

From Form to Fumbling: Reflections on Creating and Collaborating from Archival, Choreographic and Performative Perspectives

Solveig Styve Holte and Magdalene Solli

ABSTRACT

Frå Form til Famling / From Form to Fumbling premiered on 2nd November 2023 at Henie Onstad Art Center that takes its starting point in the material traces in the archive after Høvik Ballet. In this article, choreographer Solveig Styve Holte and performer Magdalene Solli reflect on the choreographic and performative parameters of this creation, with a focus on one piece of solo material that was included. How may archival material inform and transform how and what we create? In addition to investigating that topic, this article addresses how different modes of collaboration were explored in the creation process, as are recounted from choreographic and performative perspectives. This article is written from both perspectives, letting the different experiences from the process and the polyphony from the performance make it into the reflection at large. The process of engaging in transformation, transmission and transpositioning changes not only our understanding of the material but also our understanding of ourselves as dancers and choreographers. In that regard, this article recounts how our relation to the archive started, developed and transformed, both in our bodies and perceptions, during the long creative process. It also describes how the passing of time, and our time spent with the archives, affected us and the overall choreographic decisions made concerning the performance.

SAMMENDRAG

Frå Form til Famling / From Form to Fumbling hadde premiere 2. November 2023 på Henie Onstad Kunst-senter og spring utifrå dei materielle spora i arkivet etter Høvik Ballett. I denne artikkelen reflekterer koreograf Solveig Styve Holte og utøver Magdalene Solli kring dei koreografiske og performative parametera i produksjonen, gjennom å løfte fram eitt spesifikt solomateriale. Korleis nærar og endrar eit arkivmateriale korleis og kva vi skapar? Artikkelen gjer synleg ulike samarbeidsformer som vart utforska i prosessen, sett frå både ein koreografisk og performativ ståstad. Å skrive frå to ulike perspektiv gjer at fleire erfaringar og opplevingar frå prosessen får rom i refleksjonen som heilskap og gjer performansen sitt fleirstemmige vesen synleg. Gjennom prosessen har ikkje berre forståinga vår av arkivmaterialet vore i endring, men òg sjølvforståinga vår som dansar og koreograf, i ein vedvarande prosess av transformasjon, overføring og transposisjonering. Teksta greier ut korleis forholdet vårt til arkivet starta, utvikla og endra seg undervegs, både i kroppane våre og i persepsjonen vår, gjennom ein langvarig skapingsprosess. Og den skildrar også korleis dette aspektet av langstrakt tid, med ei fleirårig undersøking, påverka arbeidet, oss og dei overordna koreografiske vala i arbeidet.

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Introduction

Frå *Form til Famling* / *From Form to Fumbling* (FFtF)¹ premiered on 2nd November 2023 at Henie Onstad Art Center. The present article outlines the choreographic and performative parameters of this creation and the ways in which archival material informed and transformed how and what we created². Different modes of collaboration were explored in the creative process, as we recount from choreographic and performative perspectives. In doing so, we assert that the process of engaging in transformation, transmission and transpositioning changed not only our understanding of the material but also of ourselves as dancers and choreographers. This article will recount how our relation to the archive started, developed and transformed, in our bodies and perceptions, during the long creative process. It will also describe how the passing of time, and spending time with the archives, affected us and the overall choreographic decisions made concerning the performance.

FFtF was created by working with archival materials from Høvik Ballett (HB)³, including photos and film from its first period, spanning 1969 to 1975. The title of the performance was a reversal of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation's (NRK) program *Fra famling til form* from 1969, which marked the first time the company's work was captured on film. The performance lasted for four hours and stretched through the art centre and out into the surrounding park and fjord, inviting the spectator to actively reflect on why something is remembered and something else is forgotten.

