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2015

ROSEMARY BUTCHER  
winner of the  
BONNIE BIRD LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION  
TO CHOREOGRAPHY AWARD 2015

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'Rosemary Butcher is, simply, a national treasure.'

Maggie Morris, Chair, Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund

The biennial Lifetime Contribution to Choreography Award was established by the Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund in 2015 to celebrate and acknowledge those who have made an exceptional lifetime contribution to the development of choreography and choreographic practice in the UK. In December 2015, the inaugural award was presented to Rosemary Butcher in recognition of four decades of continuous innovation and excellence in choreography. It recognises the reach of her influence across the fields of dance, collaboration and education.

This book was created as the most appropriate way to mark such a long and wide ranging career. It is hoped that the combined voices of Rosemary's contemporaries and collaborators presented here, and collected especially for this book, will demonstrate the significant impact of her work (and her person) throughout dance. In addition it shows the enormous affection, respect and awe that is felt throughout the dance world for Rosemary and her choreography.

But how to describe Rosemary and her many contributions to choreography? She has been called a maverick, a modernist and a minimalist, the mother of British post-modern dance, a revolutionary and an inspiration. Contributors to this book note her sense of anarchy and the absurd, her ready laugh, her steely intelligence and her uncompromising rigour. The foundation of her work may have been the post-modern dance scene in 1970s New York (Rosemary's website proudly quotes

Yvonne Rainer's famous 'No Manifesto' and the rejection of unnecessary theatricality and artifice remains a core feature of her work) but the path she has pursued since her studies in America has been insistently her own.

All choreography is alchemy rather than science and any attempt to summarise what makes Rosemary's work distinctive will necessarily be reductive. A bare bones description of her approach – her demanding methodology in the studio; the stripping back of anything unnecessary; the continuing interest in cross art-collaborations; the strong conceptual core of the work – does little to reveal how deeply moving and intensely human the finished works are. In her choreography, abstraction becomes a medium of direct and profound communication with the audience, creating visually startling, physically compelling dances that resemble the work of no one else. In an age where dance is presented in indoor and outdoor spaces of all kinds, it is worth remembering that Rosemary was a pioneer of creating works sensitive to the various sites in which she presented them – including galleries and churches.

In an ephemeral art form, Rosemary's work has endured. She has not been seduced by the vagaries of dance fashion but instead has been sustained by her own internal artistic vision. Repeated retrospectives have brought past works to new audiences and new generations; it is striking that the work does not date, and still feels fresh and exciting, even on repeated viewing.

Rosemary is a truly independent artist; however, constantly being at the cutting edge has meant that funding has not always flowed. Despite this, she has doggedly refused to compromise on her vision and managed to produce work of startling quality despite (or perhaps because of) a lack of sustained support from establishment sources.

But Rosemary's contribution to choreography only partially rests on her extraordinary output as an artist. Significant roles with different organisations and higher educational institutions have allowed her to influence generations of dance artists. From the very beginning of her career she has taught – in schools, colleges, universities and conservatoires – her rigorous, enquiring approach finding a natural home in academia. A generous and exacting teacher, she has provided innumerable students with new insights into their own creative processes, never imposing an aesthetic or methodology but always pushing people to question themselves and their practice. Working with Rosemary has also proved an education with many of her dancers and collaborators going on to pursue valued roles in the arts.

In the end, Rosemary is simply Rosemary, and her body of work is testament to a truly great artist of international standing.

## VOICES

The first time I saw Rosemary Butcher's company was in the 1980s at the Arnolfini in Bristol. I was rocked to the core that dance could be perceived like this, that a work could be so subtle and profound – and, frankly, at the time I truly did not grasp its importance. All I knew was that I had been changed forever and that my dance world had been repositioned and opened up in ways I had never expected. Since then I have known this visionary maker's work to change countless others' lives. To this day, the youngest and the most mature of dancers revere her work and the word legend is used repeatedly when she is spoken of, and she is spoken of with great respect and often.

The British dance community owes Rosemary Butcher a great service. Indeed so does Europe and the rest of the world, but we are blessed to have such an extraordinary presence in our particular landscape.

My personal contact with Rosemary is a connection of such warmth and humour, with unending playfulness and insightful depth in equal measure. It is people like this who make our lives so rich and make our work in nurturing dance so important.

Bravo to the Bonnies for the presentation of this excellent award and with it an acknowledgement of this woman's impeccable work.





In 1975, I was 15 years old and attending Pimlico School in London. I had already thrown myself into dancing, attending Saturday and Wednesday sessions at The Place, and had joined London Youth Dance at Mulberry School in Whitechapel.

But the course of my life would change when the new dance teacher at school arrived. Her name was Rosemary Butcher. Very quickly, a whole group of us committed ourselves to classes, after school clubs, rehearsals, performances and long talks with Rosemary. She inspired us all immensely and we all worked hard to inspire her too. She gave us space to create our own dances and experimented with us on her own choreographic ideas, never diluting them in any way because we were teenagers.

We had a particularly enlightened head, Kathleen Mitchell, who encouraged arts to be central within the school. We had a fantastic orchestra who played live while we performed dances to a score by Benjamin Britten inspired by the poems of Water de la Mare. So the notion of collaborations where dance took a central role was established at school as part of Rosemary's vision.

I was known as the student who spent all my time in the gym (in those days dance was part

of the PE department). I even got to watch early company rehearsals, dreaming of being part of her company one day. In only another six years' time I would dance for Rosemary for several years, allowing me to have the incredible opportunity to work with her on the creation of many seminal works. Today, 30 years later, I can remember in detail all those works.

It is often said Rosemary is the mother of post-modern dance in the UK. I think that makes me one of her original teenage children. How lucky was I?





Dear Rosemary,

The first class I took with you was at Dartington Hall in 1980 during the Easter Dance at Dartington Festival which was my introduction to British new dance. It was there also that I first saw your work. The piece was *5-Sided Figure* and I remember that one of the dancers was Janet Smith. In this, performers moved along the sides of the irregular geometrical shape that had been taped out on the studio floor. I remember them pausing at its points for little choreographic events that I think were also sometimes triggers to which other dancers responded. It made a really strong impression on me – its clear, simple conceptual structure and the quiet, thoughtful, responsive quality of the performance.

That was 35 years ago. I took one more class with you, in 1986, when I was on the editorial collective of *New Dance* magazine and we were doing a special issue to accompany a retrospective of your work. I came down to London and attended your regular evening class at Riverside Studios. Others attending, I seem to remember, included dancers with whom you regularly worked at the time like Merry Dufton

and Caroline Pegg (with whom I worked on *New Dance*) as well as people who were involved with Alexander technique, and also, I think, some young architects.

Not living in London, I've not always been able to follow everything you've been doing, and of course a lot of it has been abroad, particularly in Germany and Austria. But every few years I've made trips to London or elsewhere to see a new piece and, more recently, started talking with you about your work and sitting in on a few rehearsals. I remember the slow, thoughtfulness of pieces like *Shell Force Fields* and *Spaces* (1981) and then the dynamic running in *Flying Lines* (1985) developed from the idea of running with kites. Then in the 1990s there was an extraordinary series of works with dancers like Gill Clarke, Jonathan Burrows, Finn Walker and others which had an extraordinary depth and resonance. Most recently you let me follow you through several stages of your project *After Kaprow* (2011) with Ana Mira, first as an idea, then as a two-screen video project in a studio, then an installation with live performance at the Bloomberg Gallery, then the films shot in Italy and the duet at The Place theatre in London where I chaired a post-show discussion with

you and everyone involved in the project. It was an amazing example of how research can animate a community of creative people to discover and bring into being something new and previously inconceivable. Looking back now it was so obviously and so clearly an extension of your work.

My background before I started writing about dance was painting and fine art. So, for example, I knew Heinz Dieter Pietsch's work before I came across your dances. Only later did I discover that you were collaborating with him on a several pieces. And there have been so many similar collaborations. People in architecture, film and the visual arts have always seemed to understand your work in ways in which some of the more conventionally oriented members of the British dance world have not been able to do. Yet for me it has always been the movement material that dancers develop through working with you and the quality of attention with which they execute it in performance that hooks me, and that I always rediscover each time I have an opportunity to catch up with what you've been doing. It is almost as if, as I watch the dancers, I can hear the underlying traces of your calm clear voice talking to them, feeding back to them about what they are doing, not exactly directing but nevertheless leading

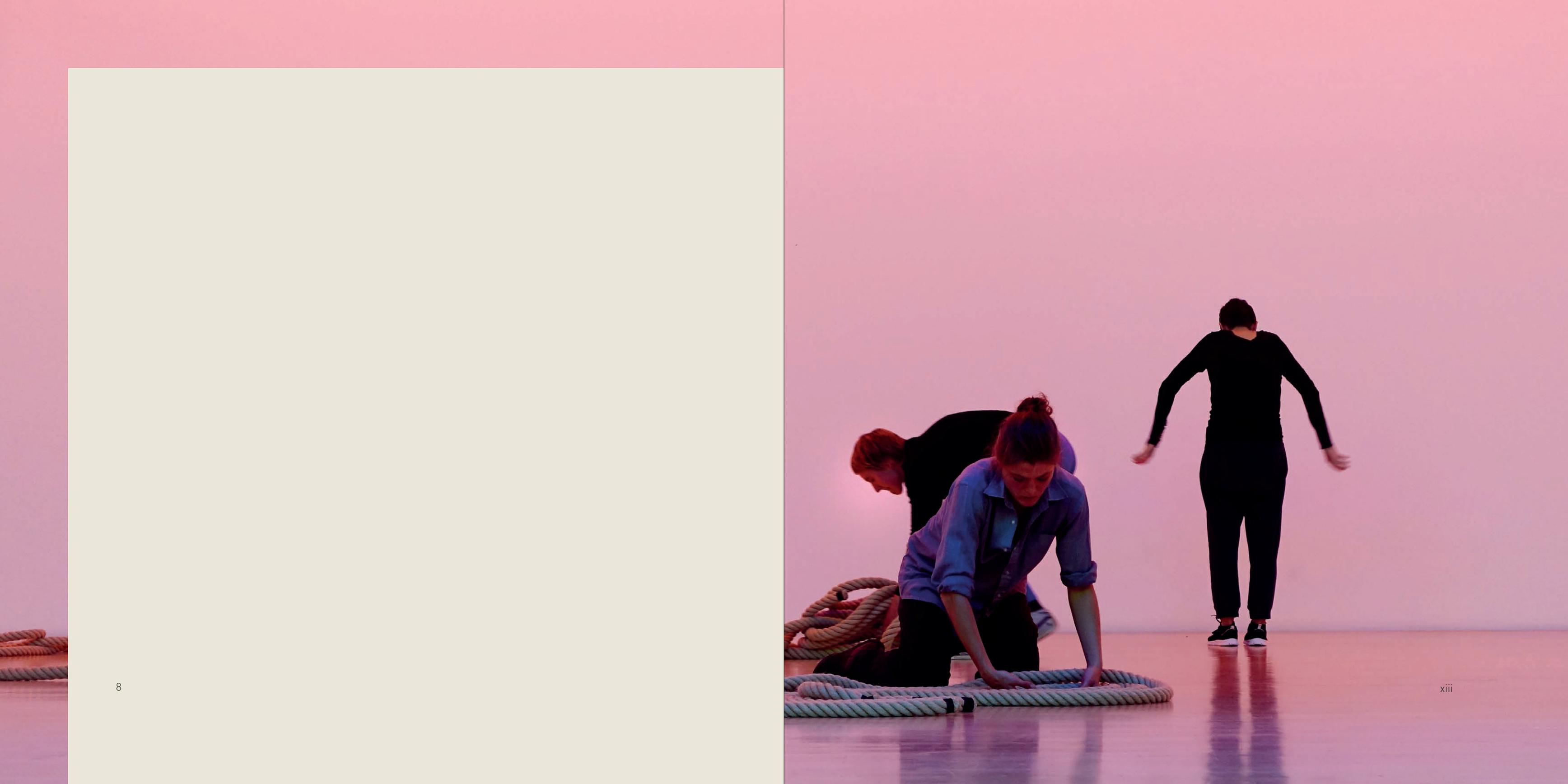
them through an evolving dialogue. I know that I am watching something where there has been a kind of ethics in the making process which has resulted in an ethico-aesthetics in performance. And that is what moves me and gives me hope whenever I am fortunate enough to encounter your work. Thank you.

As an architect, I learned so much from collaborating with Rosemary. We worked together on *D2* (1989), on *3d* (1989) and on *Body as Site* (1992) where I contributed a bridge, a ramp, lines of light on the floor or large sheets of bendy plywood strung with ropes. We both started with a blank sheet of paper really, but Rosemary's choreography would bring these beginnings of architectural space alive with precise and concentrated movement by the dancers. As rehearsals progressed, she would reinforce and adapt the 'architecture' on stage by repetitive lines of structural movement and by beautiful, transformative ideas. For me, it was watching human body movements sketch and define invented space.

These performances would take place in unlikely touring venues like art galleries, warehouses, a tram shed, a church and a cathedral. Such large volumes were transformed, not just by stage lights and physical constructions (always minimal due to small budgets) but by the purposeful movements of the dancers. She enabled them to redefine the space with their bodies over time. Time, of course, is an important aspect for the appreciation of architectural space which can change remarkably with human movement and the progression of sound.

Another special memory is running an architectural winter school in the early 1990s at Ricky DeMarco's gallery space in Edinburgh. Rosemary workshopped with architectural students to use their bodies to feel the essence of structural elements in combination (two students are a sheet of glass leaning against three students who are representing a stone wall, for example). She then helped them to devise their own short dance pieces with members of her company to music composed by the wonderful Jim Fulkerson.

So Rosemary's work has had a great and meaningful impact on the creativity of many architects – especially this one.





Whenever I've had the opportunity to work with Rosemary, I've always felt that I'd arrived where I belonged. The encouragement to work with instinctive sensibilities and excavate continually necessitates a rigour of investigation and exploration that is instantly invigorating and empowering. The work becomes vital. There are never any formulas. There are never tried and tested methods to fall back on. Each work is a new challenge and you never really know where it will lead. Except you can always be sure the journey will be beautifully enriching.

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LAUREN POTTER  
Dance artist



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Around 1988, I met Rosemary Butcher for the first time. As a young fresh faced designer you hope to meet a client who will give you creative freedom and opportunity. In Rosemary I found that and much more: a colleague, a collaborator, a friend and an inspiration. I've worked with her ever since and it is always a privilege and a joy.

In 2004, I helped make a film of Rosemary's *Hidden Voices* performance for Channel 4. We set up a complex camera and lighting arrangement in a studio in west London with a small film crew. The head of lighting that day was a large, burly geezer who confided he knew little or nothing about dance or art, let alone Rosemary's unique work. No matter. After the first full take of the piece which lasted about 12 minutes he was practically speechless. But he wore the broadest smile. After a pause he quietly declared it to be 'Bloody brilliant!' and was an instant convert. That's what Rosemary can do.

I raise my glass to you Rosemary.

