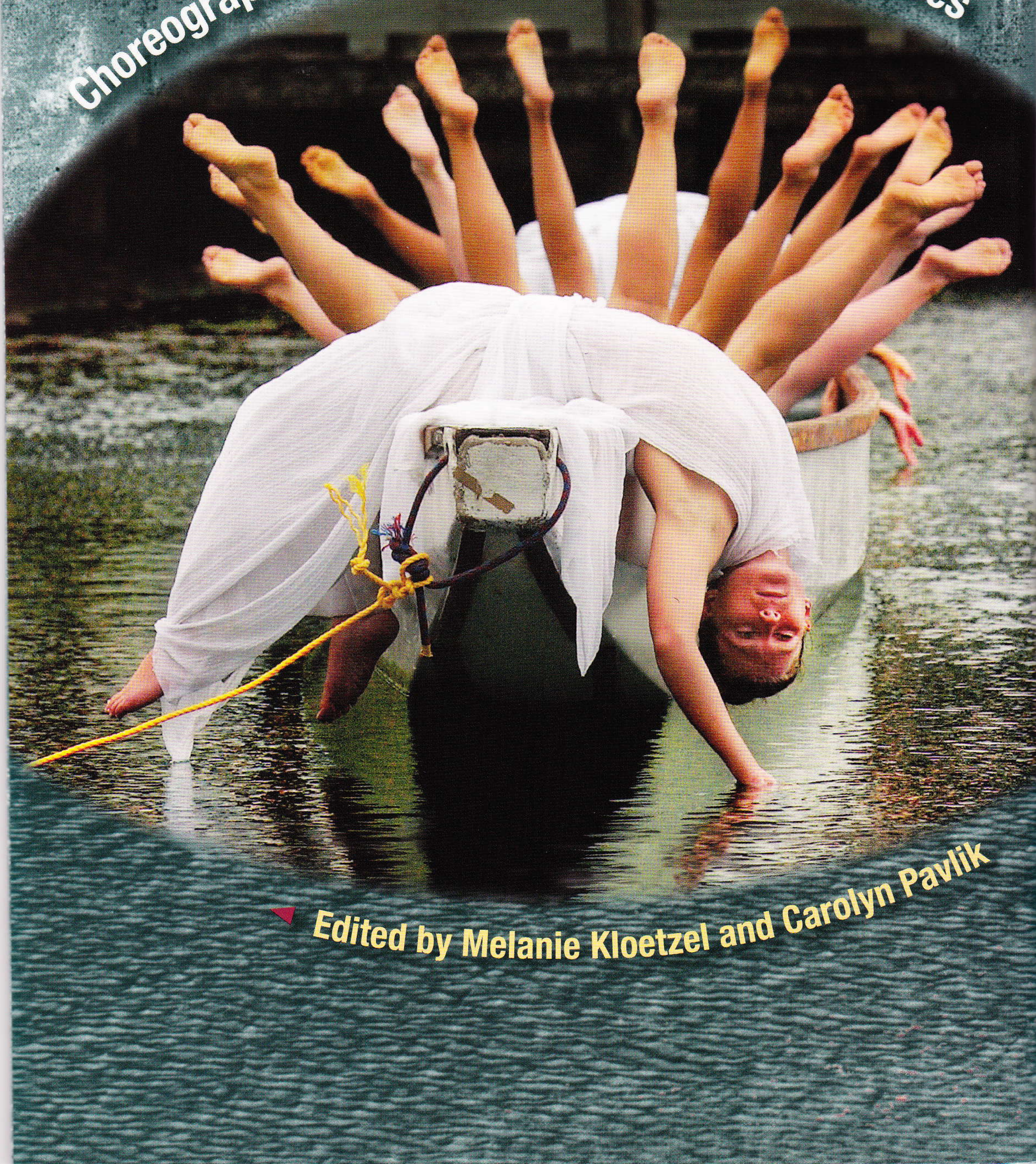
Site Dance

Choreographers and the Lure of Alternative Spaces



Edited by Melanie Kloetzel and Carolyn Pavlik

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Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig

Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig are the artistic directors of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER, a company that presents site performances and conducts site workshops all over the globe. Invested in site-adaptive works that may travel from the grassy expanses of a garden estate to a bird sanctuary in Maine to the campus of Dartmouth College, Pearson and Widrig enjoy finding both the universal and specific traits of place. Their work has been produced by Lincoln Center, the Joyce Theater, the City Center Fall for Dance Festival, DTW, The Kitchen, Central Park SummerStage, Danspace Project, P.S. 122, the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project, and Dancing in the Streets, and they have received foundation support from the NEA, NYSCA, NYFA, NPN, NCCI, Rockefeller, Jerome, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore, and Arts International, among others. They discussed their work with Kloetzel on August 30, 2006, from their home in New York City.