The archive

The archive from Høvik Ballett is scattered and stored in many different places, and a substantial part of the film documentation from the early years of their work has been lost or deleted. Our choreographic creation began

with encountering the material archival traces, and from there, constructing, creating and suggesting were central to the mode of production. Choreographically, I see dance archives, in general – and this one, in particular – as a part of our shared commons, and my interest is in how we can approach, care for, carry and transpose these archival traces into the world again today. This requires understanding the movements in the archive as material objects that we can embody. To do so means separating the dance or the movement from the dancer or choreographer who initially danced or created them. It thus makes sense to think of the movements as having a life of their own, a life that can reappear in the here and now and that is present and possible to find in the archive. Daniel Blanga Gubbay described this in his article 'The movement as living non-body':

Movements are real objects, separated from the sensible objects through which they appear. Dance is made of the encounter between real objects (the movements) and sensible ones (the bodies) on which or through which they appear. And if so far we thought dance as movement of the body, we can now think it as movement of the movements among different bodies. (Gubbay 2018, 124)

Given that we consider the materials in the archive as a found object, our exploration started with working with these materials as a group, while knowing that we would later work individually. The performers were asked to choose one fragment from the archive as a starting point. Through conversations, physical explorations and shared studio work, each fragment was contested with social and political events and histories that we came to consider through our interests and explorations. These comprised the social and political context, movement materials and stories of Høvik Ballett, which we combined with other approaches to choreographing and performing than those held in the movement material.

Collectively, these procedures transformed the original movement fragment and created a new material. Each solo consisted of dance and storytelling, and through these means, included both the memory of Høvik Ballett and other bodies and events that could have been present, we felt were missing or existed as lost potential. Through this approach, the archive was transformed into a prism, where the performance became a container for a polyphony of parallel histories, transposing the original material into different social and political contexts. We included the potential for collaborations with other female artists working at the time as allies, considered the feminist and queer liberation movement and growing environmental awareness in the 1970s and took a critical approach to acknowledging the

accumulation of wealth and fortune that has enabled the art centre to exist, both as the site of the original company and as the site for our performance.

Our work questioned how we can remember dance history, not only by naming it but also through the acts of performing and choreographing it, working from it and relating to it, and what this remembering may create in recalling movements from another time in our reality here and now. Gubbay described the potential for this to happen: '(...) the life of the movement is invisible until it is moved by a body, and yet this does not mean it does not exist, and that its life is not a continuous one. A single life lived by many bodies; a ghostly life during which it can lie for days or centuries before voluntarily or accidentally reappearing through another body' (Gubbay 2018, 126).



Studio Space, Frå Form til Famling, Henie Onstad Art Center. Photo by Tale Hendnes.

Listening and references

The studio space in Henie Onstad is where performances, concerts and live events are normally held, from 1968 until today. We wanted to transform it into a space for imaginative dances, along with a light, sound and textile installation open to the public throughout the performance. To do so, we configured the space as a nest for the performers, where they started before branching out into their different paths inside or outside the art centre. The sound installation inside the studio held traces of the different soundscapes performed in the gallery spaces and outside. Non-human agents such as chairs that were part of the original furniture from 1968 were arranged so they were lying or standing in a pattern, with chairs facing in multiple directions. The light was soft and the costumes, which were changed throughout the performance, could be seen located under a light balloon, present as a trace from those in the audience who had seen them in use during the performance. There was an installation of hanging footnotes, consisting of several used women's tights filled with stones from the beach at Henie Onstad. We wanted the reference list for the project to be in the same landscape as the performance at large, something you listen to oppose to reading. Therefore, we named them footnotes, being literally verbal notes in loudspeakers hanging inside the different "legs". The reference list both in Norwegian and English was spoken in and recorded, in advance. Four speakers installed around the tights, would at different times throughout a four-hour cycle, be played at a low volume. The sound of the footnotes was subtle so the audience had to come close to hear them. We made a conceptual choice when considering how listening and following would guide the audience's attention throughout the performance. The audience was oriented through listening rather than through reading materials – which reflected the fragmented archival material and the sense that while much still exists of the Høvik Ballett company, just as much has been lost.