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DAVID ELLIS

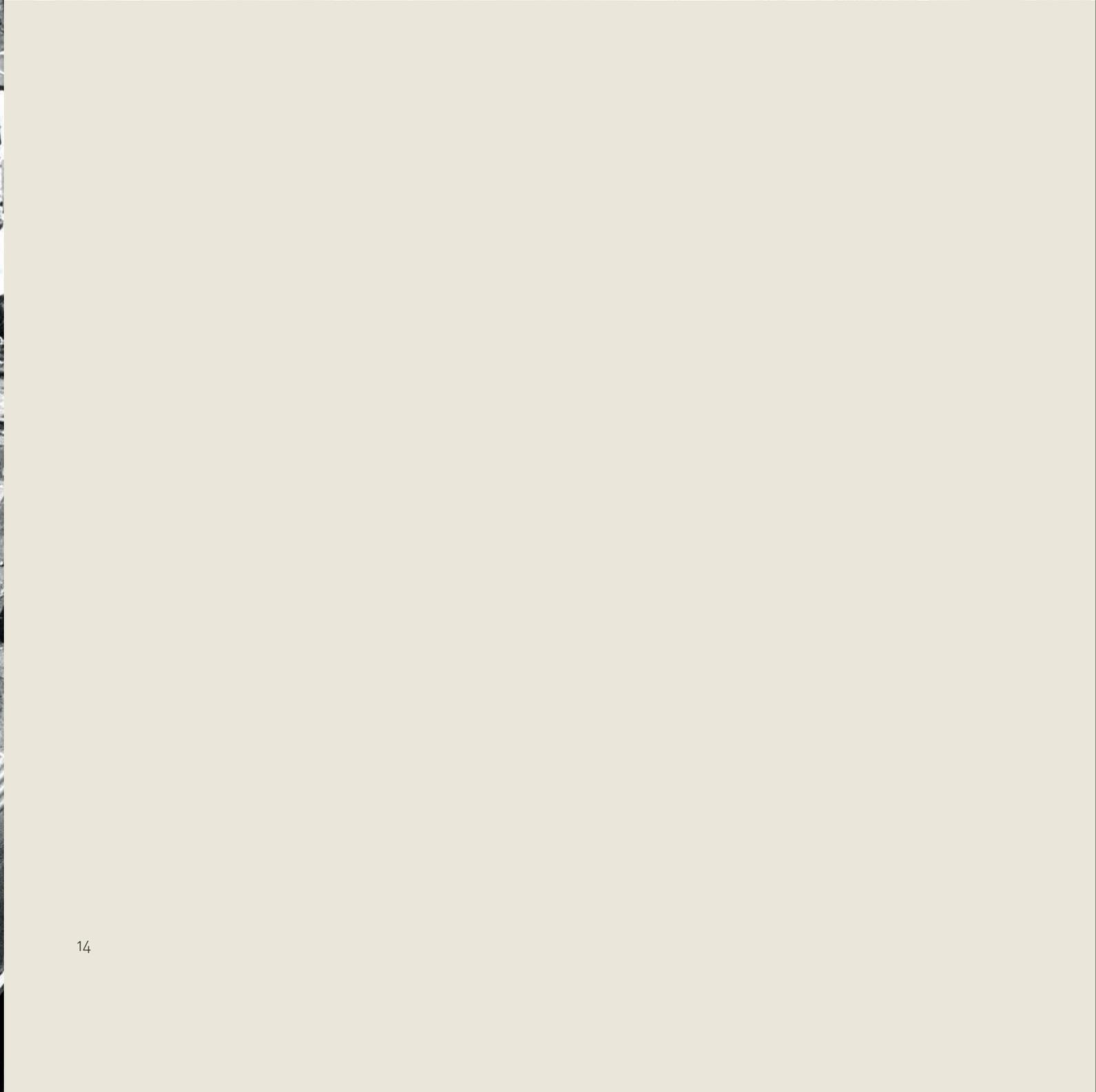
Graphic Designer, why not associates

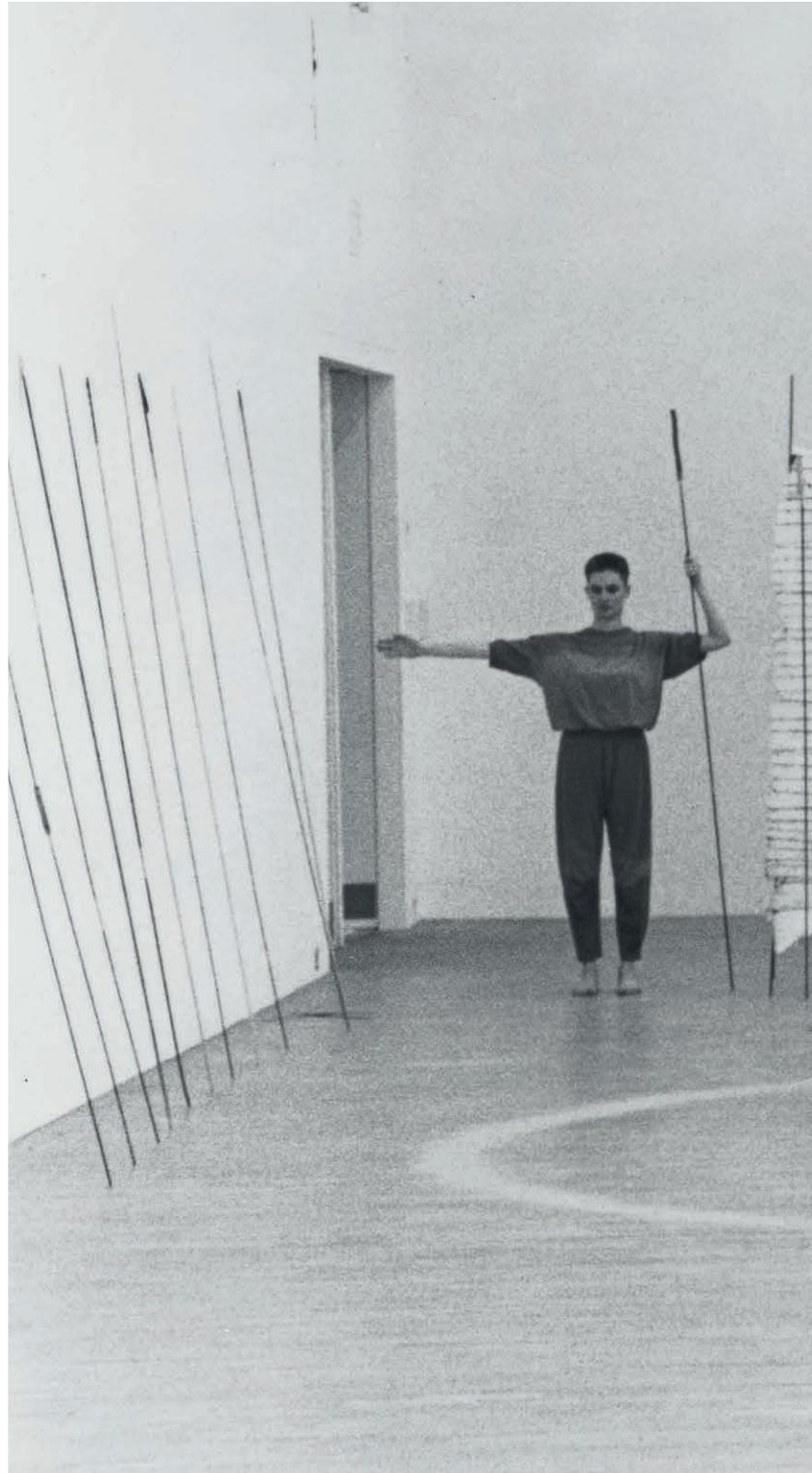


It was Jonathan Burrows who introduced me to Rosemary's work. In 2000, I presented her work for the first time at Arts Centre Vooruit in Ghent, Belgium, as part of a focus on British Dance. Since then we would regularly meet in London, Munich, Montreal, Bassano del Grappa, Berlin... and engage in long conversations.

*Scan* (2000) and *Hidden Voices* (2004) belong to my favourite choreographic works for how they both rigorously reflect on the art form – the relationship between bodies and their environment – and touch you in ways that escape you.

The many dialogues I have had with Rosemary, some in public like the *body:language* talk at Sadler's Wells in 2008, often have had a similar effect: in the middle of it, you feel slightly lost because her articulateness challenges you to go to new places in your own thinking. But, similar to the choreographic work, they stick with you and continue to influence you for a long time.





I met Rosemary through hanging out at Riverside Studios when it opened and being a volunteer at the box office there. As far as I remember, Rosemary was a resident artist, before Michael Clark, or at least she was always around. It turned out we both had young kids and by chance we would take them to the same adventure playground in Holland Park, because we both lived in West London, and we'd chat a bit when we met. One day she asked if I would be in the recreation of a piece she was going to make. I said, 'But you've never seen me dance,' and she said, 'It doesn't matter, I like talking to you.' So I went along and we tried to put *Landings* (1976) and *Space Between* (1977) back together. I was lucky enough to have Maedée Duprès dancing with me who'd done them originally, and between us, and with the help of a notebook from the other original dancer, Julyen Hamilton, we kind of got it going. Rosemary was very patient, and remained patient over the years, with the fact that my body was 'up' instead of 'down' because I was a ballet dancer and I didn't have that gravity thing that comes with contemporary dance training.

At that time Rosemary was also teaching the famous Riverside open class and I'd go along. That was a revelation because there were so many different types of people there,

some of them amazing performers and others who weren't dancers at all. We kind of did improvisation stuff and it was probably the first taste of that that I ever had. And in a way it was a unique and brilliant thing she was doing with that class, and it was a focus for quite a few interesting artists.

Those first recreations I did were part of an early retrospective at Riverside, and from there I drifted into other pieces, some old and some new. It was always a bit ad hoc, and I was coming and going from my day job with The Royal Ballet, but it was a good training for being able to focus anywhere and pick stuff up again despite the odd hours and places we worked.

I always laugh when I see a new piece by Rosemary because without exception I've always said to her afterwards that this one was the best yet, and it seems to go on like that. Perhaps it is something to do with the way the work shifts slowly and is out of time but somehow always connected to what is happening around.

We worked a lot in non-theatre spaces, even gallery spaces on a number of occasions. It is interesting to think of what we were doing back then, now that so much work is happening in galleries again. It seemed an obvious place to

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JONATHAN BURROWS

Choreographer

present the work because gallery spaces suited the conceptual and architectural quality of the pieces, and at the same time they wouldn't have had such power if there wasn't also this parallel world of emotional resonance in the movement. One rehearsal sticks in my mind with me, Russell Maliphant and Deborah Jones. Rosemary had us make short phrases and then cut them in half, and then cut them in half again, and again, until what was left was a micro-fragment of the original feeling of the thing, and then from there we built it up again into movement. I was influenced a lot by this discovery that the heart of a dance can be condensed like that, and then used as the source of other and more intense material. I think the rehearsal I am talking about was for a video installation called *After the Last Sky* (1995), which was shown on multiple screens in a gallery space at the Royal College of Art.

The other thing Rosemary is brilliant at is the sense that the starting point for a material can be anything – from a weighty image to an abstract instruction or task – but the work itself over time, watched and commented upon, slowly fills whatever you have chosen until it becomes something that transcends the flimsiness of the original impulse.

I understood Rosemary's work better when I heard Phillipp Gehmacher explain in a workshop that for him the standing figure is a portrait and the lying down or horizontal figure a landscape, and his image seemed to reflect the way Rosemary uses both, and uses the powerful expressive field of shifting between the two. It made me think again about why I still go back in my mind to earlier pieces like *The Site* (1983) and *Imprints* (1983), and why those two pieces in particular were so extraordinary together: the first almost entirely hugging the floor, and then the delicate upright relationship of Gaby Agis and Dennis Greenwood in the second. I've watched *Imprints* again recently and it still seems so fresh.

