Hi - Please read my paper titled: Studio-based dance research; a seamless task within the teaching/research nexus, before reading this collection of ideas. It'll contextualize what I've been working on for some time.

I'm just beginning to write about what I call camera-as-dramaturg, and would like to share these notes, sketches, in sub-headings of ideas. This is work in progress, so if you have responses, I'd appreciate them in the context of this process, thanks.

Jennifer

[The dramaturg] is not only an analytical, intellectual eye from the outside, but also a body who thinks along with the director or choreographer – that is, as a collaborator who moves along with him or her in a movement that involves both closeness and distance, both similarity and difference.

(Bleeker 2003, p.163)

There is “nothing transcendent, no Unity, Subject, Reason; there are only processes”

(Deleuze 1995, p.145)

Camera in the dance-making process:

In the process of making dance-theatre, I ask how can the video camera provide the makers with options that otherwise wouldn’t have occurred without cameras? If the camera ignites questions and answers in a dialog between technology and movers, can the camera act as a dramaturg? Barton 2005 states that “a central role of dramaturgy is to question habit, to complicate unreflective expediency, and to dig beneath the surface of unearned presumption. (Barton, p.103)

The historical role of the dramaturg from Lessing through to Brecht was to analyze text in a theatrical production specifying themes and concepts as researched by a dramaturg. Dramaturgy, moving away from theatrical textual analysis paved the way for new forms of collaborations between theatre directors, choreographers and visual artists. (Bleeker 2003) Dramaturgy as a practice, as a means of performance research has developed substantially over the past two decades in interdisciplinary performance-making. (Bleeker 2003, Barton 2005, Croft 2009)

For me, the camera does not appear as a chronological tool, or only as a partial player; it is part of the process from the beginning, at all times, in the stages of making, viewing and reviewing.
From the outside, the camera documents, archives and captures, providing movers with material that they can rely on to look at afterwards. But what if the camera also initiates perspectives and frames phrases, or demands the mover to manipulate its presence somehow, are these not also roles of the dramaturg?

I agree with Bleeker that dramaturgy is not “the exclusive terrain of the dramaturg” (Bleeker, p. 163 2003). The movers are choreographers, the cameras are choreographers, the directors are choreographers and movers, and they all hold cameras at different times for specific reasons. Camera and mover and dramaturg are interchangeable collaborators.

**Noticing subtleties:**

The camera captures subtleties, creates subtleties, and documents subtleties. In these constant moments of making, it is what we do with what we see, experience, or review after experiencing, that creates the role of mover and camera, together as dramaturgy. I call this relationship between mover and camera; camera-as-dramaturg.

The camera is not a replacement of an experienced way of seeing and doing. It is a subtle tool, or a tool that makes notice of subtleties. The camera, manipulated by the mover, picks up on imperceptibility’s of the naked eye.

Rajchman (2000) writes of Deleuze and small differences, what I see as subtleties, that:

> modern work is... “chaosmotic” in Joyce’s phrase – it works through surface series and variations, as when Warhol introduces small differences into series of images, or, in another more “obsessive” way, in the nouveau roman.”

(Rajchman, p.125)

He states that we don’t begin with a new piece, the work doesn’t “start with an anxious encounter with the “empty place,” and it doesn’t try to denude itself in preparation for the revelation or uncovering of Being.” (Rajchman, p.125)

The camera finds subtleties, variations based on previous perspectives; that I relate to possibilities that are reoccurring. Deleuze was drawn to possibility in the aesthetic sense. (Rajchman, p.125) Subtle shifts allow us to see possibility in what is, or what has been. The camera carries what we’ve shown it before, with it. We just show it as a variation.

The painter does not paint on an empty canvas, and neither does the writer write on a blank page; but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, reestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision.

(Deleuze, Guattari 1995, p.204)
I am looking for subtle shifts that make new possibilities, informed by using the camera as well as looking at what the camera just saw.

Exploring the gaps, relationships not yet made, the ignored possibilities that the camera can provide for the performer, opens up the possibilities for the deterritorialization of the camera as a tool for performers. Specifically, what can the camera do with the gaps, within the gaps, that performers cannot do without it?