I am interested in experimental techniques of referencing in contemporary choreographic practice. When the performers quoted a movement material that was part of a solo from Høvik Ballett, they named the year and title of the work. Both the choreographic work as a whole and the different solos meant we worked with many different references, to books, articles and other

artistic works in addition to the archive from HB. The choreographic work was also informed by several artistic works that have employed different approaches to art practice and archival research, such as those of Mette Ingvartsen, Xavier Le Roy, Marte Elise Stramrud, Joar Nango and Netta Yerushalmy. I wanted these references to be available for the audience while avoiding sheets or lists. The performance invited the audience to partake in a continuous, multi-layered, polyphonic experience. The idea of printing a program text, map, reference list or catalogue was for me falling into the trap of what Claire Bishop (2023) critiques as 'the information overload' within artistic research. In her article in *Art Forum*, she quotes the British artist Mark Leckey: 'The richest possibilities for research-based installation emerge when preexisting information is not simply cut and pasted, aggregated, and dropped in a vitrine but metabolized by an idiosyncratic thinker who feels their way through the world.' (Leckey; Bishop 2023)

During a performance, the performers are the *idiosyncratic thinkers*, the containers and the transmitters of the archive, in addition to the installation content. A catalogue or map would give an idea of an overview or completeness of the archive, which did not correspond with the archive we encountered. Instead, we decided that the audience would actively move around, listen to and possibly remember the content from the hanging footnotes of the used tights, where each of the legs was filled with stones that changed their relation to gravity.

The choreographic parameters

Performer as source and site of knowledge

In the creation process, the performer is an active co-author of the artistic work, and thus they are a source and a site of knowledge. The performer responds to the frames and concepts of the artistic work based on their knowledge, which is situated in their living practice and cultural history. In the choreographic process, the aim is to create a productive learning situation where output can be produced through the combined work of me as a choreographer and the performer/dancer/collaborator. In this capacity, choreography operates as a structure for organising and composing the artistic expression found in dance, music and costumes. The Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim's (1976) term 'et felles

tredje', which I translate as 'a common third', describes a learning situation where a triangular relation exists. When two people direct themselves towards a shared third thing or interest, they can become subjects for one another, rather than one becoming the object for the other. Skjervheim wrote about this in the essay 'Deltakar og tilskodar' ('Participant and spectator') from 1976 in relation to pedagogics. This triangular relationship has become key for me in thinking about how to work with collaborators and how to approach choreography.

Archive/ Choreography

Choreographer (host)

Dancer (participant)

Dancer – hosts the archive

In this approach, the archive can be the common third we direct ourselves towards. My role as a choreographer is to be a host of the work, or a facilitator for a situation and meeting, and to extend an invitation for the performer/collaborator to contribute with their knowledge and interests to a specific frame, which we can name the project. In this specific work, *FFF*, the archive was transformed from being the material traces we could find into a performative material that the dancers now hosted in their bodies and in the choreographies. Through a transformative process, where we started directing ourselves towards a thing outside of ourselves and through being with it, learning and exploring, this material thing transformed from an outside object to a lived experience that the performers and the performance now hosted the memory of, and through the performance, the memory was activated and potentially reinscribed in the cultural memory of the audience.

'The common third' could also be the choreography or choreographic methods, which refers to the organising capacity, both for how we work, what we do and when, and how we perform. In the process, I do not want the way in which the material is composed, created and shaped to be hidden, but rather to be mapped out, discussed and articulated. Language becomes a key to creating a relationship where the performer can equally discuss and critically examine the decisions that are made. In working like this, I believe we are becoming subjects for one another and resisting the usual power play or trap

of creating the other as an object for one's own desire. This means that choreographic work contains analytical, critical and social togetherness, built on talking together, listening to the unknown, acknowledging resistance, witnessing, describing and proposing. To create a work becomes an ongoing inscription we carry out together. I am unable to create anything that the performer's body does not have an interest in engaging in. We are interdependent, trusting each other and daring to be vulnerable and not knowing together, where we are enabling something in one another and in the material that none of us necessarily could have predicted or succeeded with individually. This method emphasises the relational qualities of a choreographic process, where we achieve more than any of us could have on our own. When the situated knowledge of each performer is acknowledged, the performers as a group can hold and contain a greater polyphony, which was an important aim of the creation in question.