Having said that, I worked with Rosemary on and off for 13 years and at the end I remember a conversation with her. I thought, 'Well, I can say what I think now,' and I said, 'You know, the reason I've gone on working with you is because I haven't a clue what you're doing or how you're doing it. And that made every rehearsal and every new piece a journey.'





I remember going to see Rosemary's company for the first time in the late 1970s at Riverside Studios. I am not sure if it was part of the first Dance Umbrella programme – I am a bit vague on detail – but it certainly was around that time. I do, however, remember the dancers: Maedée Duprès, Julyen Hamilton, Dennis Greenwood and Miranda Tufnell.

Up until that point my dance diet had mostly been London Contemporary Dance Theatre and Rambert Dance. I had seen some other new work – things were happening in London, not least at X6 – so I knew there was more going on out there, but I had very little context for what I was about to see. My whole understanding of dance was transformed by that experience at Riverside. It was so different, so fresh, so clear; I knew I had seen something really special. Dance changed for me that night and I would never look at work in the same way again.

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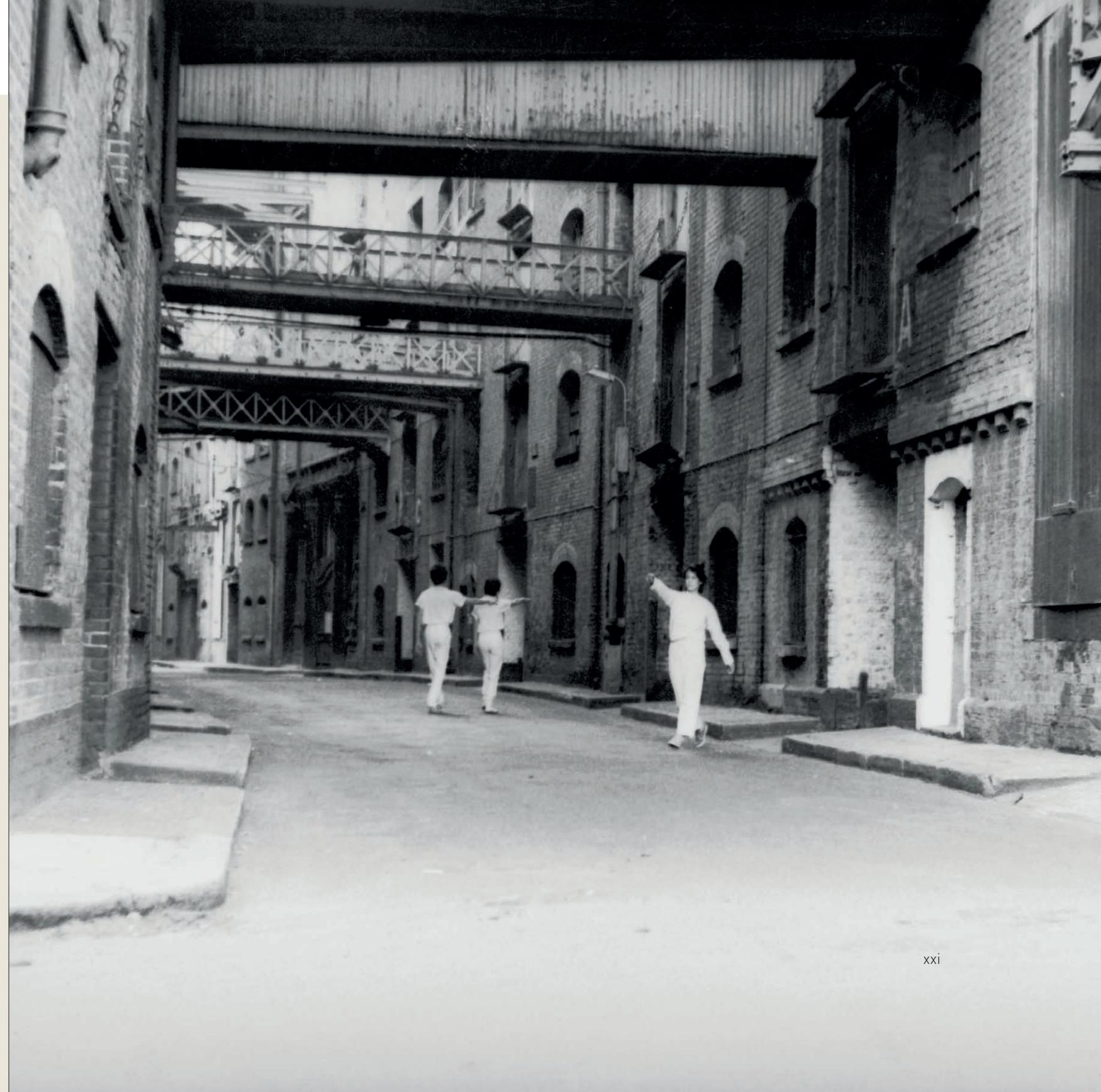
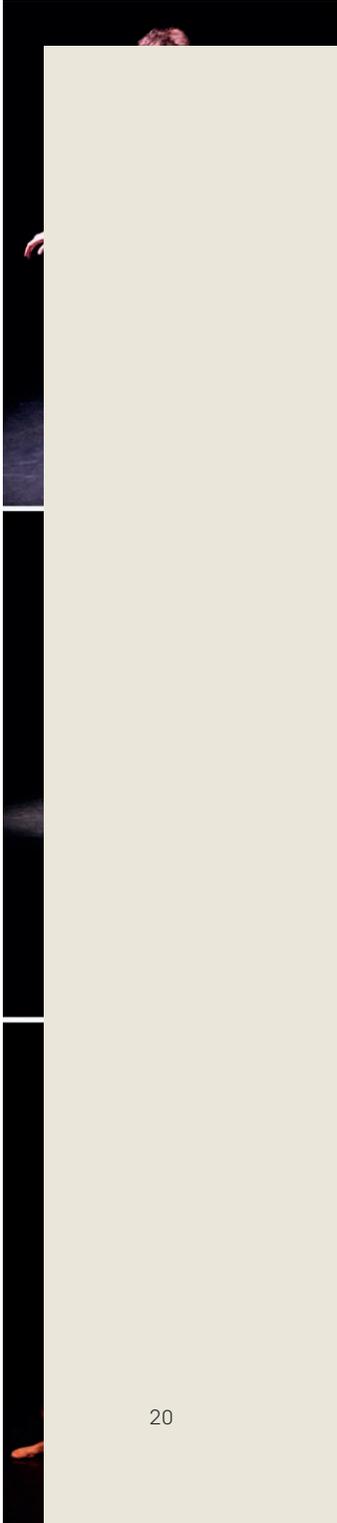
BRENDAN KEANEY

Artistic Director and Chief Executive, DanceEast

I remember experiencing a great sense of excitement and freedom while running in vast arcs across the stage at Riverside Studios in Rosemary's 1977 piece *White Field*. Throughout the many years I worked with her, those feelings were always present.

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DENNIS GREENWOOD  
Dance artist





Dearest Rosemary,

It was a joy to help you with your research for *After Kaprow – The Silent Room* (2012) for The Place and Bloomberg commission at the Bloomberg Gallery: a real privilege, a personal awakening and a unique insight into your practice.

You have a unique, subtle and extraordinary way of opening up the choreographic process through your creative vision, placing embodiment within altered time and space to reveal the work and ideas in motion.

I am thrilled that you are being honoured by the Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund, as you are both very special to me. I am looking forward to working on many great projects together going forward, extending our journey and our friendship.

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ELLIE BEEDHAM

Programmer and Producer, The Place







There is something fabulously naughty about Rosemary. Alongside the rigour and distinctive aesthetic of her choreography there is a dry English wit that means whenever I see her we end up laughing, whether talking about art or life. It comes from a place of generosity, I think, that permeates her teaching but also a gleeful appreciation of the absurdity of life. When she curated the programme in Lilian Baylis Studio a few years ago, I had a fantastic excuse to travel abroad with her, going to see work, and the photos of our trips still make me laugh. A fabulous gift to have and to give to people, among her many other talents.

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EMMA GLADSTONE

Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Dance Umbrella

I am really honoured and pleased to congratulate Rosemary Butcher on her lifetime achievement award.

Through the years together, I kept reading in her biography that 'Rosemary had her ground breaking performance at Serpentine Gallery in 1976'. I was born in 1976. Rosemary has transmitted to many generations of students, choreographers, dancers and visual artists her unique choreographic signature, her path of dedication to artistic process and her appreciation of dance as a contemporary art form.