Out of these gaps, or the attempt to find them, how much roughness, awkwardness, potential is there? In doing this we create contexts for something new, or to make us see in an alternate way, something we otherwise wouldn’t have, in this process of becoming.

It is through shifting traditional or common ways we use the camera as proscenium documenter, as archiver or as videodance maker; by disrupting this relationship between performers and cameras, we may have new ways of seeing, in the process of becoming.

... by breaching or rupturing the old boundaries that lead to a release of new intensities. This is the notion of “deterritorialization” in Deleuze – a movement by which we leave the territory, or move away from spaces regulated by dominant systems of signification that keep us confined within old patterns, in order to make new connections. (Roy 2003, p. 21)

For Bergson and Deleuze after him, “the new is bound up with a creative unrolling and enrolling, and cannot be conceived outside of duration.” (Durie, p.145) Bergson’s concept of duration “in which each form flows out of previous forms, while adding them to something new, and is explained by them as much as it explains them…” [Creative Evolution 362/CE 801]

Bergson arrived at the notion of the possible by abstracting from the real once it has been made and then projected backwards so, the possible resembles the real, not the other way around. (Durie, p. 147)

When a possible is realized, it simply gets ‘existence’ added to it; its fundamental nature has not changed. (Durie, p. 152) The new is able to create its’ own conditions of possibility.

**Camera-dramaturgy as rhizome:**

In the studio methodology of making one exercise with its own questions, which leads to the next exercise with its own questions, I see this method as rhizomic; lateral, non-hierarchical, able to continue to operate on its own, with roots that can spread in any direction.

The tasks are stand alone, and in the workshop #1 process in June 2010,
they were created as a result of experiencing the tasks before them. The camera-as-dramaturg experiences fully, one task, with all the curiosities that are characteristic of that solo task. Then we take these discoveries to a new question, researched through the relationship of the camera and performer, in a new context and we continue making ongoing tasks, informed by previous tasks.

In this manner, the endlessness of “where to next” is generated by tasks preceding and the re-generation of material based on the specific curiosities that drive those tasks. Lateral ideas germinate as they do for a dramaturg or in the process of dramaturgy.

The tasks therefore all have a relationship, yet they’re self-sufficient. Any of the outcomes of these tasks could stand alone as movement studies in themselves, with their own connection to capturer, captured, and audience.

Supporting becoming, as the stages within the process of making, becomes the role of the camera-as-dramaturg.

All the unknown spaces in-between, are the moments where potential arises, in the process of becoming. These moments may be small, slight variations, subtleties, only made possible between the relationship of camera and mover.

Camera-as dramaturg can pick up and occupy any of those spaces, and create a new potential based on the circumstances that drive the question of the task, and the movers and cameras that respond to that question, in that moment.

**Innovations in methods of capturing, creating and constructing:**

How does the use of the camera and reflections on its use lead to the invention of "what is next" to try in rehearsal?

To me, **capturing** is documenting, what you see around you, in a manner you choose to capture in (moving or still camera, taking into account camera moves and camera angels). This is still creative for the cameraperson, but it stays in the act of capture.

I feel that **creating** is about making tasks with an objective. Creating to me implies giving the camera and the performer a task and having them fulfil that exercise. I still find the collective, “progression” approach where discoveries from one task lead to questions that determine another task, interesting as a method.

**Constructing** develops these even further. The act of capturing (range of moves and angles) along with creating (the task or exercise) aligns with the intention behind what we want to develop thematically. I may be specifically
What the camera does:

The camera documents in a way that the live performer cannot possibly document. One practical example resides in the act of seeing the shot footage after capturing perspectives outside of the experience set by improvisation. Secondly, the performers enter the improvisation, aware of the cameras’ presence, as it has a specific purpose in the improv task. This changes the dynamic between camera and mover. This relationship is entirely alternate to that of the camera as documenter, set on its tripod, for the sake of archiving a performance or a rehearsal.