An Interview with Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig

MK: While perusing your Web site, I noticed that you use the terms *site-specific* and *site-adaptive* when you discuss your work. Can you talk about the difference between those terms?

SP: It all began when presenters would invite us to make a site-specific work that they couldn't afford on their own. So they would team up with another presenter who was interested in a completely different site and then ask us to adapt the same choreography for each of them. Our first attempt was truly unbelievable! Conceived as the brainchild of Elise Bernhardt and co-produced by Dancing in the Streets, Wave Hill, and Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, *Common Ground* was initially created for this bucolic hillside garden at Wave Hill that invited choreography impossible to do anywhere but there. And then we translated it to the urban cement landscape of Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. It was a wonderful, terrible assignment that we resisted

mightily, but we needed the job, and so we said yes. This project underscored the fact that while artistic vision is one thing, dealing well within the limitations of the practical world is another. It was one of the great early challenges of our site choreographic careers; it taught us so much and opened the door to a whole new world of touring site-adaptive works. So, by the time we started the *Curious Invasion* series at an Audubon Sanctuary in Maine in 1997, we had developed the skills needed to plan and organize such a residency.

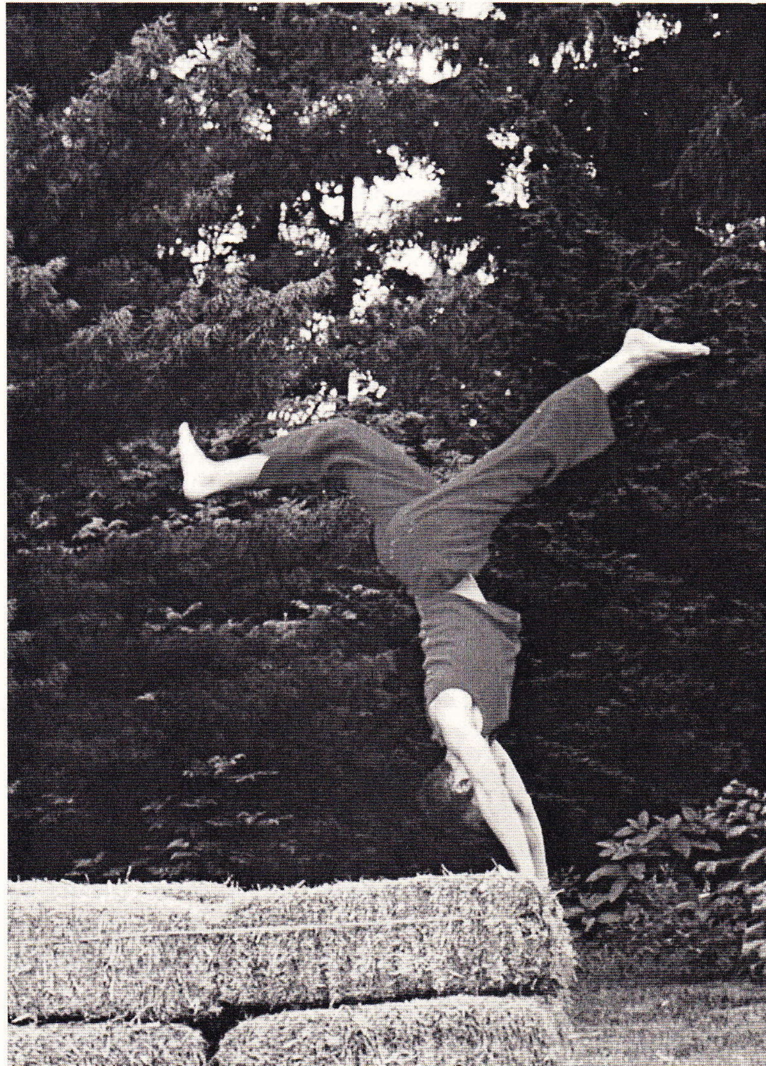

Figure 64. Jason Akira Somma flips over a hay bale in *A Curious Invasion* (1997). Photo by James Murphy, courtesy of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER.