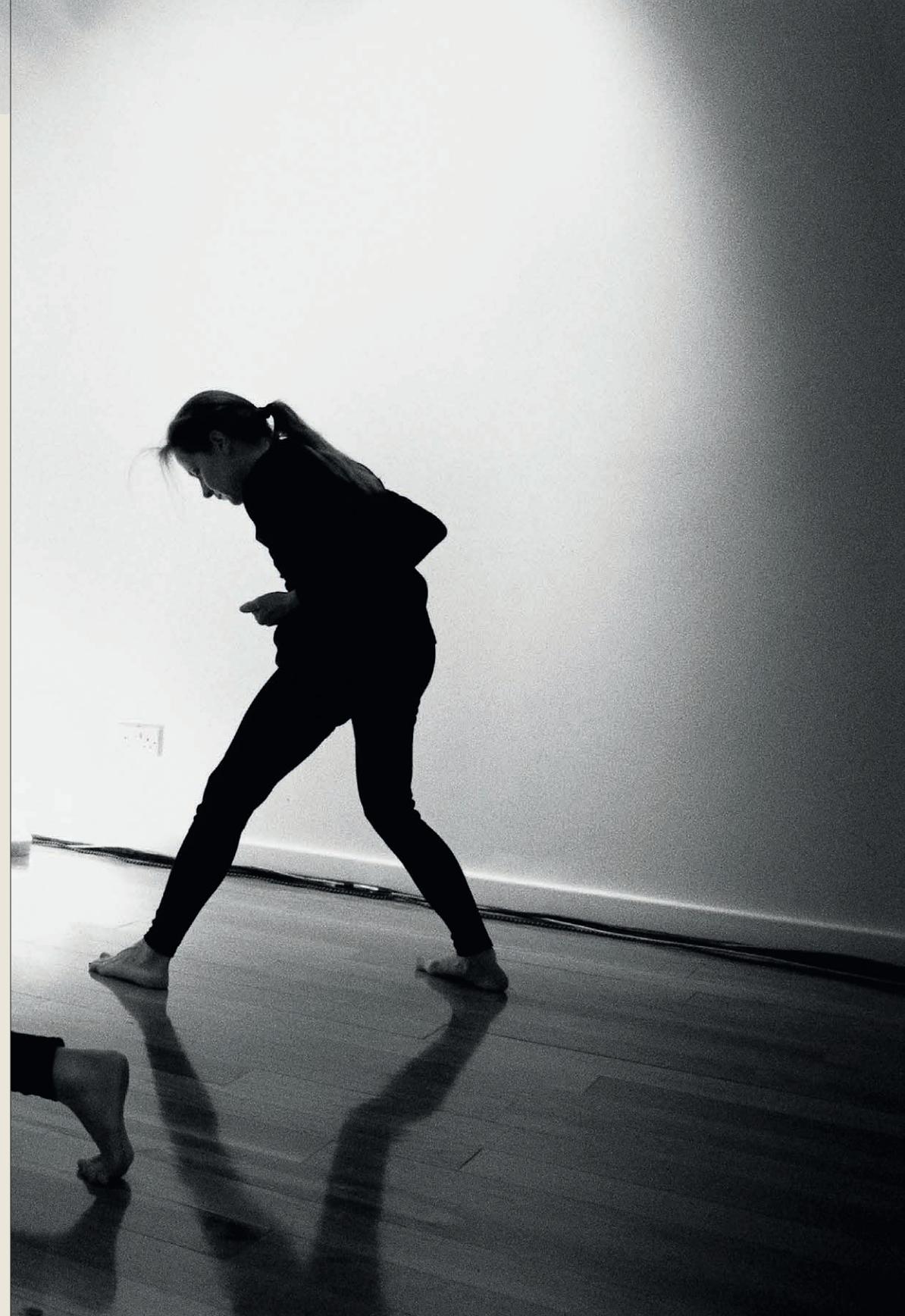
I have been beside her for more than 10 years working on Idea and Body. Her choreographic 'way' has the power of bridging between conceptual premises and practice.

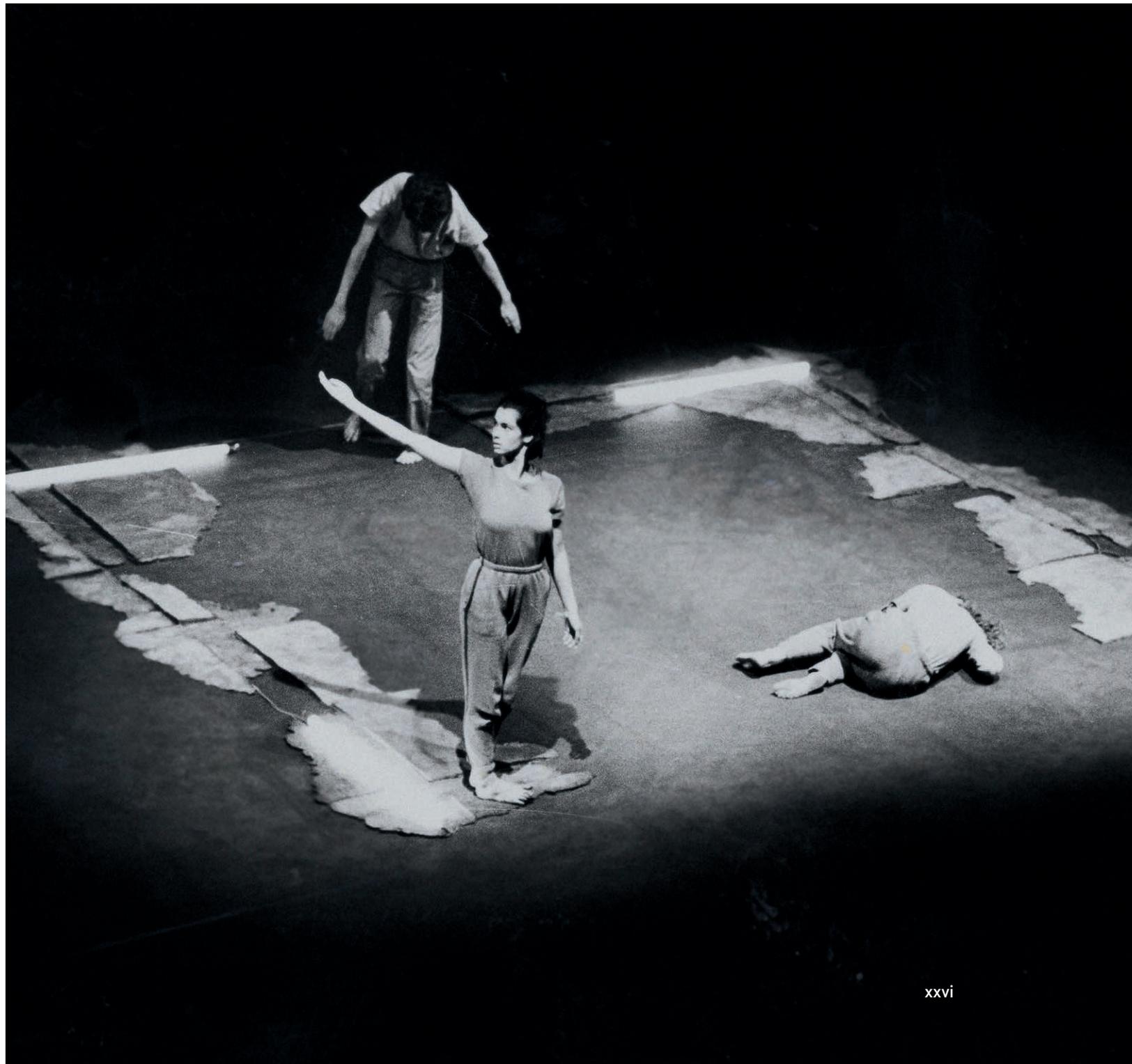
To me Rosemary is a Master: for her kindness of transmission, her commitment to life and art, her understanding of dance practice and embodiment; for her body of work of great inspiration and challenge. Her teachings resonate in the field more and more strongly.

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ELENA GIANNOTTI

Dance artist





I was introduced to Rosemary Butcher in 1980 by a fellow artist and friend, John Groom, who had previously collaborated with her.

During an initial meeting at my studio, we discussed our backgrounds and artistic work. We found that, though working in different disciplines, we shared many interests. Rosemary was already firmly established as a contemporary choreographer interested in working with visual artists and musicians. I had completed my studies at the Royal College of Art two years previously and was searching for new concepts and processes which would help to advance my artistic development. So I was delighted that Rosemary offered me the opportunity to work with her on a new project, which later became *Spaces 4*, first performed at Riverside studios in 1981. It marked the beginning of several collaborations throughout the 1980s and beyond.

Rosemary has her own, perhaps unique, approach for collaborating with visual artists. She does not confront them with a finished, worked out choreography for which a visual background or stage set would be required.

Instead, Rosemary invites ideas or suggestions for themes, narratives, visual elements or movements that could inform and inspire the process of creating a work. Everyone involved in the project is encouraged to contribute ideas or suggestions.

Our first collaboration began with informal rehearsals consisting of improvised movements. They initially took place in my studio and later at Riverside Studios. Temporary sculptural objects were set up by me to work out what form and proportions the final installation for the piece should have. Gradually, with careful and considerate direction by Rosemary, a more defined concept evolved which shaped and determined both the choreography of the piece as well as its visual elements.

