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Ori Flomin – MFA2

Dance and Technology, Research paper

Advisor – Cari Ann Shim Sham

Performance, Intimacy and technology

Is technology affecting the sense of intimacy in dance performance?

Introduction

From a very young age I was fascinated by dance performances. The ability to tell a story through movement was magic to me. I was amazed by the body's virtuosic ability to communicate through movement rather than speech. Leaving the theater when seeing a good dance show made me feel a sense of connection to the performers, like an intimacy I felt when sharing a meaningful conversation with a good friend. Even now, the moments that resonate in my memory from a dance performance are those when I experience a profound connection to the performers on stage like an unspoken intimacy.

Technology also fascinated me since I was a young kid. Excited to purchase new gadgets from my first Walkman to my first iPod. I still feel the excitement when a new technology offers more advanced possibilities with each generation.

Art and technology have always been connected. This can be noted from the definition of the word itself: "The term "technology" stems from the ancient Greek word technologia, which means a systematic treatment, which itself is derived from

techne, an ancient Greek word meaning art, and *logos* meaning guiding principle"

(*Logan* 13).

Art is created with the assistance of technology, whether it is the brushes and canvas for a painter, the tools to shape a sculpture, the instruments to created music or simply the wooden sprung floor to support the dancers performance. Technology always supports dance performance. From a sprung floor, lights and sound to the incorporation of video, motion capture and interactive live streaming, it continues to be an integral part of performances. As a choreographer myself, my experience of using technology in my own work, opened new pathways of creativity. Other artists also continue to find ways to enhance their artistic vision with technology, using it to add more elements to their performance beyond the dancing body. But how is the use of technology affecting the essence of live performance? Does it aid in connecting the audience to the performers and maintaining the sense of intimacy between audiences and performers?

In this paper I will research the relationship between technology and intimacy in dance and how it connects and/or distracts the audience and the performers from establishing a connection. I will examine this subject through the work of three notable choreographers: Inbal Pinto, Yasmeen Godder and Sasha Waltz. These chorographers have unique individual voices and each incorporates technology in their work. In extensive interviews with these three choreographers, I questioned how they maintain a sense of intimate connection with their audiences and whether we might be losing the ability to maintain human intimacy in the age of advanced technology.

Technology and intimacy

When we hear the word technology today, we often think of our smart phones or home devices, but as defined by Marshal McLuhan in the 1960's, technology could refer to anything that is an "extensions of man" (Logan 21) and serves human kind in the need to amplify human powers. A hammer is a form of technology, as well as our clothing, our homes, the wheel, the pencil, the printed book and language itself. Dancing can be regarded as a way of using the body as a tool by creating movement through the technological advancement of using the body in complex ways. Choreographer Yasmeen Godder refers to the body as "material" that can undergo a transformation with each creative process. (Personal interview.)

According to this definition, technology is already an integral part of a dance performance, yet additional technology in today's western world, has become essential to create a live performance – a sprung floor, lights and sounds are necessary for almost every show to be able to share the experience with an audience on a staged Theater. As early as performances have been presented, dance creators have been exploring further use of technology to enhance their creative vision. From Loie Fuller and her exploration of lights to Merce Cunningham and his pioneering use of motion capture and computer programing, possibilities have become as endless as the imagination, limited only by what each generation of technology can provide.

As a dancer and choreographer, I am interested in the connection between technology and dance but I continue to prioritize movement as a way to communicate

with audiences, mainly through the technology of the physical body as a way to engage in an intimacy that can only be shared through the live performance experience. As abstract as a dance can be, I believe it can convey a sense of a narrative through dancing or choreography. It is essential to me, no matter what technology is being used. The Cambridge dictionary defines intimacy as "The state of having a close, personal relationship or romantic relationship with someone"(dictionary.cambridge.org.)

My question is - How do we define a close relationship? And with who? Is it only between people we know like a good friend, lover or family member? Or can audience members share intimacy with someone unknown, like a performer on stage? I have found some answers through one of Alessandro Tomasi's definitions of intimacy in his article *The Role of Intimacy in the Evolution of Technology*. In the article Tomasi explains human intimacy as "the experience that is of the moment"(jetpress.org.) When we can experience the state of being as an experience without a specific function, like when we enjoy a peaceful ride in our car for the sake of enjoying the drive and scenery rather than driving to a specific destination. I believe this is the unique experience one can have when being present at a dance show, the pure pleasure of being there for the experience itself, for the connection to the performers and events that take place on stage. In a way this experience of intimacy is an expansion of the Cambridge definition. The personal relationship is the one between the audience and the performers or between the audience and the performance itself. Further more, in many psychology articles and blogs (like Goodtherapy.org for example) about intimacy, the words vulnerability, closeness, openness, and sharing are often mentioned. These words have an important role in our relationships with someone we are close to, but can also be related in

connection with the sensation we experience when we see a performance that has a strong impact on us. When the performer/s are vulnerable, open and sharing their body and expression on the stage with the audiences, closeness is created. Intimacy is experienced. When we see a performance that is honest and strong, we can connect to the vulnerability of the performers and share an intimate moment with them, the same way we allow ourselves to be vulnerable next to people we are close to because we feel safe next to them. I believe this is the unique experience one can have when being present at a dance show, the pure pleasure of being there for the experience. There is fragility in the live bodies on stage, which creates a tension in the present moment. This tension draws the audience's attention to create a connection. The performers may not know their audience, but they are allowing themselves to be exposed, viewed and looked at, and therefore share intimacy with the viewer, the audience.

As technology continues to develop and many artists experiment with its possibilities in live performance, I question whether advanced technology is actually adding or distracting from their vision, Is it helping the audience connect to the vision and create a sense of communication or does it stay on the pure level of a technological spectacle that serves to merely impress? As Craig Detweiler says in iGods: "Technologies meant to empower us can also blind us" (Detweiler 41.)

I asked these questions in interviews conducted in the summer of 2019 with these three choreographers whom. I wanted to learn more about how their use of technology and the dancing body is necessary to create a strong sense of connection and communication with the audience. The personal stories and insights of the

choreographers validate their desire to create a meaningful connection between

performers and audiences in a live performance experience.

My goal is to show that technology cannot provide a profound performance experience

without a clear intention and imagination of the creator and the dedication of the

performers who share the experience with the audience.

Interviews

For this research I had the pleasure of interviewing three choreographers whose work I

have admired for a long time. They each maintain a distinct style and approach to

movement and dance making while finding different ways to use technology and engage

with audiences.

Inbal Pinto, Yasmeen Godder and Sasha Waltz are strong visionaries who have used

technology and media in their work to a certain degree, yet the technology has not

become the driving force in their creative process. They are all dedicated first and

foremost to the investigation of movement. Their work is always an exploration of the

body and it's ability to express ideas through its physical potential in the space, on the

stage or with the other dancers.

The following is a summary of my conversations with each choreographer.

Inbal Pinto

Israeli choreographer Inbal Pinto has been creating unique dance pieces since forming her

dance company in 1992. Her dances transform the theater into her unique circus/fairy

tale like world, which is a beautiful mix of Dance Theater and physicality with influences from a wide variety of styles (from ballet to hip hop and folk dance.) Pinto creates a surreal environment in which her vast imagination comes to life. Pinto not only directs and choreographs her work but also designs the costumes and sets, which help bring her full vision to life. When asked about her relationship to technology in her work Pinto says that she doesn't like technology as an effect for itself but she likes the possibilities that technology can offer to serve the work "When I want to create something, I first ask myself if its possible to create it through the body, and if not is it necessary to use that specific technology to contribute to what I am trying to say in the piece." (Personal interview)

In her signature work *Oyster* (1992) she used a flying system in one of the sections. The piece has old circus vaudeville like feeling to it. Two dancers dressed like ballerinas/puppets, where attached to strings and at some point leaped onto another performer's shoulders and tiptoed across his stretched arms and span into the air.

I wanted to show the magical affect of the puppets walking on the other person's arms and found the technology to create it. We were not trying to impress with the technology or hide it. You could see the strings and the whole system, but perhaps because it was exposed it was successful and worked for the scene. (Personal interview.)