PW: Sometimes a piece that starts out as site-specific can become site-adaptive. One example of this came from a section of *A Curious Invasion/Wave Hill* in 2001. We originally made the section on a two-tiered stone ledge in the middle of this beautiful, secluded garden; it was a luxurious unison quartet to Ethel Waters's 1930s recording of "Moonglow" and was just about everybody's favorite section. A couple of years later, we were invited by the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College to create a site-adapted version of *A Curious Invasion*, and of course, there was no two-tiered ledge anywhere in the chosen site. But then we found these great old leather art deco couches in the boathouse by the lake, and we asked if we could move the couches out to the terrace in front of the building and perform the dance there. So we adapted that same dance to these four couches. It was completely different, and yet it was the same piece.

MK: So it sounds like making site-adaptive works is more economically viable.

PW: Well, the template we've created with *A Curious Invasion* can really be taken into practically any natural and/or architectural space and adapted to the particulars. This adds to its economic practicality. It's exciting for us to come up with appropriate solutions for each new space, but we don't have to start from scratch every time.

SP: Often, we must make choices based on the economics of a project, although, to be honest, it was economics that drove us to site-specific work in the first place. Economics ended up being responsible for opening up one of the great loves of our lives. Back in 1987, when Patrik and I first started working together, we noticed a one-inch ad in the *Village Voice* that read something like, "Searching for choreographers to create outdoor work for Dancing in the Streets' Coney Island Festival." It was the first grant we had ever written, and we got it—$500! It was the first time we were able to pay our dancers a "fee"; there was just enough money to give them subway tokens for rehearsals and performances. It was also the first time we had choreographed for something other than the proscenium stage. It was traumatizing and amazing and wonderful, and we never stopped.

MK: What is it that continues to draw you back outdoors?

SP: It isn't just the outdoors, it is to *site*, whether that be in a Buddhist temple in Kyoto, or on a rowboat in New York City's Central Park, or in a fourteenth-century village on the Greek island of Tinos. Unlike many choreographers who are drawn to a bare stage and bare bodies, we get inspired by time, by architecture, by our own relationship to space and place.

MK: Do you make a distinction between space and place?

Figure 65. Dancers with heads in the sand on Coney Island in *Graven Images* (1987). Photo by James Murphy, courtesy of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER.

PW: Space is an inherent choreographic element in the way we were trained. Space was and has always been really important, at the forefront of what we tap into. For many people, it is so often about movement and steps and choreographic patterns. But spatial awareness, onstage or on site, is a crucial ingredient for us. This spatial awareness became magnified when we started going to sites outside the theater. For me, place would be the architectural landscape, the geographic attributes of a site, the physical elements. But space is what radiates out of that, the atmosphere that we sense when we go into a place.

MK: This is an important distinction. A lot of geographers discuss the differ-

ence between space and place, but it seems like it would be a significant issue for site choreographers as well.

SP: I think the distinction is really key. For me, place contains the entire history of the location we are working with, in every sense. The space, however, is the tuning, the key that the place is singing in. For us, that is what we tap into.

A year and a half ago, we were invited to Kyoto for a site-specific workshop and performance in a Buddhist temple with Japanese dancers and community participants. Having come of age in the late 1960s, when there was such pride in disobedience, in breaking with tradition, in disrespect for ritual, I had not really expected to be attracted to the Japanese culture. But before day one of the workshop was over, I had fallen deeply in love with Japan. During this experience, I realized how differently the Japanese experience space and place. What shocked me was that within every tradition—of taking off one's shoes, of putting them in a certain place, of restoring a room or gravel path to its original condition after wildly dancing in it—there was such respect for the space, for the ground. Their treatment of the space was based on a deep awareness and appreciation, not merely on tradition.

MK: What were your initial efforts in transitioning from stage to site?

SP: In the beginning, our first site work began with taking choreography that we had created in the studio, transplanting it to the site, and seeing what would happen. What happened was that everything was off, out of tune! So we discovered that Einstein was right, that space and time are indeed relative, and that each environment has its own unique requirements.

It was with *Ordinary Festivals*, our piece with 300 oranges, two knives, and wonderfully weird Italian folk music, that we first figured out how to adapt a full-evening proscenium work to an outdoor site. We first performed it on an outdoor stage at the Maine Festival, and then we adapted it to the Bates College quad—a huge green space intersected with gorgeous old elm trees. We thought our only job would be to adjust the piece to a space without wings and a "cyc." We had absolutely no idea what changes the space was going to demand of us! It was an incredible experience. In an odd way, it felt as if we were forced to become filmmakers overnight. It took me immediately back to the first foreign film I saw, Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*. His use of space just sang! The camera angles had such power, such emotional and spiritual depth.

