is therefore the outcome, not of an *imposition* so much as of an *authorization*, according to which the dance performance involves the spectator "in a complexity similar to the one life has, the life each of us is living."³³ Since the audience's freedom of cooperation, a characteristic of "open" performance as defined by Marco De Marinis,³⁴ unfolds outside the performer's control (that is to say the sender's control), in this context the spectator lets herself be suspended: in this state, while asked to become a counterweight to the action being presented, her body, too (and not only her sight) experiences the tension of "waiting," that is, literally, of "waiting to see."

Dunn's choreographic universe, theatrical but still abstract in its search for interactions between movements, words, images and objects, thus evokes what Piergiorgio Giacchè defines as the "threshold effect,"³⁵ a posture characterizing the technique of the spectator's body, often undervalued and mistaken for external coercion exerted by the performer's action or by the performance's aim. In this connection, we can point to the fact that over the past two decades, the various gradations of freedom and involvement of the spectator have been the subject of critical studies and surveys. Today, with all the more reason after the social restrictions owing to the recent pandemic (a period in which everyone experienced various strategies of interaction and distancing to remedy the practical and psychic discomforts of the quarantine), we think that the

condition of the spectator merits fresh reflection.³⁶ “In person” became an expression antithetical to “remotely,” online became the surrogate, more or less creative, for physical co-presence, for the formerly-taken-for-granted fact of being able to breathe in the same place, in a location which allowed proximity, facial and bodily expressions, contact, chemical signals to convey communication between individuals. This constriction was a source of suffering to which everyone tried to respond creatively, and it equally affected artists and the dance world. On this subject, Dunn says:

The inability to work with dancers over the last few years, because of the pandemic, along with having various experiences online, threw into high relief what I knew but had taken for granted: that gathering in person with live dancers is basic to my desire to participate in the dance arena. I made two videos by myself while isolating. I taught my New York University class in Open Structures on line, and led some Zoom technique classes. I was impressed with the eagerness of young dancers to make the most of these digital opportunities. But such fallbacks satisfied neither my choreographic nor my social need. The latter, it turns out, despite moving, not talking, being the dominant form of dancerly communication, is much more in play during live rehearsals and classes than I had realized. Left alone to my own daily dance activities, certain moistnesses in me were drying up. Not being on stage, too, frazzled my stability. The theater’s ambiguous, non-rational dialogue is also, I saw vividly, essential to my being alive.³⁷

Furthermore, regarding the recent proliferation of performances on online platforms and the relationship with the spectator in those contexts, Dunn says that, unlike in the past, it is now no longer of primary importance to him to multiply the variations of interactions between dancer and spectator:

I want, lately, the dance to be in its own hermetic world, the spectator having to choose to look, and to decide whether kinetically and emotionally to enter that world. This is, I know, a demanding, and an old fashioned, stance. So be it. I can’t help it. The one sweetener (or maybe not?) is, I’m working with music less ironically. A few years ago, some audiences were, at the end of a dance called *Cassations*, crying. I found I didn’t mind.³⁸



“Captive Portrait” (portrait of Douglas Dunn). Photo by Grazia Della Terza, 2013.

Though delivered with characteristic understatement (“I found I didn’t mind”),³⁹ Douglas Dunn ultimately recovers the decidedly traditional idea of an emotionally involved spectator. With the complicity of Mozart’s music, in *Cassations* a new defection occurred in the work of this artist in continual transformation, adroit at combining the ridiculous and the sublime, at playing between distance and closeness, and at eluding with his “quintessential” grace the critic’s invitation to become available for stylistic classification.⁴⁰ Still today, Dunn gives us the pleasure of enjoying his being “an abiding mystery,”⁴¹ a body in flight and a face to discover, a dancer between presence and absence, and an icon of dance’s intrinsic capacity for transformation, just as he appeared in the headless image on Banes’s first cover.⁴²

A dancer without a live spectator is
—a bird without a twig (or air)
—a fish with no ocean (or prey)
—a sun without planets (or space)
—a planet with no rotation (or elephants)

- hair without a head (or color)
- a dog with no master (or mail person)
- a shoe without a foot (or sole)
- a book with no reader (or shelf)
- a leader without a country (or compassion)
- a pen with no ink (or hand)
- an heart without a loved one (or aorta)
- a mirror with no reflection
- a computer without keys (or CPU)
- a push pin with no pin (or cork board)
- a calendar without days (or months)
- an elephant without a trunk (or big ears)
- a polar bear with no ice (or water)
- a sadist without a masochist (or vice versa)
- a lei with no flowers (or tourists)
- a police person without crime (or badge)
- a cat with no meow (or claws)
- a firecracker without a fuse (or match)
- a bow with no arrow (or string)
- cam lobes without a shaft (or car)
- a friend with no friend (or enemy)
- a parent with no child (or vice versa)
- Africa without elephants (or Lake Victoria)⁴³

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NOTES

1 I am thinking about the impulse given by Rossella Mazzaglia's books on Trisha Brown (2007) and Judson Theater (2010), of Alessandra Sini's and Laura Delfini's research work (see note 12), of Fabrizio Favale's recent performance *Danze americane* [*American Dances*]. See also Emma Bigé, Francesca Falcone, Alice Godfroy, Alessandra Sini (eds.), *Il punto di vista della mela. Storia, politiche e pratiche della Contact Improvisation* [*The Apple's Point of View: History, Politics, and Practices of Contact Improvisation*], Bologna: Piretti, 2021, 119-137. As a general reflection about Italian contemporary dance, the conference "Il senso del tempo – Danza contemporanea, 40 anni di movimento" ["The Sense of Time–Contemporary Dance, 40 years of movement"], Porcari (Lucca), September 6th and 7th,

2003. <https://novantatrepercento.it/036-01-cronaca-di-un-convegno-sulla-danza-e-sul-senso-del-tempo/>

2 The Danza Volo Musica Dinamite Festival took place in Rome from June 9-19, 1969 at Garage in via Beccaria. <https://www.fabiosargentini.it>

3 Douglas Dunn, American dancer and choreographer, was born in Palo Alto, California, on October 19, 1942. He graduated from Princeton University in 1964 and has lived and worked in New York since 1968. He studied at the Joffrey Ballet School, was a member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (1969-1973) and was a founding member of Grand Union (1970-1976). In 1978, he formed the company Douglas Dunn + Dancers. In 1980 he staged his own version of Stravinsky's ballet *Pulcinella* for the Paris Opera Ballet. He is a member emeritus of the board of directors of DanceSpace Project in New York City. In 1998, he received a New York Dance & Performance Award (also known as a Bessie Award, a "Bessie") for Sustained Achievement, and in 2008 he was honored by the French Government by being inducted as a Chevalier in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Continuing to lead Douglas Dunn + Dancers, Dunn also teaches Open Structures at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. The numerous works of his repertory include many in which he himself is a dancer. In addition, he has published various forms of writing, including poetry, journals, and letters, some of which are collected in the volume *Dancer Out of Sight: Collected Writings of Douglas Dunn. Drawings by Mimi Gross* (New York: Ink, Inc., 2012). For a complete bibliography of Douglas Dunn see the Douglas Dunn + Dancers website: <http://www.douglasdunndance.com/bibliograph>

4 Dunn presented *Holds* in Florence, at the Teatro Affratellamento (September 18 to 22, 1981), and in Milan at the Teatro di Porta Romana (September 25 to 28, 1981). In Milan Dunn met Dario Fo who appreciated the performance and invited him to see his play *Mistero Buffo* in New York. They were introduced by Dante Della Terza, Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at Harvard University (1962-1993) and the father of Grazia Della Terza, Dunn's dancer and now his wife.

5 It was during New York University's Summer Program on Music, Dance, and New Technologies, a post-baccalaureate program organized in collaboration with the University of Genoa, DIBRIS (Department of Information Science, Bioengineering, Robotics and Systems Engineering) and by Infomus (Laboratory of sound and music computing, multimodal interactive systems for theater, music, dance), directed by Professor Antonio Camurri.

6 *Disappearing Dancers* was performed at the Eugenio Montale Auditorium of the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa on July 9, 2003.