When I saw Oyster for the first time, this magical moment stood out. Not hiding the ropes that make the characters fly, made the audience, and myself not notice or question it. We enjoyed the illusion of the characters flying without questioning how it was done, because we could see it, but didn't really care. It made us connect to the events

on stage rather than look at the technology. By using the technology this way it seemed to disappear and the focus was on the dance.

In another piece Dust (2013) Pinto used animation but it was important for her to have it incorporated into the dance and not have the video be a separate segment.

We looked for low-tech animation that will become part of the object that is already on stage and we found a way to physicalize the feeling of animation in the dancers bodies, which accompanied the video so there was a co-relation between the technology and the dance vocabulary. Again the technology served the work and added to what I wanted to say in the piece (Personal interview.)

When asking Pinto if she believes using technology affects the feeling of intimacy in performance she replies:

If you choose to create a distraction then, it will distract, but if you choose to integrate the technology and intimacy, then it will probably create something new and effective. For example, I could chose to make a duet between a dancer and a phone – and I will find a way to integrate this technology with the intimacy of a duet. (Personal interview.)

When she talks about intimacy in performance and whether this is something that is important for her to achieve in her work – Pinto says that one can think about intimacy in many ways. Dance on its own is already an act that shares intimacy, either as the dancers dance alone or when two bodies are touching each other and they are so connected to each other, sometimes dependent on each other to the point of becoming one body together.

So you can create a new way of intimacy through the dancers on stage and sometime I think about how its being created in cinema when the camera can bring us close to the action, and how this can be created in a live performance? Can we bring the focus in a live performance to a specific direction, or part of the dancers body, to create a connection and intimacy to that moment? (Personal Interview.)

Pinto's *Wallflower* (2014), was performed in a museum and the audience was sitting around the space. Pinto recalls that it was an interesting and new experience because the dancers didn't focus on one front; they had the audience from different angles. So the front was shifting, the space itself changed and so was the audience perspective. It was a new environment that promoted a different awareness. The audience was in close distance to the dancers which made them aware of elements that are not always as noticeable from a stage setting, like the dancer's breath and sweat. This promoted a stronger sense of what the dancers are going through during the performance, which made the audience relate more to the performers and perhaps find an intimate connection to them that wasn't there before.

It's a different feeling when it's so close. I think they're more connected to the person itself rather than into the large effect or the whole piece.

But generally I invited the audience to come and to create their own interpretation of my work and their vision about it. It's very open for their interpretation, but not for them to participate in it so even when sitting close they were still spectators. (Personal interview.)

When she begins to create a new work, she first thinks about the universe she is creating, the characters, the scenery, the story and how it all comes together with the elements of lights, sets and costumes. She is not thinking about the audience right away, but how to create a world to which she can later invite the audience to join and view and have their own interpretation of it. Technology mostly comes to play through her stage and costume design. In *Trout* (2009) for example the floor is covered with a layer of shallow water throughout the piece. When a new piece is being performed for the first time, this meeting between the audience and the new dance brings a new dimension to the work.

> It's always kind of striking and surprising to get to the stage and to see the first chemistry with the audience because now it created a new thing.
>
> And then, the piece grows with the audience. It's a trust relationship. You know that you built something and now you share it with the audience and create an intimate experience that is open to interpretation. (Personal interview.)

Yasmeen Godder

Yasmeen Godder's work has been presented worldwide since 1997. She is known for her extreme "in your face" physicality that pushes dancers to explore bold ways of body expression as well as pushing the boundaries of performer-audience relationships, by creating unique performance experiences in alternative spaces that challenge the audience

when asked to be involved and take part of the live action by given a choice to join the dancers on stage or engage in a conversation with the performers.