The documentation of practice forms in process, carry their own meaning. The purpose of the form of documentation I am advocating differs in that the material is ours, as performers. Performers enter the improvisational setting knowing that what is documented will be reviewed and will determine choices made in shaping the performance work based on post-liveness.

I think that the link between the memory of doing and then viewing retrospectively, lives in that relationship between a kinesthetic, experiential memory of what was danced, and seeing what was captured from a perspective that was not experienced.

Regardless of what the individual experiences in the moments of moving while a camera is capturing, the captured footage is going to encapsulate an alternate liveness. The footage exhibits collective factors of space and time in relationship to self as performer and others, or audience. I argue that this is an advantageous connection between experience and memory. It traces choices made in the moment and presents an alternate perspective on choices made in the surrounding space, from a place that the live mover cannot possibly have, alone. What the camera does, is it affirms to the mover, that it will capture unseen potential and bring it back to the mover as viewer, as a tool that reveals a secret and a possibility.

The combination of the memory traces from doing, and viewing and discussing the viewing, creates an instant decision making process between these two experiences. This in itself becomes an act of immediacy, initiated by the camera. The memory of the decision made around footage and re-doing, or re-trying is in itself a choice that leads to further movement choices. This takes movers further away from not only the moment of doing, but also the moment of re-viewing documentation, of what was just done.

This stage becomes a memory, and leads performers to the next stage of developing “where to next?” The dramaturgical process relies on live improvisation and capturing the live through a method of reviewing. Viewing captured material in a repeated method of review; is looped for those recreating dance-theatre material after moving and then viewing, process documentation. Immediacy is important as the body remembers and the task remains present.
I agree with what André Lepecki has to say about the dramaturg and its relationship to material, not as an outside eye but as part of the somatic body as stated in Van Imschoot's 2003 article, *Anxious Dramaturgy*:

What Lepecki resists is the idea of the dramaturg (the eye) as the locus of power and knowledge, put at disposal of a choreographer, who (if we extend the metaphor) is perceived as being all body—a blind and dumb body, waiting to be illuminated by sight and speech. In a description of his own dramaturgical practice Lepecki likes to reconfigure the dramaturg as locus of disembodied knowledge, by melting the dramaturge’s body with the body of work and by “becoming one somatic body.” (Imschoot, p.21)

The camera as a dramaturg doesn’t need to give power to the camera, if as a crew, we realize that the inquisitiveness can bounce from camera to mover. This also means that as a researcher I like to be in all roles or locations: moving with the camera, in front of, behind, with other participants, so there are collective questions and answers that I am experiencing by moving and thinking and living the direction that the inquiry take us in.

In his 2006 text, Reason identifies Peggy Phelan’s writing in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) as providing the most influential articulation of “the ontological and ideological import of disappearance.”

Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, It becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being…becomes itself through disappearance.

(Reason, p. 146)

This relationship with becoming its own, by the nature of disappearance defining its identity parallels the disappearance of moments in improvisation, becoming their defining characteristics. Through the act of improv, moments disappear and they are never re-traceable. I don’t wish for the camera to sit wide, ready to get it all in, as I feel this form of documentation is too prescriptive.

I argue that the camera moves, coerces, intersects moments as they are being made, and records possibilities that just need a point of insertion into the process, to be taken to a new place, for development of possibilities. The original improv and its liveness also disappear, but new moments of improvisation occur because only parts of a process are remembered or documented and therefore highlighted.
Dance-theatre performance:

The process will lead to dance-theatre performance, or exhibition of the process. These will be repeatable showings, but the ingredient of a new audience each time, allows for this “showing” stage to be a process of becoming in itself, always new, always stand-alone from previous or future showings. This material will be shown in a roaming layout, as it is not conducive to proscenium relationships isolating performer from audience.

Artworks are composed of sensations, prelinguistic and presubjective, brought together in an expressive material through the construct with an anorganized plan, with which we have peculiar relationships. They are not there to save us or perfect us (or to damn or corrupt us), but rather to complicate things, to create more complex nervous systems no longer subservient to the debilitating effects of clichés, to show and release the possibilities of a life.

(Rajchman 2000, p.138)
References:


