

1998 (2008) - Script accompanying a choreographic work by Matthias Sperling

Chelan:

(Fernanda starts)

“1998”

In 1998, I was a student at Laban, in Transitions Dance Company.

That year, we performed six very different works by six choreographers and this was the costume that I wore in one of them.

Since 1998, this costume has been neatly stored away in the Laban archive, waiting patiently for an opportunity to be re-animated, and it's a great pleasure to be able to give it that chance today.

I have many vivid memories of what those six works were like.

I can still describe, in detail, many things about each of them. (Or at least I believe it's those works that I'm describing... and I assume that my picture of them is fairly complete.)

Perhaps it's more sensations and atmospheres that I remember, but it's also key images that, for me, have become hallmarks of those works.

(Tomoe starts)

As a performer of those works ten years ago, I was in some way a representative of each of those six choreographers and their ideas, their voice, their reflections on their own memories.

Today, I can try to represent them once again, but working from my memory alone, I can only represent the traces that remain within me, within my memory, still written in my body and my brain.

Megan: (as Andy walks in and begins, bit faster)

In 1998, I was in Transitions Dance Company at Laban.

Six professional choreographers from different countries made works for us that we toured all around the UK in a little white minibus.

We went on some international tours as well – in my year, we got to go to Vienna, Prague, Tokyo, Osakaand Jersey in the Channel Islands.

I think we performed our show almost 40 times in different theatres, some big, some small.

I remember having to iron this costume before every single show – (that year was probably the only time I was ever any good at ironing).

With all those performances together, my guess is that at least 3– or 4,000 people must have seen the show over the course of the year.

...3- or 4,000 people in different places around the world who might remember.

...Perhaps some of you who are here now, were also there then, watching me dance (in this beautifully ironed costume) in 1998.

...Perhaps you remember.

Fernanda:

I remember six very different works that really stood out from one another.

I remember one work that was all made up of duets.

And I remember one work that was really theatrical.

Joss:

I remember a work that really brought out the individual personalities of the dancers.

Fernanda:

I remember a work in which I had a short solo, with an orange.

Joss:

I remember a work that was full of sharpness and tension in the atmosphere.

Fernanda:

I remember a work that was playful and child-like.

Joss: (Lucy walking in)

I remember a work that involved three dancers.

Fernanda: (Quintet moving)

I remember a work that involved a whole group of us all shooting past each other really quickly in a tight space.

Joss:

...Did we really do that in 1998?

Are you sure?

Fernanda: (Quintet model box)

Well, yes... I remember a tight group that sort of travelled around each other.

Joss:

I don't think I have that memory, ...from ten years ago.

(short pause)

Fernanda:

But if I describe it to you,

you could remember it then.

And you could re-enact that memory.

I have an image, a taste of what I remember, even if it isn't in the right shape.

And you can interpret that image and bring your physical memory and mine into play.

All I have are my memories, my experiences and my descriptions of them.

Some things, I still see and feel vividly before me.

Some things, I may believe to remember clearly, but in fact have mixed up with other experiences, other performances, other works.

(short pause)

This must be the part that I don't remember so well.

(long pause, Megan starts)

But I remember this part quite well.

Adele:

I wonder if the audiences who saw this in 1998 remember this part as well.

(looking at them, not reading)

...Ten years ago, though, they wore their hair down for this part ...and they had really long hair at the time.

This work actually wasn't originally made for our year, but for the year before us. The choreographer came back to work on it with us, to help us make it our own.

There was another work that was also originally made for another group, three years before us. We never had the opportunity to meet the choreographer of that work, but we re-enacted it by squinting at a grainy video with the help of one of the dancers from the original cast. I remember her telling us that the choreographer wanted them to imagine that they had an extra pair of nostrils in the backs of their knees when they danced her piece, sniffing the space around them.

(girls trio/boys trio exit)

Cathy:

I remember I was studying in New Cross, but lived on the other side of London so had to commute right across town every day for our 8:45 starts. We really weren't allowed to be late and I remember some days if the trains were a bit delayed, and I was cutting it really close, I would try to find a toilet on the train that didn't stink and get changed into my dance clothes and track suit in this little toilet while the train went from London Bridge to New Cross. And then I'd run from the station, trying not to get killed crossing New Cross Road, and literally just fly into the studio as the first exercise started.