PW: The quad at Bates offered a huge canvas that allowed us to work with great depth and a palette that was so much bigger than on a concert stage. It opened up the possibility of expanding our vision in a very filmic way. For

example, my solo, which on the stage occurs in the most upstage wing, was done along a 100-foot pathway at the other end of the quad, making me a distant figure. This heightened the illusion of me portraying an ephemeral memory of someone's beloved. This spatial magnifier was incredibly effective in increasing not just the visual but also the emotional impact of the entire work.

MK: Does historical research factor into your creative process?

SP: Doing historical research has never been a formal part of our creative process, but it has certainly inspired us, informed us, and even changed the direction of our work. I'm thinking of our first residency in Lewiston, Maine, where we had planned to make a community/site work that explored pivotal moments of change in one's life, whether that change was by choice or by chance. We had assumed that the project would be based on intensely personal stories, which we would then videotape in locations throughout the city. We had done a pilot project of something similar to this in Lincoln, Nebraska, and thought we were ready to roll. But in Lewiston, *nobody* opened up. How naïve we were! This was no hippie counterculture of individuals waiting for an opportunity for the world to listen to their darkest secrets; this was a French-Canadian community that was not about to reveal itself to these New York artists!

What literally broke the ice that first night was when a 98-year-old retired professor spoke up. "Well, I have a choice of what to think about when I have insomnia at night. Being a lover of mathematics, last night when I couldn't sleep, I decided to calculate the tonnage of ice I delivered as a boy." Then this beautiful old woman who had been the town's librarian interjected, "You might be interested in the documentary footage we have down at the county courthouse of the last ice harvest in Maine. And after you look at it, you should go talk to Chuck, who cuts up chickens in the Bates College cafeteria and who knows all about ice." So we found Chuck, and he told us about how ice from Maine was *the* ice to have in your cocktails back in 1900, whether in Havana or Johannesburg or Calcutta. This got us fascinated, not just with the history of Lewiston, but also with ice, which became a significant choreographic ingredient in the piece.

Then a 95-year-old man shared with us, "The pivotal moment of change in my life came by a choice that was not of my own making. I was manager of the Empire movie theater in town, and after 45 years, they closed it down." And then everyone started telling personal stories about what happened to them at the movie theater. We found out that before the Empire was a movie theater, it was a vaudeville house where Laurel and Hardy, Sarah Bernhardt,

and Charlie Chaplin had performed. It turns out that Lewiston, this decaying mill town, had once been part of the theater touring triangle along with New York City and Boston. We learned about the waves of immigrants who built Lewiston and how, during the 1940s when the mill workers went on strike, the owners chose to close their factories down rather than allow the workers to unionize. As a result, the town virtually died, and many of its beautiful buildings were boarded up. But we got access to these incredible sites where Patrik shot a dozen videos with our company and community participants, and these became the heart of the piece.

None of this had to do with our original intentions, but we always try to allow the piece to be defined by the community itself. What will be the key that unlocks the door for the project? We have to be willing to change. The moment we feel it, like bloodhounds we follow the scent.

MK: What else besides history informs your work?

SP: The space itself. It speaks to us. I think Patrik and I both come from a place where our choreographic process is about allowing the piece to be revealed to us. Our job is to make ourselves open and ready for it. That might entail learning about its history or architecture, or it might mean simply sitting in the space for hours, listening.

But what is the main thing that ends up affecting our process? Economics. Dancers' schedules. The weather. The presenter. The groundskeepers. The distance between the performance site and the nearest toilet. Tomorrow's grant deadline.

MK: Do you find that part of what attracts you to site work is the potential to create community connections?

SP: Yes and no. Performance projects involving the community are a vital aspect of our work, whether on site or onstage. Out of choreographic necessity, we often desire a lot of people for our site casts. We have a large appetite for being able to work with masses of people at one time for certain images; we also love to work with changes in density. If you are making a piece with multiple spaces, and audience members are walking through them on their own, your images will be occurring simultaneously, and so you'll need a large cast. That usually means getting involved in the community. It might mean collaborating with the highest level of artists in the area, or it might mean creating a spoken word/movement duet for a 70-year-old woman and an "at-risk" teenage girl. Or it might mean experimenting with a group of martial artists and hospice nurses.