When working with Rosemary on this or other projects, I was always impressed and fascinated by the way she initiated, structured and coordinated the processes in order to create a work, and also how she communicated and worked with her dancers. She had a warm, gentle, considerate and caring approach in directing and rehearsing a piece, inviting

individual interpretations and ideas both from artists as well as her dancers. At the same time though, Rosemary always had a clear vision of what she wanted to achieve and what her artistic intentions were.

Rosemary and I continued to collaborate throughout the 1980s, not only creating three further pieces, but also in teaching projects in which interactions between movement and drawing were explored.

Our collaboration culminated in a piece called *Touch the Earth* (1987) which, in my view, was the most complex work in terms of choreography and sculptural installation, combined with Michael Nyman's haunting musical composition. It was filmed for the BBC in a disused warehouse in Bristol and has influenced the development of my own work in many ways.





Rosemary's remarkable achievements have taken place over nearly four decades, over which time she has become regarded as one of our most innovative choreographers. Significant alongside her profile as a dance and visual artist is Rosemary's contribution as teacher and mentor – her work with students, emerging artists and the teachers with whom she has worked in conservatoires, academies, colleges and universities is described by all as inspiring and enduring; she has influenced the directions of dance pedagogy and in turn developments within the contemporary dance genre.

Over 40 or so years, Rosemary has remained an independent artist: in her use of cross arts collaboration in music, visual arts, film and architecture as an integral aspect of the choreographic process, and in her frequent choice of non-theatrical spaces for presentation, Rosemary's work has made a unique and significant contribution to contemporary dance as an art form. In many ways removed from mainstream contemporary dance, Rosemary's achievements are all the more remarkable for this.

At Trinity Laban, we are fortunate indeed to have had Rosemary with us as a member of the Faculty for five years, from 1998 to 2003,

during which time she was to have a profound influence on our students, teaching and curriculum at all levels.

Rosemary's choreographic work continues to critical acclaim: she is driven, she is compelled; she is forensic in her exploration of movement and in pushing dancers to excavate the endless possibilities of the body. It is fitting indeed that Rosemary is being honoured with a Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund Lifetime Achievement Award.

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MIRELLA BARTRIP

Director of Dance, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Movement and Dance

I am so happy that Rosemary finally gets the deep appreciation she truly has deserved. We have all known for years and decades: Rosemary is simply the best.

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SIGRID GAREIS

Curator and Founding Director of Tanzquartier Vienna





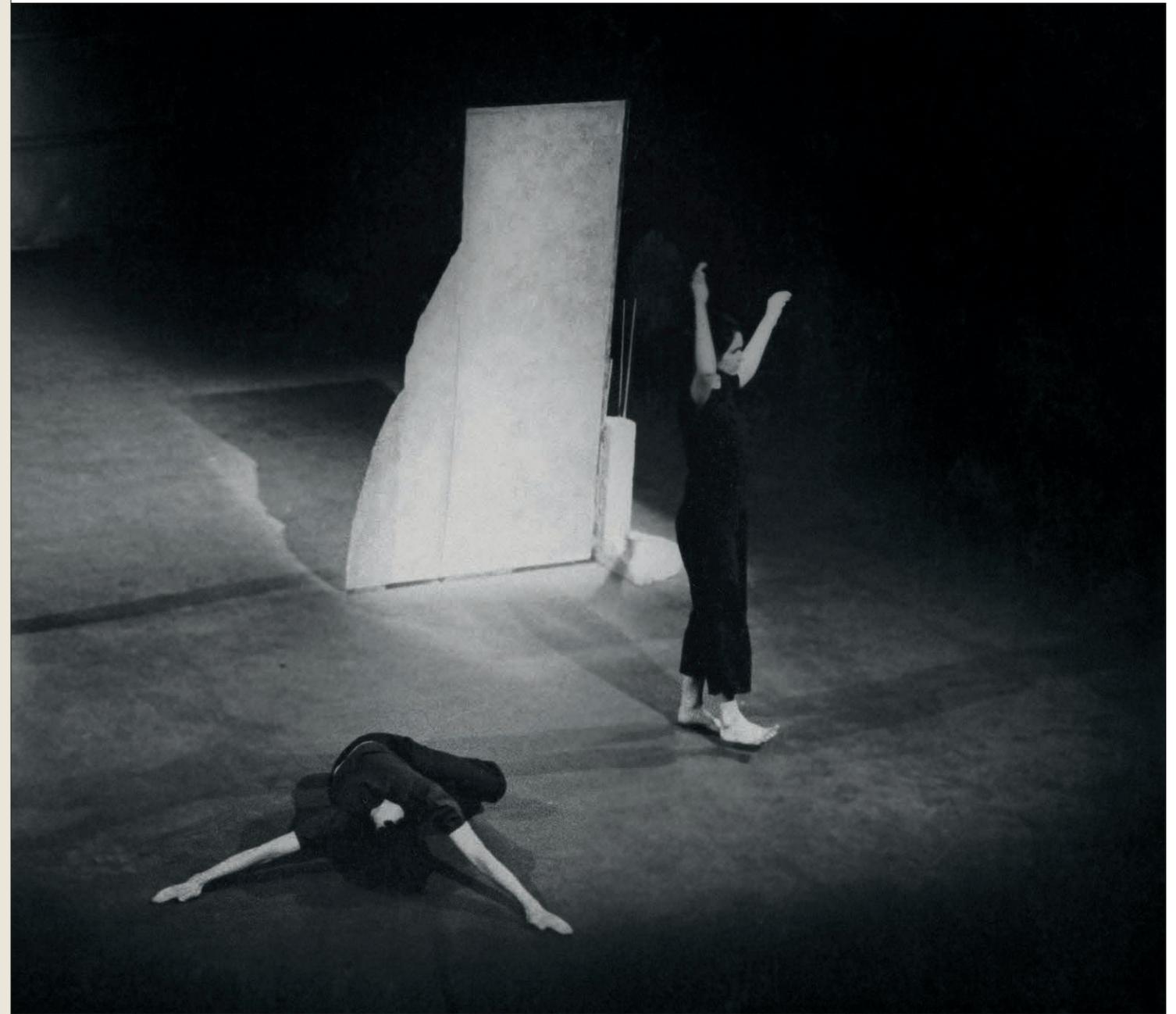
#### Glossary of Sounds: Berlin 2015

Whilst working with Rosemary in Berlin on *Test Pieces* (2015), we established a code referring to specific sounds we were using. Rosemary directed with her unique style, never following convention, resulting in a composition that was often in a fluid state of experimentation. This language became invaluable during rehearsals as we shifted and rearranged our sounds. I have compiled a list that was noted down at the time.

Clearing sound  
Cleaning sound  
Singing metal  
Second wall line thin crunchy tone  
Lighthouse in the wind  
Container sound  
Light resonance  
Spatial wash  
Void  
Third wall  
Exit sound  
Barbed wire  
Lighthouse sweep  
Reverse wall  
Third wall light  
Drop lower  
Wash at the end of lighthouse  
Bass hollow wind