At that time, I was living in a flat with so many people sleeping in various corners that I had to get up and get ready without turning any lights on. One day my green all in one that we had to wear as a uniform hadn't quite dried overnight after I had washed it, so I put it on the radiator to let it dry. It was one of those ancient open gas flame radiators (that probably aren't even legal anymore) and my all in one was made of nylon, so I stayed right by it to make sure it didn't burst into flame or anything. But then because it was so dark in the room I didn't notice that it just started to slightly melt under the heat until I smelled this... smell and ended up with a toasted green unitard that I had to throw away.

(change to triple duets, pause)

I remember that there were a lot of couples in my year.

Two marriages, in fact.

And I remember the day one of the girls dislocated her elbow. And another girl, later on, developed a stress fracture in her foot and had to stop performing before we got to the end of the year.

Andy:

And I remember the director of our year of Transitions, Bill Cratty, he was American.

I remember his leg-warmers, and I remember him telling me that if I ate more brown rice and lentils I'd have more energy, and he was right.

He actually became very ill during the year and we didn't see much of him during our tour. On our way back from our last tour of the year, we heard that he had been diagnosed with cancer and that it was very advanced.

He died just two months later.

I went to his funeral.

Even though I didn't really know him that well, I kind of identified with him in many ways. At the end of the funeral service, his coffin was carried down the aisle and passed very close to me. In that moment, I think for the first time in my life, I encountered death as a physical presence. The death of someone I knew and looked up to, the death of someone who I thought had led a life similar to how mine might be.

I wasn't prepared for how strongly that moment would affect me.

I remember him.

Laura:

I remember

and that memory is a movement, a physical event, however small, embodied in my brain.

I remember

And my memory creates new physical structures within my brain: it becomes a body part that I carry with me.

What we participate in, becomes a part of us.

It becomes the window through which we approach our present, each witnessing that present through the filter of our individual memories.

The present gains its richness from the many layers that have come before, and we re-activate what has been by using its fabric to weave what we do now.

Past choreographies are the material on which present choreographies are built.

This 1998 is built on that 1998.

Stage Right Microphone	Stage Left Microphone
	Fernanda: In 1998, I went clubbing for the first time with my older sister.
Laura: In 1998, I tripped and split my ear open on a table corner and had to be glued back together.	
	Chris: In 1998, I started smoking.
Tomoe: In 1998, I had a job in a convenience store.	
	Kiel: In 1998, my best friend Wiggy and I would get together to sing all the words from Steps.
Carl: In 1998, I had to give up singing because my voice was breaking.	
	Andy: In 1998, me and my sister invented a fake radio show where we would sing Spice Girls songs and record it on cassettes – she thought she had a really good voice.
Joss: In 1998, I was at secondary school wearing an itchy red sweater that I hated because it clashed with my bag.	
	Megan: In 1998, I was at Good Shepherd Primary School and had a turtle Tamagotchi.
Cathy: In 1998, I spent a lot of my time doing gymnastics and not really thinking much about dance.	
	Michaela: In 1998, I didn't even know what contemporary dance was.
Lucy: In 1998, I wanted to be a vet.	
	Adele: In 1998, I played Queen Titania in the school production of A Midsummer Nights' Dream.
Sofia: In 1998, I lived in Barcelona.	
	Chelan: In 1998, I remember having a very busy life, juggling dance classes, friends, the skate park and a bit of school.

Credits:

1998 (2008)

Concept, choreography, script: Matthias Sperling

Performed by and created with: Joss Arnott, Megan Brock, Michaela Doran, Chelan Freeman, Lucy Glover, Laura Grattifge, Andrew McAuley, Keil Morris, Fernanda Munoz-Newsome, Carl Patrick, Adele Smith, Sofia Upton, Tomoe Utsunomiya, Christopher Vann, Catherine Waller.

Based on the choreographer's memories of performing the repertoire of Transitions Dance Company 1998: Noa Dar's *Fhou*, Allen Kaeja's *Permafrost*, Rosemary Lee's *3 Studies in Courtship*, Amanda Miller's *An Etude* (1995), Roger Sinha's *Divided* (1997) and Jamie Watton's *Helalisa*.

Costumes: After original designs by Suzie Holmes, Mair Joint and Allison Amin, with thanks to Susan Kulkarni

Lighting: Fay Patterson

Performances: Bonnie Bird Theatre, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (London, UK)

Commissioned by Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Thanks to the choreographers of the original works for generously supporting the project, to Transitions Dance Company and Laban costume department for providing access to the archive, and to Neil Wissink and Michael Pinchbeck for their valuable dramaturgical input. Thanks to Gill Clarke for the invitation and for generous support throughout the process.

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