Layering

The performance happened both in the exhibition spaces and neighbouring liminal spaces, that is, the stairs, the reception, hallways, etc., actively working with the architecture as an archival trace that the performance would resonate with. One of the ongoing exhibitions that the performance related to was the Magdalena Abakanowicz exhibition 'Floker av tråd og tau'. Abakanowicz, a textile artist who had a crucial impact on Norwegian artists in the 1960s and 1970s, was presented at Henie Onstad in 1977, at the same time as Hovik Ballett's work there. Her body of work and her 'Abakans' became a physical context, a material archive and an embracing time capsule to be in resonance with. The same applied to the architecture and site at Henie Onstad. The feeling that these walls, the forest, architecture and floors were the same and had seen these dances before felt as though it was a material support that gave us a sense of proximity to the original movements and histories.

Layering was an important compositional tool, in the different solo works and in the overall choreography of the performance. Layering allowed for the original fragments to be made visible together with several potential possibilities and histories, so that they co-existed in resonance with each other within the performance. The choreography was layered through

the multiplicity of performative events, and through visible traces of the archive in the performance, including through sound and costume. Layering was also applied in the choreographic process, where the archival materials met with different corporealities and contexts, by asking what absence was there or was there not in the original material, not to complete this material, but rather to continue contesting it and to create a field of friction. The performers learned the archival material through a process of critical reflection, but without the aim of authenticity or placing the archive on a pedestal. Through layering, the archival material was paired with different performative and choreographic parameters, and our interpretation opened up the possibility of the material finding multiple resonances and an expanded contextualisation.

Transpositioning

Transpositioning as a concept for collaborations was coined by the architects in the firm Snohetta (Aspaas 2013) to describe the process of changing positions to facilitate an understanding of interests from different perspectives. In a choreographic process, I see it as a method of observing the artistic work or specific material from another position than my own and as a process of dislocating a material from its original context. Transpositioning thus becomes a method both for developing material and for collaboration. The former occurs when an archival movement fragment is transposed to another body, context and future.

Working with existing materials creates the potential for the choreography to produce other relations than those that existed in the original. It also suggests a separation of the dance and the dancer and understanding them as two different capacities. The moment a specific dance material is interpreted and performed (or perhaps metabolised?) by another dancer/performer, it is immediately changed. The fragment is transformed through this process from a material trace to the dancer, who becomes the carrier of the archive. When learning the archive fragment, the document undergoes a new activation, and when being performed in a different body at a different time, the fragment is recontextualised. The transpositioning of the material is met with the method of layering and asserting the potential for what had been absence in the work and context of Høvik Ballett. The process of finding a form or grasping a movement material over a historical distance is an exercise in not letting time collapse or underestimating the distance. In the work in question, the distance between our interpretations and the original fragment was open and transparent for the audience, and the performance offered a multitude of approaches to transpositioning the original material through dancing and storytelling.

It – textual material

Magdalene Solli created several materials in the creation process. The solo material described in this text, referred to as 'It', consisted of a collage of textual materials combining excerpts from the reviews and information

Jeg skal aldri glemme den dagen i 1969 da Miriam Skjorten og en bukket spenstig og grazios kvinnelig ynde dukket opp på mitt kontor eskortert av et administrativt og foretningskyndig reien av bankjenn, Torkel Mør, og så de skulle etablere seg som en ballettgruppe og akkompagnement, med basis i fridans. De søkte opphold på Høvikodden.



Slide from the archival material.

That started it. they are a bouquet. Goes on: they are a springy bouquet. Moves. Beyond. Becomes. a springy bouquet of elegant female grace. Goes further than that. Becomes it and it and it. Becomes something else. Becomes more. Combines something else with more to keep becoming something else and more. Goes further than that. Becomes something besides something else and more. Something. Something new: Newer still. The grace dances, meanders forth, increasing its strength. In the next now, becomes as new as it now can be. Pending money. Imposes itself. six girls Flaunt. Touches, touched. with fate in their hand. Catches free material. Grows bigger and bigger. Nodding energetically. Builds itself up by being more than itself, gains weight, gains speed, gains more in its rush, gains on something else, passes something else, which is taken up, taken in, fast laden with what came first, so randomly. That's it.