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SIMON KEEP  
Composer



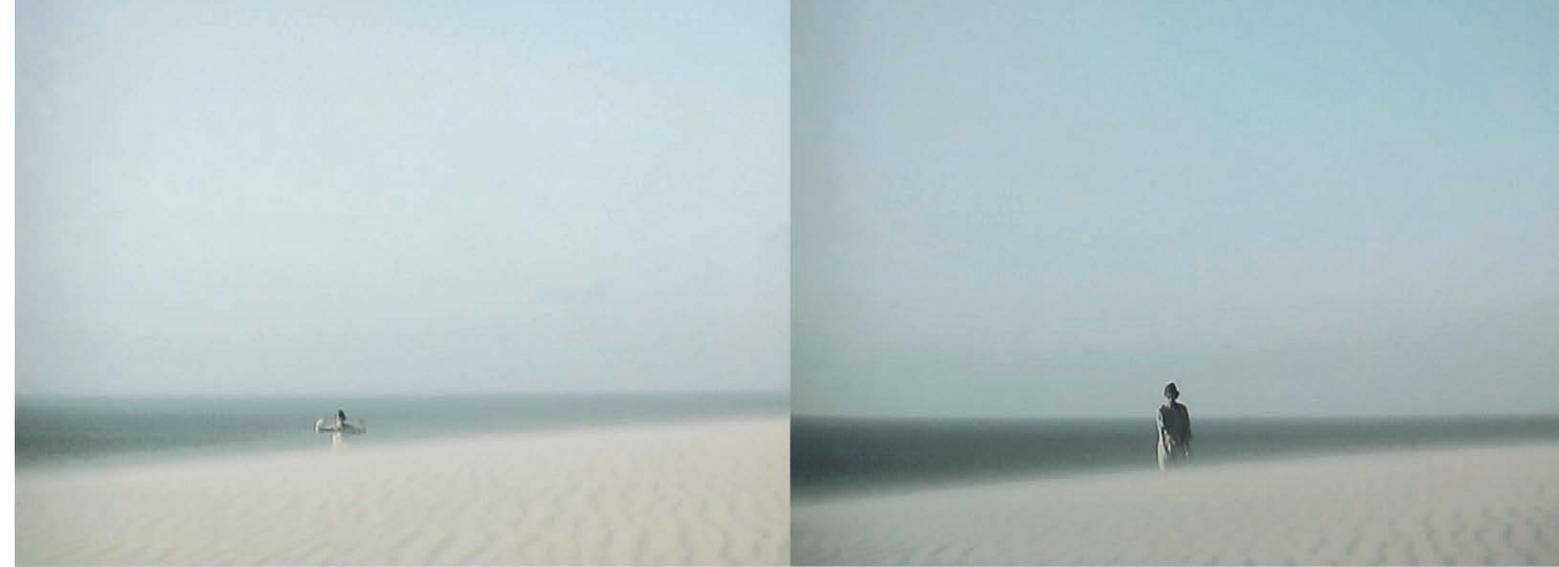


Rosemary, back in the day when we were young, you came along and opened my eyes to what dance could be, beyond the boundaries of Graham technique and ballet, in which I had been training so hard. I was aware of Paxton, Fulkerson and the Judson artists in New York but you were right here, in London, working in a new way, always with great integrity – and we were able to watch, see, talk and work with you as you developed your craft. You took us out of the theatre and studio, into outdoor spaces and art galleries. You worked with improvisation and what we might now call movement ‘scores’. Many young people today think that kind of thing is new but you were doing it before they were born. Ever since, you have quietly and assiduously followed your artistic line, wherever it takes you and without pandering to fashion. I am, and always have been, full of admiration and respect. You’re way, way ahead of the curve. I’m sure it is not an easy place to be but I, for one, am very glad you are there.

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BETSY GREGORY

Chair, Dance4



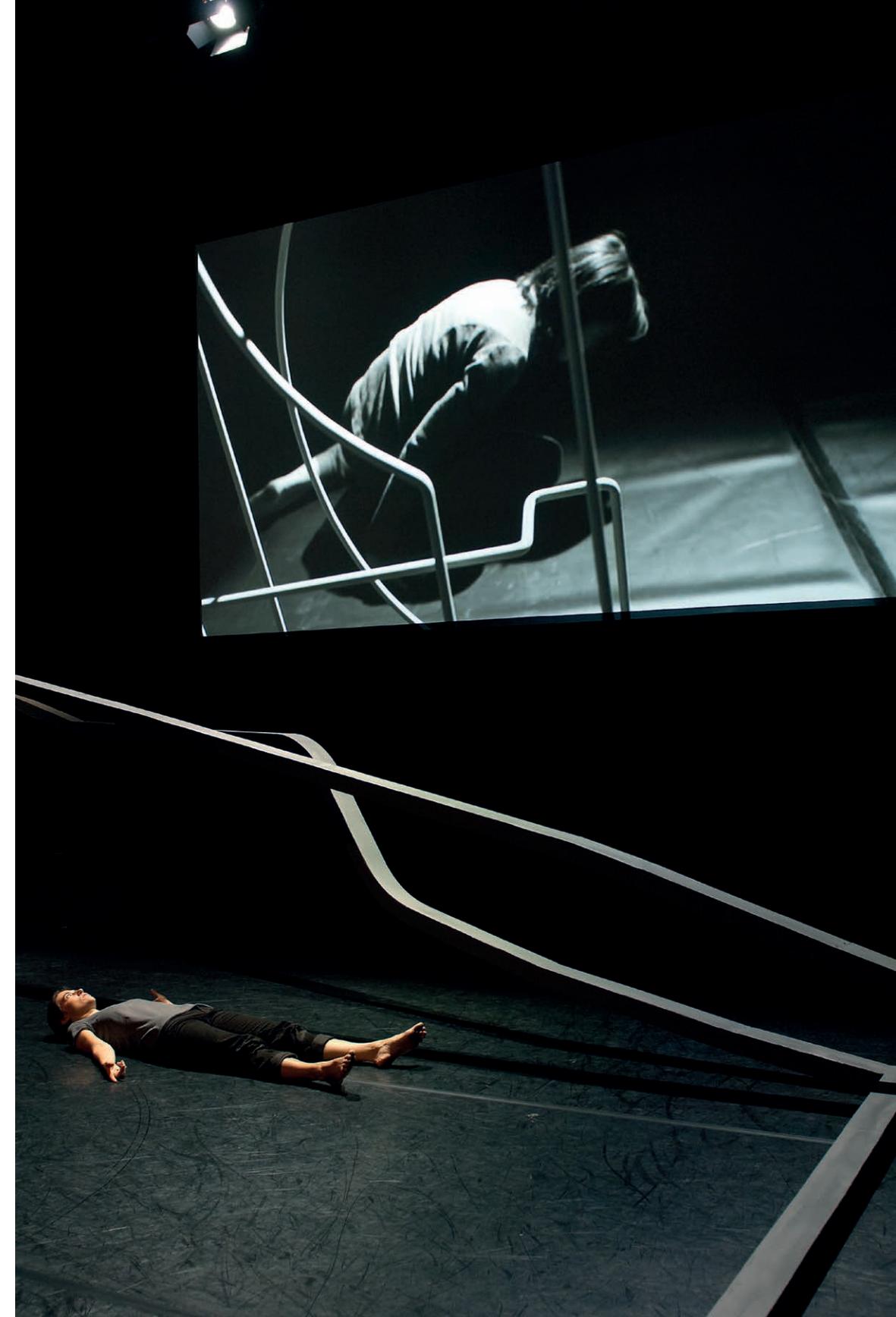


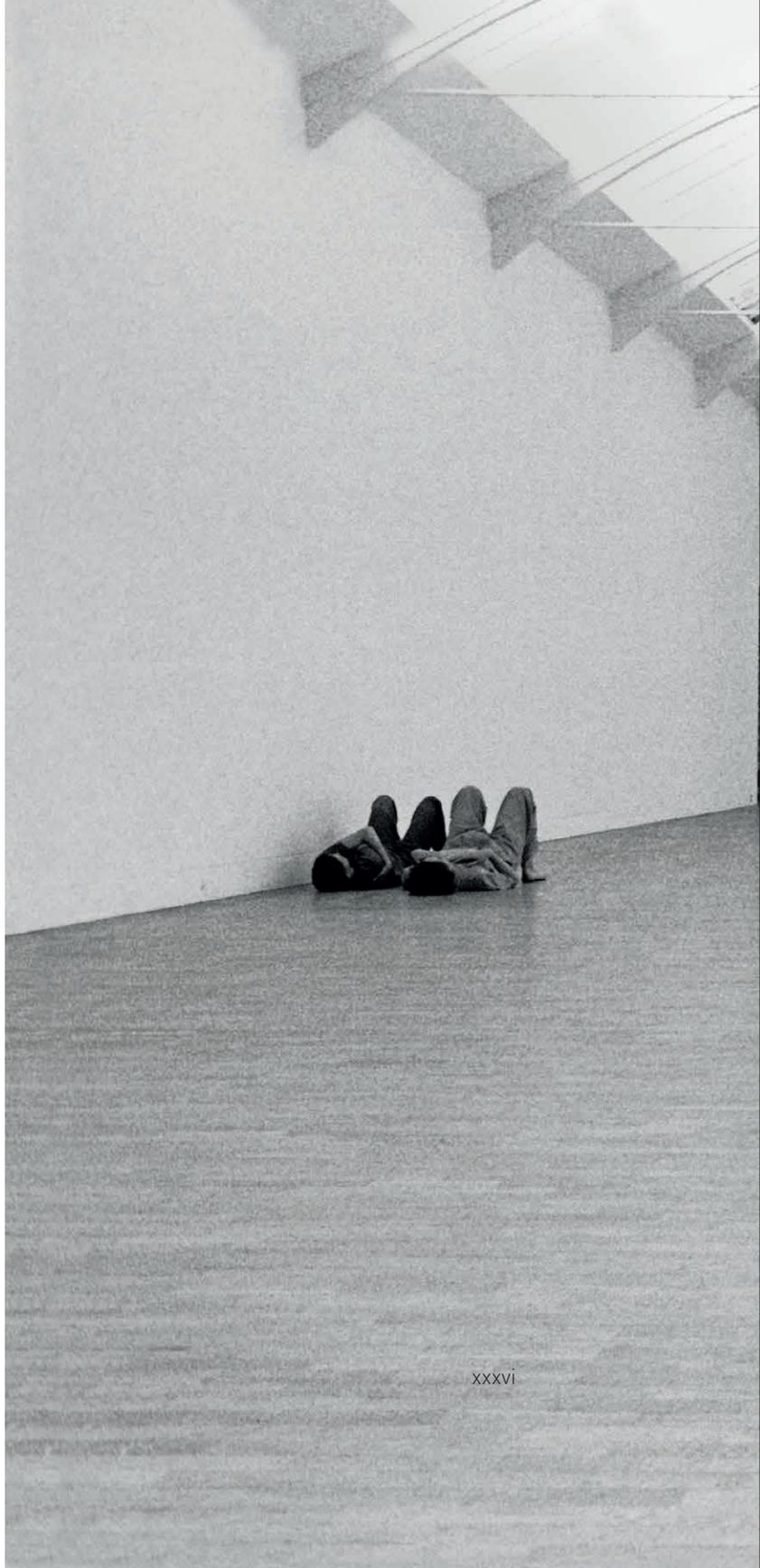
Rosemary, your work creates an atmosphere that hangs in the air long after the dancing is over. This is true both of the choreographies you create and the classes you teach. Those classes on a Friday night at Riverside Studios in the early 1980s had a resonance that still haunts me. You mostly taught without music in those days but I remember the dancing feeling extraordinarily musical because the kinaesthetic quality was akin to listening, really listening.

