

PArticle

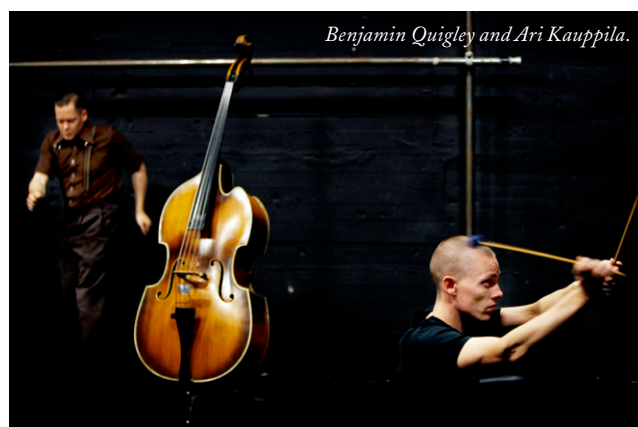
by Stephanie Schober

Choreographer Stephanie Schober shares her experiences from Choreosound. In her work, collaboration and communication are two important starting points for her artistic work. Therefore Choreosound was such an interesting project to her. In PArticle she reflects upon the experiences made in the different collaborations during Choresound.

This autumn I was one of the lucky choreographers who were invited to participate in Choreosound, a pilot project in Göteborg conceived by Swedish choreographer Marika Hedemyr. During this lab, choreographers and composers, dancers and musicians from all over the world met and explored new ideas for collaborations without any predetermined agendas. The invitation came at a perfect time for me. My dance company was touring a programme of short pieces entitled between sound and silence, which had been created with composers John-Marc Gowans and Matteo Fargion, Choreosound was an opportunity for me to question where my passion for music collaborations had come from, and where they could go next. It was also a chance to meet new artists and to work with musicians, something I had wanted to do for a long time.

My desire to choreograph always originated from a personal place, without wanting to be autobiographical. Seeing the works of choreographers like Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Rosemary Butcher, and Jonathan Burrows left a lasting impression on me. Their performances were not concerned with displays of skill, but with the movement material itself. They made me see movements through the eyes of an individual artist. Working with chosen limits, they seemed to find expressive potential within its internal details. As a young dance maker, I found it hard, though, to analyse the methodologies of other artists. I did not believe in borrowing toolboxes. To create my first piece, I just used all the movements I liked and left out everything I did not like. Relying on intuition, the materials were then mapped out in space and time. The choreographies were created with a group of dancers I brought together for each project. We performed in silence, with the intention to reveal a personal type of musicality interwoven with the physical language and to maintain a simplicity and directness.

Eventually I stopped dancing in my work, because I wanted to sit with the audience and watch. I felt the need to improve



Benjamin Quigley and Ari Kauppila.

PHOTO: MALIN ARNEMSSON

the composition, and one way was to introduce an exterior logic. I found inspiration in the Estonian composer Veljo Tormis, whose music is developed from folk songs, and the American composer Tom Johnson, who uses mathematical ideas in his compositions. With my dance company, I created a duet entitled Newly based on Veljo Tormis' choral composition Estonian Wedding Songs. In this process, I interpreted the music as a set of patterns and drawings, which were then given to the dancers. They responded with movement and vocal sounds. The musical structure created a framework in which the dancers could reinvent their relationship in surprising ways. I came to Choreosound with ideas and questions about how to work with structures and about how to engage the performers and the viewer within them.

My first session was with composer Yong Nan Park, musicians Antti Leinonen and Ellen Sander, and dancers Katja Henriksen Schia and Karin Hedin. We borrowed an idea from composer Tom Johnson, in which he divides the number 12 into 2, 3, 4 and 6, which are then combined to create a pattern.

-2-2 -2-2-2 - 2
-3- -3- -3- - 3
---4 ---4-- - 4 ---- -6---- - 6

PHOTO: MALIN ARNESSON



Stephanie Schober and Daniel Skoglund.

Each performer's task was to create four materials which could be performed at the same time, and in all possible combinations, on certain counts. The structure determined a fragmented type of movement. Without having thought about sound or rhythm, there was a "musical logic" which tied together everyone's actions. What I liked about this experiment was the concentrated effort between the four performers to stay together. An interesting discovery was how the combinations of sounds seemed to work better each time they build up to something new, and the repetition was enjoyable to witness, while the combinations of movements and their repetitions did not always produce the same effect. The experience raised questions about the difference between hearing sound and seeing movement and what this meant for music and dance collaborations based on rigorous compositional ideas. If we had the chance to work on this sketch again, I would experiment more with the translation from pattern to movement.

My following session was with composer Daniel Skoglund, musicians Benjamin Quigley and Ellen Sander, and dancers Ari Kauppila and Andrius Katinas. We worked with structures and chance elements. Each performer acted as a dancer and musician by creating a sequence of tasks, which involved movement and playing instruments. It was important that the materials were clear rather than skilful. The sequences were then looped, and because they were of a different length, different combinations of actions between the performers were created each time. We then introduced more options for the performers to add new materials, to copy each other, stillness, and so on. Sometimes this sketch produced a totally unexpected theatricality, and sometimes it fell flat. We realized that we needed to be careful about how many elements that could change at once, so that the structure was still there, but that it remained unpredictable for the performers as well as for the viewer, what would happen next. It was a very fragile balance, but that was also what really excited me about this experiment.

My last session was with composer Amanda Cole, musicians Barney Strachan and Ellen Sander, and dancers Gilda Stillbäck, Lisa Fahlén, and Alice Martucci. We interpreted a piece of music Amanda had written. This piece had a minimal rigor and the musicians' interpretation brought real beauty to it. It was a peaceful experience to be in the studio with them and I was looking for something the choreography could do to meet the music halfway. Although this session took place in the most conventional set-up, with clear role divisions and a need for virtuosity from both dancers and musicians, I still felt I was on an experimental pathway. The dance part was based on very limited material. Each dancer had a set score of steps and pauses, and the combination of three dancers' patterns created a strange "start and pause" effect. What interested me was how the dance could have its own rhythm.

Back in London I realize that I have taken so many new inspirations and ideas with me from Choreosound. What will stay with me is the experience of everyone's generosity and I really hope that we will find a way to develop the begun collaborations.

Stephanie Schober, JANUARY 2010

Stephanie studied Medicine at the Humboldt University in Berlin and Dance Theatre at Laban. In 2002 she formed Stephanie Schober & Dance Company. Her choreographies for her company include the pieces "Made Elsewhere" (duet-2002), "Inside Us" (quartet-2003), "Change" (quartet 2004), "Catch" (duet-2005), "Newly" (duet-2007) and "The Accompanists" (duet-2007). She was a recipient of the Bonnie Bird New Choreography Award and resident dance artist at the South Bank Centre and at Laban in 2003-04. Since then she has been touring her work extensively in the U.K. and abroad in Belgium, Portugal, Germany and Spain.

Stephanie works as a freelance choreographer and teacher in Higher Education settings. She was commissioned by the London Metropolitan University (2006), by the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (2007) and three times by Laban (2003-06) to create larger group works for their third year students. She taught a series of choreographic workshops, working with movement and voice, at The Place, to their BA Dance students (2007), to young dancers aged 11 - 18 at their Centre for Advanced Training (2008) and to adults at their summer school (2008). She currently is a mentor for young choreographers as part of the Dance Beyond Borders project at London Metropolitan University and at Dancekiosk/ K3 in Hamburg (2008-09).