Afterwards they wash the floor, So changed now that it's begun. So transformed. Already a difference between it and it, for nothing is what it was, they have nodded and washed and knitted and danced, stretched towards the premiere. Already time between it and it, here and there, then and now where already the span of space between it and something else, it and more, it and something, something new, in this now, already has been, in the next now is and goes on. No prima donna whims nod for inside to differ from outside. Plays, shifts, eddies. Outside. And condenses inside. Gains core and substance. Gains surface, refractions, passages, impediments. Takes a turn, a whole new turn. Turns and twists, is turned and twisted. And pursues an evolution. Seeks a form.

Excerpt from the script performed by Magdalene Solli.

pieces about Høvik Ballett and excerpts from the book *Det* (1969) by Inger Christensen. When reading the content written about Høvik Ballett, we were struck by the infantilising language that was used. In several texts, they were not referred to as artists or women but as 'piker', a conservative term used to refer to young girls. They were collectively called a bouquet, and it was emphasised how little money they earned from their dancing. The headline of one news article, in advertising their next premiere, stated that they washed the floor themselves after the performance. When reading and watching cultural news reports from the same era, it can be seen that the male artists and musicians were not described in the same manner, with these reports neither mentioning how they washed their studios nor how little money they earned from their art. It became clear to us that Høvik Ballett suffered both from neglect of dance as an art form and of female artists in their time. Høvik Ballett was at that time a rather radical proposal in the context of Norwegian modern dance: A female collective that situated itself in an art centre actively collaborating with the artists of the time, worked with Happenings and live events inside the gallery and outside in nature as well as held an expansive vision of touring its work in schools, kindergartens and prisons across Norway. How radically different would the field of dance as an art form in Norway be today if this initiative had been

recognised, valued and described as a progressive art initiative instead of as a 'bouquet of female grace'?

In our speculation about the possibilities for parallels with other feminist movements and female artist working at that time, we first investigated the writings of Gertrude Stein and later the writings of Inger Christensen. *Det* (1969) consists of descriptions of the world, the city and how something begins and evolves, written in an accumulating structure. The textual material in question comprised a collage of the reviews and excerpts from the book by Christensen (see above, with reviews in green and Christensen's in red). Solli performed the text verbally and simultaneously moved through an accumulating composition, recalling forms from Høvik Ballett, performed with a decisiveness that was not present in the original material.

A clear correspondence appeared between the language in this book and accumulation as a compositional strategy, referencing Trisha Brown's solo work 'Accumulation' from 1971. The Judson Church movement, with its experimental dance practices, has been central to Western-centric education and understanding of dance history, and it existed as a ghost in *FFF*. But it was a ghost of ambivalence. Throughout the work carried out, I felt a resistance towards letting the canonised pioneers overwrite this local archive that has received

less recognition. It felt like an easy way out to just lean towards the parallel in the US. I started this work with a critical approach to my own understanding of the writing of history within my education and field, and the same questions as mine were raised by Aleida Assmann (2008) in the text 'Canon and Archive', about what falls out of our cultural memory and what tends to be centralised. Assmann wrote about the active and passive ways of remembering, and she proposed that the canon in our cultural history is made up of those actions or things from the past that we want to actively remember: 'Cultural memory contains a number of cultural messages that are addressed to posterity and intended for continuous repetition and re-use. To this active memory belong, among other things, works of art, which are destined to be repeatedly re-read, appreciated, staged, performed, and commented.' (Assmann 2008, 99).

In this regard, the status of the archive of Høvik Ballett is of varying character. Sigrid Øvreås Svendal produced a seminal work in which she interviewed many of the ballet's pioneers for her PhD research at the University of Oslo, and members of Høvik Ballett published a book containing images and memoirs for their 50th anniversary in 2019. Moreover, the Dance Archive of Dance Information Norway stands as an important resource in which select reviews and pieces of information about the company can be found. However, much of the archive is fragmented, stored in different places. Negatives can be found in metal boxes in the basement of Henie Onstad, and film documentation was deleted by NRK (The National Broadcasting Corporation). Materials exist, but '...they fall out of the frames of attention, valuation, and use', to reference Assman (2008, 99). This scattered status could be seen as an invitation to create a whole. This idea of wholeness, which a historian would strive towards while collecting and preserving materials, was something I actively had to resist in myself. It also felt like an easy way out, and it did not seem representative of either the memories or material that I wanted to investigate. To let the materials be as they were, stay with the ambivalence they gave us and treat them as questions, fragments and troubles felt key to the process. It seemed the way forward was that I refrain from saving them by aligning them with the American post-modern, and refrain from re-enacting them and announcing the resurrection of Høvik Ballett as a company or creating an illusion of a complete