As we have grown through the years, we have learned not just about our own needs but also about the needs of the people in the community. We have

to consider how much free time they have for rehearsals and performances. We now offer a four-tiered range of possible involvement for community participants, from three weeks of daily rehearsals to a onetime video session. Having that kind of organizational and artistic wherewithal has taken us years to develop. Site-adaptive work helps in terms of time as well. We know that we've got preexisting dances that we can adapt to age and site that can be taught with a minimum of rehearsals. Twenty years ago, we would rehearse daily with five people for two months. That is what we needed, and everybody had the time. It is different now.

MK: Do you feel there is something about approaching a site through movement and dance that is particularly effective for communicating with a site?

SP: Absolutely. Connecting with site through the choreographic language of space, time, motion, dynamics, density, musicality, and design deepens and expands awareness. It gives me a profoundly richer experience of the space and the place than I would have had otherwise. And the same occurs for the audience.

In our culture, intellect is so separated from feeling, sensation, intuition. Site choreography, I believe, can bring it all together for both performer and audience. History, sociology, art, nature, and architecture all integrate into a unified whole in site work. Somehow it quiets the mind, and an internal expansiveness opens up.

MK: Do you have one piece that you consider your most successful?

PW: Oh, definitely our *A Curious Invasion* series. We built a structure that is easily adaptable to almost any kind of site, natural or architectural. This allows for the restaging of certain sections as well as for the creation of new dances in each site. The elements are all there, and we string them together in different ways, varying the emphasis and embracing tangents made possible by the particular site. Each performance is distinct, yet they all feel like a continuum.

SP: With *A Curious Invasion/Wave Hill*, we came of age by being on top of the organizational aspect of it. It was such a big piece that utilized multiple sites; it was choreographically challenging, spatially magnificent, and it truly worked for the audience both logistically and artistically. It worked for the downtown experimental artists; it worked for people who had never been to a dance performance; it worked for the nature lovers who had gone to Wave Hill that day expecting to look at flowers; it worked for the 10-year-olds and their siblings; it worked for the 80-year-olds in wheelchairs. And it works beautifully as a site-adaptive performance project.

MK: Do you get more feedback from your site work than you do from your proscenium work?

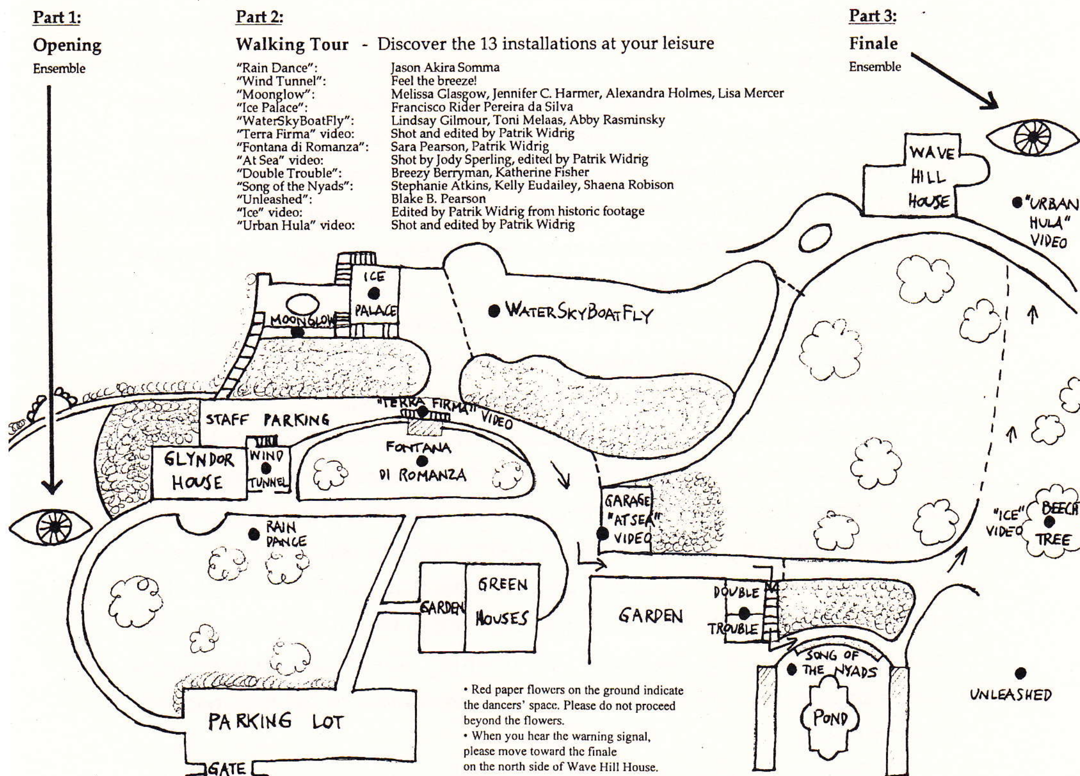

Figure 66. Dealing with multiple sites. Patrik Widrig's map for *A Curious Invasion/Wave Hill* (2001). Courtesy of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER.