7 An account of that performance can be found in Douglas Dunn, *Genoese Days* (Long Island City, New York: Erudite Fangs, 2004), subsequently republished in Douglas Dunn, *Dancer Out of Sight*, 101-115. For an online description of the event, see: <http://www.infomus.org/Events/NYUDisappearingDancer.html>. Photo online: <http://www.infomus.org/Events/NYU2003/index.htm>

8 Antonio Camurri, Shuji Hashimoto, Matteo Ricchetti, Andrea Ricci, Kenji Suzuki, Riccardo Trocra, Gualtiero Volpe, EyesWeb: Toward Gesture and Affect Recognition in Interactive Dance and Music Systems, *Computer Music Journal* (2000) 24 (1): 57-69. In this regard, I'd like to mention the contribution given to

the research project by the choreographer and dancer Giovanni Di Cicco.

9 The internationally renowned tarogato virtuoso Esther Lamneck taught music and clarinet at New York University for more than three decades, from 1988 to 2020, during which time she was also artistic director of NYU's New Music and Dance Ensemble.

10 On the fragility and longevity of the dancing body, see the video interview "Dancing Down the Years with Douglas Dunn," online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpEmQS80CR0>

11 Dunn, conversation, September 12, 2022.

12 Noteworthy on this theme are, among others: André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," in *Dance Research Journal* XLII, n. 2 (2010): 28-48; Susanne Franco, "Corpo-archivio: mappature di una nozione tra incorporazione e pratica coreografica [The Body-archive: mapping of a concept between incorporation and choreographic practice] in *Ricerche di s/confini. Oggetti e pratiche artistico/culturali* [Boundary studies: artistic/cultural objects and practices], Dossier 5, 2019: 55-65, online: <https://www.repository.unipr.it/bitstream/1889/4458/1/Franco-corpo.pdf>. Regarding Italy, I wish here to note the recent *Progetto Archivi viventi* [Living Archives Project], edited by Laura Delfini, centering on making up for the deficit of narratives regarding dance in Italian criticism during the 1980s. See online: http://www.progettiperlascena.org/1/archivi_viventi_4516765.html.

13 Dunn, again on September 12, 2022: "As for the archive itself, the material one, the papers, videos, costumes and props, I'm ambivalent about it. [...] But what if someone taking a look at the residue of my strivings for activated equivocal presentness were to have an epiphany? Should I forestall such a possibility by calling the Junk Truck?"

14 "Disappearances ...and a Portfolio," on the other hand, is the title of a dialogue between two fictitious persons (Flora and Gladys) which Dunn wrote in order to be able to speak about himself and his work in the third person. See Dunn, "Disappearances ...and a Portfolio", in *Tether*, n. 3, 2017, 76-97. I am grateful to Professor Anita Piemonti of the University of Pisa for pointing out this publication to me.

15 See note 3.

16 Maria Eugenia Garcia Sottile and Enrico Pitozzi, "Della presenza" [On presence]. Conversation with Jean Luc Nancy, in *Culture teatrali* [*Theatrical Cultures*], n. 21, (2011), p. 13:

17 Virginia Magnaghi, "How can we know the dancer from the dance? Interview with Douglas Dunn" in *Stratagemmi. Prospettive teatrali* [Stratagems: Theatrical perspectives], May 4, 2021, online: <https://www.stratagemmi.it/how-can-we-know-the-dancer-from-the-dance-intervista-a-douglas-dunn/>

18 Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p.xviii.

19 *Ibid.*, p.xii.

20 Douglas Dunn, conversation, September 12, 2022.

21 This concept is central in my first essay on Dunn's poetics. See Aline Nari, "Douglas Dunn: il danzatore e la danza tra presenza e assenza" [Douglas Dunn: The Dancer and the Dance between Presence and Absence] in *Danza e Ricerca—Laboratorio di studi, scritture, visioni* [Dance and Research—Laboratory of Studies, Writings, Visions], published by the Department of the Arts (DAR),

University of Bologna, December 21, 2022, pp. 109-122.

22 Aline Nari, "Presenza: Note di Quore", [Presence: Notes from Quore] in Elena Cervellati and Giulia Taddeo (eds.), *La danza in Italia nel Novecento e oltre: teorie, pratiche, identità* [Dance in Italy in the twentieth century and beyond: theories, practices, identities], Macerata, Italy: *Ephemeria*, (2020), p. 167.

23 Dunn, conversation, June 5, 2022.

24 Harald Kreutzberg, quoted in Christine Macel and Emma Lavigne (guest eds.), *Danser sa vie. Art et danse de 1900 à nos jours* [To dance life: art and dance from 1900 to today], Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2011 (catalog for the exhibition by that name at the Pompidou Center in Paris, November 23, 2011-April 2, 2012, p. 16.