I remember watching *Imprints* (1983) and *The Site* (1983) during those years and being quite literally awestruck. You strip away the veneer, the habit, the indulgent to reveal what persists when one just keeps working and the potency of this is compelling – whether we are your student, a dancer in your company or an audience member. I have had the privilege of being inspired by you, Rosemary, through all the mutations of my career. You were my first teacher and dancing in your company was my first professional job. Many years later we shared an office at Laban and now I watch in wonder as the rigour of your vision quite literally transforms the thinking of the MA students with whom we work.

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KIRSTY ALEXANDER  
Co-Director, Independent Dance





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I first fell in love with Rosemary's work when she showed *SCAN* (2000) at Tanzwerkstatt Europa in Munich in 2001. I was fascinated and we stayed in touch from that moment on. What an exceptional artist: what clarity, preciseness; very emotional, but so structured. How can somebody reduce these complex, abstract subjects in such a way that they become visible in this sublime choreographic form? 'What I am trying to show is the language of the body – its humanity – can be as important as anything else in performance.' (Rosemary Butcher)

I am so happy that this year I had the chance to initiate and help Rosemary to produce and introduce her work to the Berlin audience within the festival Tanz Im August 2015, together with the now enthusiastic fans and colleagues Virve Sutinen and Sven Neumann. The Akademie der Künste was the perfect setting and next to an exhibition of her archive *Moving in Time: Making Marks and Memories* (2015), and the installations *After the last Sky* (1995) and *Secrets of the Open Sea* (2015). We presented

the most recent performance work *The Test Pieces* (2015) and the acclaimed *SCAN* (2000) with nearly the original cast. A memorable event was the artist talk between Lucinda Childs and Rosemary Butcher and it was very touching to see two historic figures of such calibre exchange their artistic lives in public.

Rosemary was once called an uncompromising 'modernist', but she is also uncompromising in continuing to find new ways, she never stays too comfortable.

Thank you Rosemary for fighting for your vision and thank you to Nigel for supporting her on every level of her career from the beginning to now.

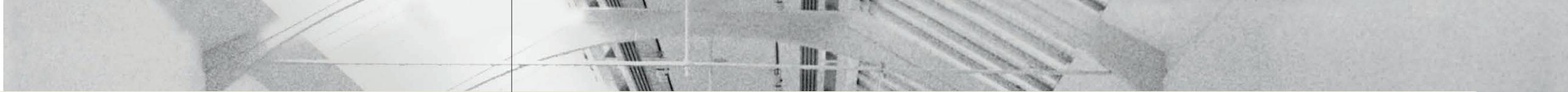
I am looking forward to a retrospective of your work in London!

With love  
Andrea

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ANDREA NEIDERBUCHNER  
Tanz im August

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Over the past decade that I have worked with Rosemary, I have infinitely gained from our many ways of relating to each other through sharing conversations, thinking out and planning projects, exchanging writing and travelling together. Being able to be part of rehearsals and sharing creative processes through all stages has, over time, led to a very special way of working together, especially one that is connected to writing about process and time (also with Susan Melrose).

It seems to me that Rosemary and I have found our own way of writing together. Her brief and densely philosophical notes keep inspiring me and what I offer back seems to resonate and perhaps further her thinking and doing. Indeed, to me, Rosemary is a philosopher and I keep being surprised by the complexity of her thinking in her choreographic practice. I also value her as a very dear friend.

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For many academic writers on dance, the object researched is the public event, for the far from simple reason that academic access to the professional artist at work is hard to win, hard to maintain. The making processes are slow, collaborative between choreographer and dancer(s) – often virtually private, intimate; they tend to be hard to write about if we are limited to the sorts of registers widely adopted over earlier decades by Dance Studies. Some of us, on these sorts of bases, are limited to write ‘about’ the choreographer, viewed almost exclusively through the lens of her or his dance works made public – to such an extent that we may well conclude that the artist’s name ‘is’ the work, and vice versa.

I was fortunate enough to meet Rosemary Butcher in a professional context, before I saw her work itself, at The Place, I think, in the early years of the twenty-first century, when she was shortlisted for The Place Prize and showed *Hidden Voices* (2004) with Elena Giannotti. She sat next to me, coiled tightly, seeing things I could not. If I say that previously I had met her smile, which was wide, generous and welcoming, before we actually spoke, this might sound overly personal, but it happened in a professional context, and in a difficult circumstance, and – besides – I have

seen Rosemary smile that smile in other professional contexts, not least those involving her work with other artists. The smile is important, professionally, not least because the collaborative work, with trained dancers, designers, lighting-designers and film-makers, is demanding and it can sometimes seem to be austere, minimalist, hence strongly marked by a particular aesthetic – a signature aesthetic. This means that while the collaborative input is vital, it remains Rosemary Butcher’s work; and it is recognisably so, I would argue, not least when it is ‘new’, innovative, challenging, demanding of spectators as well as of collaborators. It is ‘always experimental’, for Rosemary Butcher herself, which means that it challenges the maker herself – more, undoubtedly, than it challenges other participants, makers and viewers. Rosemary Butcher is strict with herself – strictest with herself – which to my eye justifies her strictness with the work as it develops.

In this sense, her work is a research undertaking of the most traditionally recognisable kind – a quality in her practice that has only relatively recently been recognised by the university and its research funders – even though the creative imperative and the need to make new work to demanding

professional standards remain dominant. My own research was challenged through my collaboration with Rosemary Butcher not least because, without knowing it, she required that I review the extent to which my own research might lend itself to illuminating process and professional outcome – to my own satisfaction – in the long-established and very active artist-at-work, who brought to her undertaking a particular understanding of (the histories of) contemporary dance. In turn, what might an academic researcher ‘give back’ to the artist? According to certain recent writers on research itself,<sup>1</sup> the research imperative – not entirely unlike the creative imperative, in my view of Rosemary Butcher’s work – is likely to be informed by a ‘structure of wanting’, a restless, ongoing and unfolding quest, that ‘entails the possibility of a deep emotional investment’ in research objects or practices or other entities. Not only does it entail the possibility of a deep emotional investment by the researcher, in aspects of her or his undertaking, but that structure of wanting remains throughout the research project, and beyond it, potentially bringing into view ‘whole series of moves and their underlying dynamic’ as the researcher pursues ‘lateral and angular branching[s] off’ that seem to emerge as projects unfold in all their complexities. ‘The idea of a structure of

wanting implies a continually renewed interest in knowing that appears never to be fulfilled by final knowledge.’

The creative research imperative, in Rosemary Butcher’s work, brings new knowledge into the frame: the expert choreographer goes on learning and must do so because whatever drives her resists easy resolution. Rosemary engages with new knowledge, and reframes what some of us understand to be ‘dance’, when she explores the interface between choreographic practice and film-making, in *Vanishing Point* (2004), or reinvents Kaprow’s notorious and much explored performance work but with dancers who have performed in her own work in the past and reoccupy it in the present (*After Kaprow – The Silent Room/Book of Journeys*, 2012). As innovation grows over time, and in tune with technological change, Rosemary Butcher has developed an acute understanding of ‘the processing capacities and sensitivities’ of the different, carefully chosen artists, film-makers, visual artists and performers involved, of their ways of seeing, doing and knowing; and I would argue that the later work, in dance spaces, on film and in galleries, is impressed with, and reveals, this (‘signature’) understanding of the ways experienced artists work.

<sup>1</sup> On meta-research, see K. Knorr Cetina, ‘Objectual practice’, in T. Schatzki et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001. All quotations included are from her work.





The Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund is dedicated to supporting artists' current practice and research.

The Fund was set up in 1985 by Bonnie Bird, who, in addition to being an original member of the Martha Graham Dance Company, played a major role in the development of dance education in the UK.

The Fund supports the research and development of new choreography, aiming to recognise and address what choreography is today and what choreographers' needs are in today's complex and ever-changing local and international landscape.

2015 marked the 30th anniversary of the Fund and in that time it has supported over 130 dance artists and dance writers with several awards of different types given each year.

The Fund's portfolio of awards are The Bonnies and include The Marion North Mentoring Awards, The Bonnie Bird New Choreography Award and the Bonnie Bird Lifetime Contribution to Choreography Award.

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