In a scene from her latest work, *Demonstrate Restraint* (2019, in collaboration with musician Tomer Damsk.) Godder attaches two sticks to her stomach with a rope that cross like an X at the front of her body. She performs a short segment of movement in which she uses the sticks in different ways while rolling on the floor and crawling on her knees. She then looks at the audience and asks for feedback on her performance, asking the audience to respond in any way they want to share images that this movement evokes. Some audience members laugh and some start to talk back and yell images such as – Maria Magdalena, Knitting sticks, a Samurai and more. She shows the movement again and asks for more images. Windmill, Chopsticks and sex are called from the audience. While this is going on, the musician in the background repeats those words into a microphone which records and echoes the words called by the audience and blends them to become the soundtrack to which Godder continues to dance and talk to the audience. Slowly the sound gets louder and louder as Godder continues into the piece and ends her conversation with the audience.

This is a powerful moment in the piece in which technology and communication with the audience is an integral part of the dance. The involvement of the audience creates a direct connection to the performer (who in this case is also the choreographer.), it becomes a conversation that is enriching the dance and the music. One can feel how the theater became a place where the communication left a profound emotional affect on the audience in this shared experience. Also hearing the words that were associated with the movement brought strong images to people and made them think and perhaps visualize

those images as Godder kept dancing. Godder explains the unique experience dancers go

through during a creative process in the studio that is intense and intimate at the same

time. In her recent work she found a desire to transform these experiences to the stage so

the intimacy can also be shared with the audience. "Its almost like an alternative reality,

connecting and engaging the audience to think about what they saw connects us at the

very moments and forces both me as performer and the audience to be very present and

involved." (Personal Interview.)

This interest started with an earlier piece, *Climax* (2014), which was a

retrospective of works by Godder, mixed into a collage in a museum space where the

audience could walk around the space and be in close proximity to the performance. In

the museum setting (performed in different museums internationally), Godder was able to

question the willingness of the performers to be exposed from a close distance and what

feelings can this trigger to the audience? She was surprised to discover how much

audience members felt compassion towards the dancers. How they felt the need to care

and hug the dancers during the shows. Breaking the barriers of the physical distance

between the audience and the performers brought intimacy to the shared space.

Following this piece Godder was intrigued to continue researching how to use

these moments in a performance as opportunities for performers and spectators to meet.

Making the audience involved and not just a passive observer. She wanted to create

situations that used the event of a performance as a chance for people to connect not only

to the performers but also to their fellow spectators. "Like when you are sitting next to

someone and watching the show with them, you are sharing this experience together,

even though you might be strangers to each other, you still have this moment of intimacy." (Personal interview.)

In her next two pieces *Common emotions* (2016) and *Simple Action* (2017), she continued to test the intimacy and boundaries between the performers and the audience. In both pieces the audience is invited to participate and is given tasks to take part of, which trigger different responses and emotions. In *Common Emotions* the tasks are done behind a screen with volunteers from the audience guided by some performers, while at the front of the space the rest of the dancers are performing the given choreography, it's a mix of live set material mixed with the outcome of the live tasks executed by the audience with some of the performers. Some of the tasks are holding hands together, or laughing together, all related to an emotional outcome.

In *Simple Action*, Godder created a studio performance where she took only one task that is done repeatedly over the hour-long piece. One of the performers picks an audience member and asks them to give them their weight and trust them to slowly lower them down to lie down on the floor. During the piece one can either be picked by a performer or can observe the others being lowered to the floor. Once lying down, one can decide to how long they can stay on the floor until returning to their seat. This simple action is nothing but simple and contains so much of what human relationships are all about – trust, communication, intimacy, caring, worrying, connecting and so on. It is a powerful piece that leaves the audience with a lasting emotional impact without any spectacular physical movement by the dancers or through any use of technology. It is simply about human connection.

The two pieces came from a long process of workshops where Godder and her dancers worked along side scientists to create movement workshops for people with Parkinson disease. Godder describes the process as being messengers of movement while dealing with people who are not performers and also challenged by a physical debilitating disease. "The dancers and I had to learn how to develop skills to be on one hand flexible on the other hand sensitive and have the ability or inability to accept people as they come with their energies with their bodies and limitations and be open to possibilities." (Personal interview.)