SP: Before yes, now no, as e-mail has extended the avenues for audience response. The phrase "We welcome your feedback" (with our e-mail address) is always in our programs, which has made a big difference. But with site work, it is much easier for an audience member to cross that invisible boundary to approach the performers after a concert. When appropriate with site performances, we'll keep the music going after the bows and invite the audience to join us. They enter the performance space, bring up their friends and family, and everyone dances together. This may not seem like a big deal, but it has a huge impact on people, on their relationship to the arts, their memory of the concert, their experience of the event, and their desire to come again.

Also, in our site work's creative process, we choreograph on location, with rehearsals open to the public. We invite feedback from people who happen to be watching and have learned how to manage such interactions. We

have even unexpectedly invited passersby to join our casts—from kids in East Harlem to musicians in Central Park. Old Jewish women sit down and watch our rehearsals outside of Lincoln Center and tell us how we should edit a section we're working on. The Iranian security guard in Bryant Park quietly approaches us as we're running *Ordinary Festivals* and asks us if we're doing a Sufi dance, as it looks very familiar to the kind of dancing from his country. Three teenage bikers silently watch us work and then shout to one another, "I know what this is; it's a race in slow motion!" Having people watch us create and then hearing them tell us what they see is inspiring, enlightening, invigorating, and not always easy to hear!

MK: I am curious about your emphasis on teaching. It seems like you have a particular interest in doing workshops around site work. I was wondering if your facilitating of other's site work also affects your own.

SP: Oh, absolutely. In the last 20 years it has been the people who have taken our workshops who have been our teachers. There is something holy or magical about class. It's a gift. There is this rarified atmosphere that gets created. There is nothing like the energy, thinking, feeling, and artistry of people involved in a collaborative, creative process. I become a student as well when I am teaching; I evaluate my teaching by how much I learn in the workshops. The more I am learning, the better I am teaching. The most beginning-level person can open my eyes and break down my unconscious, habitual patterns of perception.

At Bearnstow, where we teach a one-week site workshop each summer, participants create images in the water, inside their cabins, and throughout a forest that has been untouched for the past 60 years. One of the first assignments this year was to choose a site, decide where the audience would be, and create two images—one still, and one that changes the energy of the space. One participant brought us to a place in the woods, directed us to face the lake, and then asked us to turn around. What we saw was an empty cabin, with no dancers, no movement. Somehow it was breathtaking. He made us see that cabin as if for the first time. I had walked past it every day for the past three summers, yet I hadn't *seen* it until he had me face it with a mind shocked out of its expectations. It never occurred to me to have someone *not* in the space. Having grown up dancing, I assumed someone would be hanging from the rafters or falling into the space. But that simple emptiness—it was brilliant.

MK: Do any of the people who take your workshops go on to make site work elsewhere?

PW: Our Swiss friend Gisa Frank comes to mind. She recently made a beautiful film inspired by our site workshop. There are these giant "holes" in the alpine meadows of the mountainous region where she lives, lending the area a particular mystique. Her colorful play with disappearing into and appearing out of these indentations brilliantly capitalizes on the cultural associations connected to the Appenzell region—a combination of eerie oddity and surprising humor.

MK: Does your site work ever overlap with urban renewal projects?

SP: Funny you should ask. The one time that this was an integral aspect of a project, it got washed away with Hurricane Katrina. We were collaborating on a two-year site project with the Center for Bioenvironmental Research, a cutting-edge science think tank based at Tulane University in New Orleans. They had just purchased a defunct casino at the edge of the river that they were going to gut and turn into an international research institute. Part of their mission statement included a belief in the science/art interface. They wanted us to create a site performance piece in their space before it was developed, a piece that would introduce this new site to the public in a unique, artistic way. For us, it was a dream come true. Half of the space was a Disney-esque faux French Quarter with fake live oaks and a fake river. The other half was raw space the size of an airplane hangar. Part one of the project was to begin the first week of September 2005. We had spent the summer organizing and designing it in minute detail. Over 60 people were going to perform in it—local artists, scientists, engineers, school kids, teachers. Then Katrina hit, and for a few hours we thought the city had been saved. Then the levees broke. We were devastated, heartbroken, in shock. Having fallen in love with New Orleans during two previous guest artist residencies at Tulane University, we had become attached to every street, every tree. It was two months before we could locate most of our cast, and we still don't know where or how some people are.