Magdalene Solli in Frå Form til Famling, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, 2-5 November 2023. Photo by Josh Lake.

archive by collecting and displaying materials for the audience. Rather, I saw that the archive opened up a radical possibility. If we considered the movements in the archive as having a life of their own, then these lives were potentially open to us and open to new interpretations, meanings and contexts. Assmann described the potential for this: '... they are de-contextualized and disconnected from their former frames which had authorized them or determined their meaning. As part of the archive, they are open to new contexts and lend themselves to new interpretations' (Assmann 2010, 99).

It- dance material

The dance material in Solli's solo work started with an excerpt of the choreography for 'Ond Sirkel' (1969), shown on the TV program *Fra Famling til Form* (1969). Solli chose this excerpt and learned it by heart, and it led both to duo material with Ilse Ghekiere and to a pedestrian phrase that became the opening material for the whole group. Furthermore, Solli used this material as a basis in her solo work, where she worked

with estrangement as a method for and effort to learn a new movement language, insisting on its autonomy and resisting familiarising it with the known (and probably canonised) dance conventions present in her body. She performed through a logic of accumulation and continuous sampling of the archival materials. In the following section, Solli describes this creation process and the performative parameters at work.

The performative parameters

Fields and grounds

There were several parameters contributing to the solo. It, intertwined with desires and workings, all affecting each other. The following is an attempt to put some of that into words.

With time, it became clear that the solo, in line with *Frå Form til Famling's* workings at large, needed to be thought of as a field, where several dance objects or dances co-existed and could be 'entered' and danced. As a performer, a dancer, my task was to be in that field. In this respect, my task was threefold: firstly, to perform the dances existing there; secondly, to somewhat 'instantly compose' the whole dance from start to finish following a principle of accumulation; and thirdly, to monologue a pre-recorded text I had playing in my earpiece.

I tried to work through these three tasks as separate automated flows that together created a solid foundation, applying my 'dance capacity' to manage the moments where cracks appeared between them. I felt these moments as when something seeped, or perhaps leaked. That something may have been a sensation, a feeling I could briefly allow myself to follow, producing a new shape, pattern, etc. In other words, I tried to detect, pay attention to and articulate when the layers clashed or correlated. In either case, there was the potential for something beyond the separate parts to occur, perhaps of significance.

A premise for the solo was to think of dances and shapes as autonomous things in themselves, and then to imagine both the sites of rehearsal and performance as spaces in which those dance things existed as solid part(s) of my immediate atmosphere. From there, dance(s) became things that could pass through me one by one, or simultaneously, colliding or collaborating – allowing for them to be rendered through my body in layers with friction and slither.

Estrangement

When starting out, and choosing the archival material to depart from, I was immediately drawn to 'Ond Sirkel'. This was never performed in public, and it appeared very strange, in progress and unrealised as a dance piece. Still, there was something about the black-and-white footage of these young women with their smoky eyes and big hair updos dancing close together in sculptural forms, creating angular and tight shapes across the floor, that sparked my curiosity. Why did they move like that? It all seemed dated, with such unnecessary use of muscle power, tensions and force. I was reminded of something I had read a while ago, in Solveig's early proposal for *FFH*, along the lines of *no longer wanting to release*. Something fell into place – I could really resonate with that. Why would we? With so much needing our resistance and love, my trained dance desire to continuously allow, flow and release had already weakened. From my 'functional' dance training point of departure, I now found myself surprisingly pulled towards these completely absurd and strange shapes, the drama I sensed in them, the odd feeling of moving in such a tense body. It made me wonder if staying with the archive also meant staying with the current feel of it, a kind of estrangement, to insist on not making the familiar into known conventions, but to leap and learn, from the feeling of 'entering' these specific shapes, and from there try to understand something of the sensibilities of the dance. I had a desire to maintain a space between my body and the dance(s), to create both a separation and an intimacy at the same time, so that we perhaps both held some agency.