This helped build the adaptability the dancers needed in order to create the trust and intimacy in the two pieces where the audience was an integral participant, yet never part of the creation process. The two pieces were very successful in creating a close connection with audiences. When I saw *Simple Action*, I was surprised how emotional the experience was. I felt so much compassion for everyone that was present. As audience members participated with the performers and everyone wore street clothes, there was a moment when I couldn't tell who was a performer and who wasn't. The room transformed to a space where people simply took care of each other and felt a profound bonding experience.

Godder also uses technology as a way to document her creation process. She believes that the ability to instantly record and video rehearsals helps her understand her work and be able to memorize choreography faster and more efficiently. She can relay on recording devices as an archive of the process, which can be, traced back when re-learning a piece. Godder also refers to our own bodies as a tool that can be looked at as a technological way to deepen one physical practice.

I often feel that we have inside of us more than we expose and a lot of time

practices which I used in the past had to do with copying something that you think

you're not or taking physical characteristics or expressions that you don't associate

with yourself for movement and embodying that through transforming yourself.

So, It's interesting to think that technology exists deep in our body and that it's

about tapping into these places that we have and opening them up to discover new

possibilities, like new updates on your own device… (Personal Interview.)

This quote reminds me of Marshal McLuhan's, Laws of the media, in which he states:

1 – Every medium or technology enhances some human function.

2 – in doing so, it obsolesces some former medium or technology, which was

used to achieve the function earlier.

3 – In achieving its function, the new medium or technology retrieves some

older form from the past.

4 – When pushed far enough, the new medium or technology reverses or flips

into a complementary form (Logan 451)

It is interesting that Godder speaks of the body as "material" and technology. As

McLuhan explains the evolution of technology through these laws and what is carried

forward, Godder also speaks of how the body can renew itself and find new sources of

information and updates yet still relate to the importance of the body's archive and what

is stored in its own history while she is creating something new. McLuhan declares that

once the old technology is not used it does not mean that it disappeared. It still exists but

not dominating the function it once enhanced and so does the creative body.

Sasha Waltz

Known as one of the leading contemporary choreographers of our times, SashaWaltz has created over eighty productions since she formed her company together with her partner Yochen Sandig in Berlin in 1993. Her vivid imagination has invigorated the way we view contemporary dance. Her strong visual sense has pushed dancers to explore new ways of moving as well as how to relate to the space as another dimension of the body. Her work connects the physical body to interact in a dialogue with the space, costumes, sets and sounds on different scales. She created dances for a range of venues from small black-box Theaters to big opera houses as well as alternative spaces such as a complex of small rooms inside a huge space, a museum, outdoor performances, open studios and on film. Audiences around the world have been touched by her ability to create a personal experience for the audience members that stimulates the senses and excites the heart within the context of the moving body. When asked how she sees her work in relationship to technology or whether she is aware of technology when approaching making work, Waltz replies that technology is not the first medium that she thinks about using in a creation. She first thinks about the body and then the sets and costumes are added on as her anchor point. In some pieces she feels that the ideas and the content she is working with can be supported by the use of technology and therefor can be included as part of the piece. When looking back at her work she has included various ways in

which technology has been used; projected video images, installations and Virtual Reality are some examples of that.

In *The Women Project* (2017) she incorporated Virtual Reality (VR.) The audience could experience the piece through the VR glasses while walking through the empty space after which the dancers perform the piece in the open space while the audience walks around without the glasses and the technology. She also created a film version of the experience. The project was originally planned to be a movie project and while she did create a film version of the experience, the project turned into a live performance as Waltz was trying to re-think how audiences could experience the dance as if it was a movie filmed from different angles and perspectives. She ended up using the Virtual Reality glasses so the audience could have the perspective of seeing some of the action from very close, next to the energy of the dancers in the room, up close and personal. Waltz wanted the audience to have an intimate experience with the performers in this situation. Both in the live action where the traditional sitting was taken away, and with the VR glasses, which according to Waltz became like an extra eye to give a new perspective to what the audience could see. In addition, the film version of the piece gave another perspective of intimacy as the camera can get much closer to the body to show another angel of the performer that can't be seen in the live performance version. Waltz also explains that she finds technology helpful to fulfill her vision when she is not able to create the effect she is looking for with the live action. In this case, the technology is used to support an idea that she wasn't able to convey with the dancers alone and looks for a solution that can enhance specific images with the aid of video or film.