A friend who knew us well and was very concerned over the state we were in told us, "You have to go back into the studio, lie down on your stomachs, breathe, and the next project will come." And so it did. The following morning at 4:00 A.M., *Katrina, Katrina: Love Letters to New Orleans* was born. It was realized in February 2006 down in New Orleans with a just reopened Tulane University as our partner. The site element shifted to videos shot throughout the ravaged city; the subject matter changed completely. We call it a live documentary. It's a full-evening dance/spoken word/video work that continually evolves as it tours from city to city, inviting Gulf Coast

evacuees to participate in workshops and video portraits or as members of the performing cast. For the past year, we've been living with our hearts in New Orleans. It is where we are.

MK: So a part of you seems sited at all times?

SP: Yes, yes, yes. And a part of us is sited in India, and another in Japan, along the Kumano coast, where Buddhism met Shintoism centuries ago. So, as we sit in our sixth-floor East Village tenement apartment, where one window looks out at the Empire State Building and the other at where the Twin Towers used to be, we're internally linked to these places that awaken our hearts and call to us to frame them and capture their essence with our art.

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The Honeymoon Is Over

By Sara Pearson

The middle-class neighborhood in which I grew up sprang into existence shortly after World War II ended. Returning servicemen, armed with their GI bills and new families, quickly built houses that, from my young aesthetic, were utterly lacking in charm or beauty. Framed by a front- and backyard that was 95 percent perfectly green grass (save for the little yellow circles left behind by the family dog's daily business), I found it all perfectly boring and itchy. I considered the grass a representation of what I was so eager to leave behind.

So, 30 years later in New York City, when Patrik Widrig and I were commissioned by Dancing in the Streets to choreograph our first site work for Wave Hill—the bucolic garden estate with endless expanses of green in Riverdale, New York—I was challenged to discover a new relationship to this previously rejected phenomenon.

With old visual associations having faded from my mind—a result of living many years in Manhattan and from touring to developing countries and urban centers around the world—I was suddenly seeing grass as if for the first time. Green! Greenness! It reminded me of Socrates' question, "What is red?" which, during my first years of college, my friends and I pondered nightly—all the while fueled by homegrown marijuana and background music alternating between Bach's Mass in B Minor and the Doors' "Light My Fire."

It would be an exaggeration to say that my choreographic muses were instantly awakened by Wave Hill. As Patrik and I walked through what had previously been Teddy Roosevelt's and later Toscanini's magnificent summer residence (now a public garden and cultural center), we searched for the site we would choose for the new work. I waited for a space, a place to speak to me—nothing

happened. We kept walking; I kept waiting—nothing kept happening. This was clearly starting out as an arranged marriage.

We finally came upon a secluded corner of a garden bordered by an old stone wall, which held the possibilities of working with tremendous ranges of spatial perspective. At this point, we had no idea what the dance would be or what it would be "about." But we did know this much: it would be a duet with this particular environment, and we wanted the space and the place to dictate to us both the choreographic vocabulary and structure.

The following week we invited the dancers out for our first exploratory rehearsal. The manicured lawns were unexpectedly smooth and even—it was the equivalent of an outdoor dance floor. With earth in place of wood, the possibilities for running and rolling (yes, we found the one hill on the entire estate) and flying and crashing and being still forever were endless, delicious. And it being a summer project in hot hot hot New York City, we somehow couldn't resist experimenting with water—throwing it, pouring it, choreographing its arcs and visual delights. With the ceiling lifted infinitely upwards and with lighting left

Figure 67. Playing with water in *Common Ground* (1994). Photo by Carlo Adinolfi, courtesy of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER.

to the gods, the possibilities for working with perspective and depth became irresistibly and ravishingly appealing.

Via subway and bus, our small group of seven would commute several times a week from our 100-year-old stifling-in-summer-overheated-in-winter apartments in the East Village. It would often take two hours to get there, two hours to return. How or when anyone had time to work at a paying job with that schedule is a mystery to me now.