Looking for the absence: Filters and accumulation

In thinking in line with Solveig about absences from the archive, we tried to 'filter' the archival fragments in terms of different dance styles, techniques, qualities and ways of moving, feeling our way around what the dance could have been – if only like this, if only like that. Once we tried to strip it down to its bare necessities in a postmodern and minimalist movement approach – what was the skeleton of this dance, in a functionalist, anatomically concerned manner? The outcome became what we call *the Phrase*. This was easily shared thanks to its simplicity; we taught it to the rest of the ensemble, and it became the basis for further explorations, both in solo and group work.

In solo work, given the simplicity and step-by-step, pedestrian logic the Phrase operated in, we felt curious to complexify not necessarily the Phrase itself, but the dancer's performance. Enthused at the prospect of finding ways to stretch the specific knowledge or specialisations we had – geeking out – we decided to appropriate the structure of 'Accumulation' by Trisha Brown, applying its compositional logic to the Phrase. This experiment gave us a taste for a continuous expansion of tasks, where we layered the solo-to-become with several tasks, rooted in an interest in the capacities of the performing body.

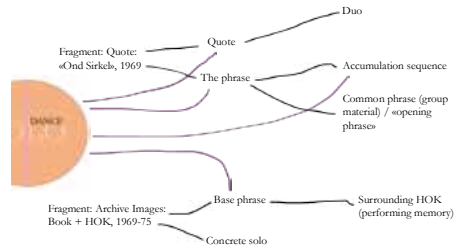
Whilst we generated ample amounts of that which was not there (material outcomes of the various modes of filtering, new compositional structures, etc.), I started to feel critical of our branching out, as if we were betraying the archive. I wanted to move closer to what was actually there in 'Ond Sirkel', to be deeply serious about the dances Høvik Ballett proposed.

Living archive – Embodiment(s) – Learning a dance logic

The solo process at large produced several outcomes, beyond It described in this text, and unfolded as a way of learning, embodying, creating, feeling, thinking and understanding what a selection of 'dance things' in Høvik Ballett's proposal were, 'Ond Sirkel' with its dances and shapes being some of those. The length of the working period permitted on *Frå Form til Famling* was absolutely crucial for the outcomes that I partook in 'finding' and creating. This stretched over several years, which allowed for a practice of embodiment I rarely experience while working as a dancer in the independent dance field in Norway. I had time to get to know the dances in minute detail, attuning my body in how to best articulate them, sculpting around and with them.

During this process, I tried to keep my 'quests' in line with what the frames of the project made possible. I became curious as to what I could achieve with the time at hand, and I trained my body to become the 'Høvik Ballett body': to take in the language and movements, become as intimate as possible with the thing(s), the fragment and the dance, and from there, compose and dance this logic further into a fictional continuation of where they stopped. That is, I sought to pick up the forms again, and not repeat them, but continue to move somehow. Then again, I had all these questions

about why and how to be a living archive. I could not simply continue Høvik Ballett's project, which would be too simple of a move, or it could only be one of several ambitions. Instead, I became rather curious about how all the things the archive taught me could exist all at once.



Automatisation – Repeating, rehearsing, training

Ultimately, the solo would end up comprising three outputs: the monologue of the text; the dance(s); and composition according to the principle of accumulation. I tried to enter a state of text delivery where the words simply flowed from my mouth as I heard them, allowing me to focus as much as I could on the movement simultaneously. The dance consisted of four dance objects: *the Quote, the Phrase, the Base Phrase and the Accumulation Sequence*. In order to achieve a similar continuous output with the dance(s), I automated these in my dancing body by rehearsing and learning certain patterns, steps, directions and rhythms. In order to achieve a steady, composed output flow aligning with the principle of accumulation, I decided on a metronomic pace, letting the movements unfold accumulatively (similarly to *the Accumulation Sequence* and 'Accumulation' by Trisha Brown). I would listen to songs with specific metrics during rehearsals and right before performing in order to have the beat in my body and move with the memory of it.