In the opera *Madea* (2007) she used a film of the dancers covered in mud who were moving very slowly around themselves. This would have been impossible to have the dancers actually covered in mud in the beginning of the piece. The filmed version allowed the audience to imagine as if this was actually happening live. In this case the technology showed something that was not possible to perform live each time. It helped to create the illusion that the action was happening live and therefor support the choreography.

Inside Out (2003) was a piece in which the dance occurs in many different rooms on two levels that are spread inside a big space and the audience was moving through them freely, choosing where and how to spend the duration of the performance. The dancers were performing in each room a dance that was very personal and intimate. They where talking and dancing about their own biography and also moving between rooms sometimes interacting with the other dancers. Simultaneously a film of the piece was on display so the audience could also see some of the actions that were happening in the other rooms. Since so much was occurring at the same time, the film helped give the audience an overlook of what is going on through the whole piece. The film also brought elements that one couldn't see through the live performance such as a fire for instance, which added layers to the live action happening in the different rooms. This installation and interaction between the technology and the live performance was a very rich and satisfying experience recalls Waltz.

> Even though the problem I had was to always be aware to balance out what I'm
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> dealing with in a live performance. That the technology doesn't take over
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> concentration and attention because it's stimulation is so immediate that the eye

goes very fast to the moving image. But in this case all elements managed to compliment each other (Personal interview.)

In 2014 the ZKN (Media Museum, Karlshue, Germany) dedicated an exhibition to Sasha Waltz's work. Mixing the stage design with a video installation, filmed images from different works by Waltz were projected on the original set from the pieces and created the illusion that the spectators were seeing the dance live. Visitors in the museum were able to move around the set and therefor get another perspective of the piece that one couldn't have seen when sitting as an audience member in the theater. The technology here was used as an interactive/ archive device that brought the performance back to life.

Waltz uses different ways to incorporate technology to see what is possible and sometimes what is not possible with the use of technology. An example of her experimentation is during the dramatic ending scene in the Opera *Romeo and Juliet* (2007 for the Paris Opera) where the two main characters are alone on the stage. Waltz wanted to find a way to bring the emotions out to the audience from the huge stage of the Opera Ballet Theater. She was concerned that in the big space the audience wouldn't be able to connect emotionally to the action. She created a film to be screened during the scene in which one could see a close-up video of the characters but then realized that while the film showed the image of the close up it distanced the audience from the emotions. She explains

> I felt that even if we got closer in the image and we would see the emotions, we
>
> would lose them. We would lose our empathy and feeling towards the characters.

Our brain actually does this process of accepting the emotions. It is an empathic moment that you don't want to cloud with a technological image. Because then it only becomes visual and you actually distance your feelings. So I trusted that the language and the expression of the artist to perform will bring the emotions forward. I realized that the brain was actually zooming in. We are the camera because they brought us somehow with their dancing to that point. So the use of the technology at that moment was not necessary to add, it was working better without. (Personal Interview.)

Very early in her creative process Waltz is aware of how a new piece will relate to the audience. What is the scenario of the theater? How will the audience be seated? How will the piece interact with the crowd? All of these questions are dealt from the beginning of her production process and with that in mind she considers whether technology should or shouldn't be incorporated into each specific piece.

Exodus (2018) related to the refugee crisis in Europe and the immediate conditions of physical existence. Waltz was interested in seeing how the audience could participate in the dance with the performers. She created a structure where there were passages in which the public could join. It was an open structure that created beautiful moments where people were going through the piece with the dancers allowing the participants from the public to become dancers as well. In one particular show as the participants were guided back to sit, one woman was so captivated in the moment that she continued to dance for a long time until she realized she was the only audience member left on stage with the company members as they shifted into more choreographic

movement. In another scene - one dancer, was joined by a woman inside a big see-through Plexiglas cube (Throughout the piece the audience is invited to enter the cube.) As he was executing the intense solo in which he expresses his struggle with repression, the woman's instinct was to help him. She was completely emerged in the experience with the dancer that both of them the experienced a deep connection at that very moment. The audience was caught in the emotions they witnessed inside the box that many started to cry. It was a memorable moment of intimacy that even though the two characters may never see each other again, both were touched by the experience and it will remain in their memory as well as the audience's for a long time.