By the end of the first week of rehearsals, much of the palette for *Common Ground* had been developed. Discovering the ways in which this new environment demanded a new relationship to time, dynamics, space, sound, motion, and stillness, we became infatuated with the creative possibilities and were ready for more.

By the third week of rehearsals, the thermometer had soared and New York City was experiencing its worst drought in years. The soft grass dried up virtually overnight, and in its place appeared a hardened, parched surface no one wanted to lie on, let alone roll in. Subways broke down; dancers forgot to bring long-sleeved shirts and pants for protection; and with temperatures hitting the high nineties, tempers within our company flared. Group unity of focus wavered, and the timing we had set the week before that had seemed so perfect now felt endlessly long, irritating, and boring. The honeymoon was over.

The next month the rains finally came and, along with the return of our newly beloved green grass, there arrived hundreds of bees. Like an audience that attempts not to get distracted when latecomers are seated, we would try to rehearse with the bees. Largely invisible to me—as I was sitting far away with megaphone in hand—the only way I could tell of their presence was from the continual interruptions in the choreography: someone would dash madly off in the wrong direction; another would stand perfectly still when they were supposed to be doing their solo; another would refuse to drop to the ground for that brilliant moment of perfect unison.

John Cage and Merce Cunningham would have loved it: it brought an element of chance and surprise into the working process that opened up new possibilities and challenged patience to the hilt. It just about drove me out of my mind. And while this was perhaps what was needed, at that time I was far from recognizing it, let alone surrendering to it.

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With every site project, as with every romance, there is a honeymoon. Dwelling perhaps in what Plato terms the "World of Ideas," one can perceive the essence of a place, listen to the space, and see how best it can be framed by color, chore-

Figure 68. Looking for clarity in the water arcs of *Common Ground* (2004). Photo Carlo Adinolfi, courtesy of PEARSONWIDRIG DANCETHEATER.

ography, and sound. This opens up a heightened awareness where both performers and audience enter into a rarefied state of aliveness and attunement, where beauty and humor and musicality and memory and history and sorrow and joy flow through each other in a contrapuntal fugue of love. This is the gift.

And then one is dropped back to earth, back into this body, back into a world of deadlines and bad moods and bad backs and talented dancers having to work three jobs to pay exorbitant rents with $50,000 student loans hovering over them. What had been so clear in that pristine environment becomes lost in the dramas and traumas of self-doubt, conflicting needs, physical limitations, and bad weather.

This is the work. This is the time when all the years of learning to continue when all one can hear is interference come into play. Give the dancers an unexpected 15-minute break. Lie down on the ground or, if you are in an art museum, in front of the Hopper painting. Find that hidden corner in the back garden of

the Buddhist temple, when everyone else is smoking a cigarette, breaking up with a boyfriend, or eating a rice triangle. Exhale and remember what Philo of Alexandria said: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."

Settle down, settle back, and listen. Soften your face. Relax your wrists. Allow your seeing to become an act of receiving rather than of forward assertion. Let the images come to you. Listen to the rhythms in the architecture, whether it's a New Zealand fern forest, an abandoned mill in rural Maine, or the Eu-In Buddhist temple in Kyoto. Slow down and see the space. Yes, it is invisible, but you *can* see it, feel it, breathe it. Let the site speak to you. It will tell you where to place the dancers and how they can frame the site's soul, so that the audience can tune in to this newness as their habitual patterns of perception and expectation dissolve. Drop by drop it comes, or sometimes, as the tightness defrosts, there is a mighty CRACK! and a huge, frozen chunk breaks away as an entire new section in the dance is revealed and discovered. It may take a long time for it to find its way into this world, let alone for you to teach and communicate it. You will need every skill you ever learned in your life to make it happen. It will take 100 percent of your will, 100 percent of your diplomatic talents, and 100 percent of your surrender. Some days everything will go wrong, when presenters and gardeners and museum directors and dancers will say no when you know the right answer is yes. And some days, everything that had seemed impossible becomes possible. A dancer suddenly illuminates the next unknown moment with transcendent clarity; an elegantly efficient solution to a logistical logjam reveals itself thanks to a passing remark from the presenter; and the storm, once again, actually passes over. And finally, Hafiz's poem that begins with "This place where you are right now, God circled on a map for you" is somehow no longer a threat but a comfort.

This is the work. There is nothing else like it in the world. It will kill you, and in so doing, you will become more alive than ever before. Congratulations. Stop complaining. Get to work. Be grateful. Enjoy. Hallelujah!