My strategy was that only things sufficiently automated could be part of the selection of objects entering into the 'field of the solo'. This was because I wanted to create surplus capacity to concentrate on the play, the sensations, feelings, correlations and contrasts between materials, accentuations, etc. In the moment of delivering the three outputs, I tried to continuously 'catch' this information and further physically articulate it at both the scales of gesture detail

and overall composition. This can perhaps be thought of as an attempt at instant composition, where I tried to ensure that the improvisational elements were chosen and informed, whilst also paying attention to the cracks in whatever fiction was rendered. To me, this was a way for the performed outputs of the solo to constantly make new connections, or never fully establish themselves into something that was perceived as stable, which I think would have been reductive of the archive.

Metabolising?

A while after the performance, when talking to friends around the kitchen table, the word ‘embodiment’ was brought into question. None of us could really be too sure what place embodiment had in the process of becoming, or the state of being. This made me think. I had considered the learnings and intimacies with the dances of Høvik Ballett as a sort of embodiment process, but maybe it did not quite cover what I had experienced

when making *FFtF*? The separations I wanted to create and uphold or even expand between me and the Høvik Ballett dance(s) were there and active, but over time, something had also moved in me, and at some point, in the process, the estrangement transformed and a desire to be changed by the dances appeared alongside – and so I was, and things also changed with that. All these forms, shapes and dances, I did not simply visit them, as they did not simply visit me, or if they did, they did so in a way that restructured my muscle fibres, coded my nervous system and sculpted my body. There is a kind of violence in this realm of real events, of what is actually happening when trying to articulate or concentrate specific movements through our soft bodies. These actions stand outside of literacy, so though I have tried my best to describe them here, they can never be fully articulated in words – to me, the work on *FFtF* lay in the realness of the movement processes, in the dancing, and not in this text that accompanies them.

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Endnotes

1 Concept and choreography by Solveig Styve Holte. Created with and performed by Ilse Ghekiere, Terje Tjøme Mossige, Per Roar, and Magdalene Solli. Music by Ane Marthe Sørlien Holen, Jan Martin Smørdal and Kristine Tjøgersen. Costume design by Solveig Fagermo. Light design by Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson. Sound design by Nikolai Høgseth. Production management by Kristin Skiftun.

2 This text concerns the lecture demonstration we held at the 16th NOFOD Conference. In the opening chapters and that titled The Choreographic Parameters, I is used to refer to Solveig Styve Holte, while in the chapter titled The Performative Parameters, I is used to refer to Magdalene Solli. Throughout the rest, we refers to our shared work and reflections during the process recounted in this text.

3 Høvik Ballett was the first independent, professional dance company in Norway, which existed from 1969 to 1989, located at the Henie Onstad Art Center in Høvikodden, which opened in 1968.

BIOGRAPHIES

Solveig Styve Holte (b. 1984) is a dancer, choreographer and currently a research fellow in the Department of Dance at Oslo Academy of the Arts (2019–2025), where she researches the usage of existing materials and historical archives in contemporary choreographic practice, emphasising questions of agency and shared authorship. Holte's recent works include *Frå Form til Famling* (2023) Henie Onstad Art Center, *Sixteen Dances* (2023) Rosendal Teater, *HORDE* (2021/22/23) MUNCH, Kilden and KIASMA and *Undying: A Handwork* (2022) National Museum Oslo. Holte is situated between Oslo and Folkestad, where she runs the choreographic centre YKS from her farm.

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Magdalene Solli (b. 1993) is an Oslo-based dancer working with performance and dance-making, as well as aspects of (experimental) education and critical text work. She is curious about what dance can contribute in any context or constellation and works on dance across genres in specialised dance groups, solo projects and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Her recent dance works include collaborations such as *Postludium 4ever* (Hommersåk/Hestånå Architecture & Taxonomic Triennale, Sandaker Senter, 2024), *Grotesker 1900-d.d.* (Black Box Teater, Oslo, 2023), *Muld* (Center424, Belgrade, 2022), and *dølge* (Dansens Hus and Nynorskens Hus, Oslo, 2022).