The five performances were broadcast through a live-stream on Facebook, which brought a much larger audience from around the world to experience the piece. I was in Stockholm when I watched the live stream, and while I was viewing the piece through my small computer screen I still felt connected to the action knowing that it was happening live in Berlin at the same time. I felt present with the community of dancers and spectators even when being far away.

Craig Detweiler talks about the role of technology in bringing us together from chat rooms to social networks: "It is not a matter of having a webpage, a Facebook account or projection screens, but of using these to enhance and expand the activities and communal life of the congregation." (Detweiler 29)

Marshal Mcluhan talks about brining communities closer to one another since the time electricity has been able to transmit information instantaneously across the globe

and created the term - "The Global Village" "Communities across the globe become

entwined in one another's affairs." (Logan, 432)

Exodus is a great example for that. Waltz used technology to connect to a wider

audience around the world and create a community that could identify with the subject of

the work. People who couldn't travel to Berlin could still see the show and become

familiar with Waltz work and feel connected to it. People also wrote comments during

the live stream. The comments were from all over the world, creating a conversation,

engaging in a communal moment with what they witnessed. They could share the

experience with anyone who was connected to the broadcast no matter how far they were

or what nationality they come from. Waltz hopes that the experience will bring more

opportunities to use technology this way yet she thinks that without a clear content to the

vision of the work, technology can distract and take away from what the message is in the

piece.

> With live stream we have the opportunity to gain more people and to be more
>
> internationally connected without having to travel. In times of crisis this is
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> something to continue to consider and it's good, we will try to emphasize on this
>
> much more. Its a great tool, yet on the stage I always need a content that makes
>
> sense to me otherwise I think technology can be in the way of the experience.
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> People can argue against it, but I feel that when I only experience technology, it
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> leaves me cold I am missing something. I am missing the breath. (Personal
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> interview.)

Reflections and Conclusions:

While the three choreographers all relate to technology in their work, what impressed me the most is their dedication to their personal path in their creative process. The driving force in each creation is the initial idea. Like a seed, the idea is what they bring to the studio to start their exploration and let it flourish through the creative process into its final manifestation when it's ready to be performed.

Through the creative process they ask questions and look for solutions. They actively pursue where their imagination is taking them: What are the ideas they want to present in any specific creation? What is the story they want to tell? What images, feelings or memories do they want the audience members to take home with them? In their recent creations, Godder and Waltz are interested in how the audience can be more involved in the actual work and create platforms for spectators to get mixed into the performers worlds. Whether it is through conversation or inviting the audience to the performing space to participate in actions with the dancers, the two choreographers want to break the fourth wall and transform the performance space into a shared, perhaps sacred space, in which the ritual of the performance is taking place. They feel the need to create a performance environment that feels more like a community rather then a stage, where everyone is actively involved. However I feel that there is a difference in the general approach between Godder and Waltz. Waltz relates to the audience more as a crowd, a community that comes to view her work, and while allowed to interact with the performers to a certain degree and see the dance from the inside, the audience remains unknown. In Godder's exploration she refers to the individual in the audience and seeks to know who the audience is and what their experience of how they view her work is

like? She is interested to hear from her audience, to know the reaction and what emotions are triggered. They each found creative solutions on how to guide the audience to participate and enjoy the performance experience from a different and new perspective but Godder taps more into the personal and emotional context of the audience while Waltz relates to the audience as a whole. I think that this necessity for a community and a shared performance experience is something audiences feel more intrigued by in present times when people might experience more isolation and separation through daily life by the overwhelming addiction to our communication devices.