25 Alessandro Pontremoli, *La danza, Storia, teoria, estetica nel Novecento* [Dance: history, theory, and aesthetics in the twentieth century] (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004), p. 47.

26 In the conference "Movement in the Confinement or: Choreopandemia" held on July 30, 2020, at the Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA), Lepecki emphasized how control of movement had been central in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Focusing initially on the controversy in the United States over the choice of terminology between the metaphors of *lockdown*, *pause*, *sheltering* (all vocabulary related to movement), Lepecki saw the emergence of a new general kinetics, in which the confluence of neoliberalism, neoauthoritarianism, and neofascism would reshape our understanding of the relationships between movement and life, movement and death. Lepecki wondered what the role of dance would be on this new horizon. See André Lepecki, *Movement in the Confinement (or: Choreopandemia)*, online: <https://riboca.digital/en/calendar/andre-lepecki>

27 Douglas Dunn: "The absence of the audience makes me wonder: Is not being able to dance in front of spectators' bodies threatening my love affair with Terpsichore?" in Virginia Magnaghi, "How can we know the dancer from the dance. Interview with Douglas Dunn".

28 Martine Époque and Denis Poulin, "La presenza del danzatore senza corpo [The presence of the dancer without a body], in *Culture teatrali* [Theatrical cultures], n. 21 (2011), pp. 89-104.

29 Again in Virginia Magnaghi, "How can we know the dancer from the dance? Interview with Douglas Dunn".

30 Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 188.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

32 Dunn, conversation, June 5, 2022.

33 Cunningham, *The Dancer and the Dance*, p. 171.

34 Marco De Marinis, *Semiotica del teatro. L'analisi testuale dello spettacolo* [Semiotics of the theater: textual analysis of performance], (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), p. 191.

35 Piergiorgio Giacchè, *Lo spettatore partecipante. Contributi per un'antropologia del teatro* [The participant spectator: contributions for an anthology of the theater]. (Milan: Angelo Guerini e Associati, 1991), pp. 97-100.

36 In regard to criticism on this subject, standouts are Eva Marinai's "Riconoscimento sull'arte dello spettatore e sui dispositivi di attivazione della memoria creativa" Recognition of the art of the spectator and his devices of creative mem-

ory activation],” and “Corpi im-memori. L’utopia dello spettatore partecipante” [Mindless bodies: The utopia of the participant spectator] in *Mimesis Journal. Scritture della performance* [Mimesis Journal: Writings about Performance] V, n. 1 (2016): 14-29: p. 14, online: <https://journals.openedition.org/mimesis/1106> and the recent volume by Gaia Bottoni, Ludovica Del Bono, and Michele Trimarchi (eds.), *Lo spettatore virale. Palcoscenici, pubblici, pandemia* [The viral spectator: stages, audiences, and the pandemic], (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2021).

37 Dunn, conversation, September 12, 2022. Among the initiatives of Douglas Dunn + Dancers during the pandemic, I recommend the event *Social media solos*, excerpts from the repertory performed on the company’s multimedia platform and streamed from May 3 to June 9, 2021.

38 Dunn, conversation, September 12, 2022. *Cassations*, a choreographic creation for six dancers set to excerpts from the symphony by that name by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, KV 63 - *Cassation in G major*. The show was reviewed thus by the *New York Times*: “His *Cassations*, which ended a three-day run at the 92nd Street Y on Sunday, is a marvelously wrought world, an imaginative feast that mashes up court dances and images of creepy crawlies, twining the ridiculous and the sublime. It is structured and poetic and distinctive, performed by a fiercely talented cast. It is, in other words, just what you might expect from Mr. Dunn, who has been presenting work in this city for more than 40 years. Somebody get this man a retrospective.” Claudia La Rocco, “Stream of Fancy: Evading Time,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 2012, online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/arts/dance/douglas-dunns-cassations-at-the-92nd-street-y.html>

39 Dunn, conversation, September 12, 2022.

40 Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 198.

41 La Rocco, “Stream of Fancy: Evading Time.”

42 Here reproduced after the title.

43 The text of “A dancer without a live spectator is” by Douglas Dunn is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author. The poem is also published online in the “Random Writings” section of the Douglas Dunn + Dancers website: <http://www.douglasdunndance.com/>

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