Pinto on the other hand mostly keeps the separation between the audience and performance. Even when she presented her work in a museum space where the audience was sitting all around, the boundaries of where the performance took place and where the audience was situated, remained very clear. At the same time her unique choreographic style with her imaginative set and costume design, creates a special environment of a specific aesthetic that enriches the audience imagination and allows them to feel connected and involved. Seeing one of Pinto's dance pieces is like looking into a snow-globe in which the outside spectator cannot enter the world but is able to observe it with all its beauty, closely from the outside and admire it. In Pinto's work one can feel that each of her pieces takes the viewer on a journey to a new world that she has thoughtfully crafted and brought to life. While in todays world we are constantly peeking into other people's life through their posting on social media, perhaps this performance experience allows us to have a moment of escape into another world without the anxiety that today's technology creates in our daily lives.

In his book, *Irresistible*, Adam Alter explains the success and addiction of Instagram because people are endlessly driven to compare themselves to others and at the same time constantly seeking for feedback on photos they posted themselves. The need for self-assurance and measure our "worth" is inherent in all of us and has been constant in recent years with the accessibility of social media. Pinto's work allows and invites the audience to step out of our lives and peek into her world yet feel free from self-comparison since her work takes us out of being in our own reality. We can simply enjoy it for what it is.

We can see from the interviews how each choreographer wishes to communicate with the audience and the means they find to achieve this connection. As stated in the introduction, dance has always been first and foremost about communication and from the beginning of time technology has assisted human kind in ways of communication. In Understanding Media, Marshal McLuhan identifies five eras in communication: the mimetic, oral, literate, electronic and the digital. They represent the various stages of evolution in human communication from the beginning of human life until the present. Each of these eras brought great change to the way humans interact and communicate. In the latter, the digital era in which we are living today, the greatest affect is how fast information travels. We can have relationships with people who are thousands of miles away from us and yet communicate and talk as if the person is standing right next to us. Text and sound is transformed in seconds. This accessibility seems like it would help us get closer to the people around us, but more often one can see people standing right next to each other, yet each is on their device ignoring the person next to them.

As time goes by we may think that the fast advancement of technology has a negative affect on human interaction but as explained by Adam Alter in his book *Irresistible,* "technology isn't inherently bad" (alter 7). It is how technology is being used and marketed that can cause the negative affects: "Apps and platforms can be designed to promote rich social connections, or, like cigarettes, they can be designed to addict. Today, unfortunately, many tech developments do promote addiction." (Atler 8)

As quoted earlier, Detwetler talks about technology as the tie that binds us in his book *iGods*. As he describes how social media and technology brought us to form countless virtual communities and how the Internet was created to bring people together from different backgrounds and distances. He also warns us that this should not replace real human interaction.

Just as Pinto, Godder and Waltz relate to technology as a means to serve their vision of creativity, the Internet and modern digital communication are also meant at their best to serve existing human connections yet not replace the experience of witnessing a live performance.

In a recent study led by the UCL(London's Global University) Division of Psychological and Language Sciences, audience members who didn't know each other had their heart rate monitored during a live performance of the musical *Dreamgirls* at the West End in London. The study showed that their pulses speeding up and slowing down was synchronized at the same rate. Dr. Devlin, who led the study said: "Experiencing the live theatre performance was extraordinary enough to overcome group differences and produce a common physiological experience in the audience members."(ucl.ac.uk)

Further more: according to Encore Tickets (who ordered the study), 59% of people say they have felt emotionally affected by a live performance, and 46% say they enjoy the theatre experience because of the atmosphere that comes with being in the audience. This study from 2017 strengthens the point that the live performance experience is still powerful and valid. Live performance serves human desire to feel connected and belong to a community that can share a rich experience together.

As Waltz enthusiastically describes the experiences of the woman who got completely involved in the dance that she almost forgot where she was, I believe that our nature strives for real connections outside the virtual world and this is what still motivates audiences to go out and see live performances. The individual wants to be part of an audience, a community that shares a real, affective and emotional experience.

As all three choreographers describe, when staying truthful to your vision and finding the ways to engage the technology to support your vision, your audience will follow and believe you, and cherish their performance experience in their hearts for years to come.

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