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Site and Re-Site: Early Efforts to Serialize Site Dance

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In recent years, dance on site has become a feature in arts festivals around the globe. From municipal celebrations to Fringe Festivals to Cultural Olympiads, dance now appears in alternative locations to enchant, amuse, amaze, and sometimes provoke audiences with the feats of the moving body. Well-known dance-dedicated presenters and festivals, such as the Canada Dance Festival in Ottawa, ImPulsTanz in Vienna, the Seattle International Dance Festival, Dance Umbrella in London, and Kuopio Dance Festival in Finland, have also grown fond of placing dance outside of theater venues. Some annual festivals, such as Guelph Dance Festival in Canada, Napoli Teatro Festival in Italy, and Abundance International Dance Festival in Sweden, among others, headline site dance as either *the* or at least *a* principal mode of presentation. In the belief that such work will enlarge and diversify their audience base due to its physical and often conceptual accessibility, presenters and choreographers have been pushing the boundaries of what is commonly called "site-specific dance."[1]

Although siting dance outside the conventional four walls of a proscenium or black-box theater is hardly new, having been a creative approach in use since the 1960s (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009), the creation and presentation methods in the site dance genre have increasingly diversified. By 1989, presenters familiar with the genre were noting this diversity. As Elise Bernhardt, the director of Dancing in the Streets (an organization founded in New York City in 1984 that is solely dedicated to producing dance outside of the theater space) expressed to *New York Times* writer Eleanor Blau, dance on site does not always fit into the site-*specific* category; although this is a category of work that she "particularly relishes," Bernhardt notes that "there are finer nuances, like 'site-appropriate' and 'site-adaptive'" (Blau 1989).

Indeed, for the festivals mentioned above, the site dances witnessed do not readily conform to the general understanding of site-specific dance or of dances that are made specifically for a single site with that site acting as both inspiration and venue for the performance. Although the presenters may borrow "site-specific" terminology to classify such work, it is clear from both Bernhardt's comments as well as from the plethora of site work being produced that the strategies employed in the site dance genre require an expanded lexicon for accurate treatment. Such an expansion has been

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attempted in various instances with new terminology such as "site-based," "site-oriented," "site-inspired," or "site-sympathetic," coined to describe a given work or even category of work.[2]

In this paper, I will focus on one mode of site performance that particularly troubles categorization in the site art field: site dance on tour. Touring site dance is a subset of the site dance genre in which the performance work is set in a series of geographically discrete sites, often at multiple festivals or venues around the world in a given season. The controversy around such touring site performance has been well documented (Wilkie 2002, 149) and has given rise to a deeper examination of the characteristics inherent in site art as a whole. For scholars such as Miwon Kwon (2002) and Fiona Wilkie, who began this in-depth examination, the dominant "spectre" raised by such work involves *mobility* and the implications of mobility (Wilkie 2012, 204). However, other queries that surface around touring site performance, such as what to do with "that set of work which is not so much *toured* as *re-located*, that is, re-worked to fit each new site" (Wilkie 2002, 150), have been left to linger.

What follows is an attempt to explore this lingering query as well as the distinctions suggested by it. I will begin by considering Kwon's (2002) and Wilkie's (2012) efforts to apply the mobility discourse to the site performance genre. Then, by adding my own (2013, 2015) and Victoria Hunter's (2012) practice-as-research findings and by looking at site work by American choreographers from the 1960s onward, I will underscore mobility's growing presence in the site dance genre. The limits of this investigation grow clearer, however, when examining the site work of such artists as Ann Carlson, Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig, Eiko and Koma Otake, and Stephan Koplowitz from 1993 to 2004. These choreographers' efforts to move beyond mobility to touring and, more specifically, to *serialization* demonstrate the need to engage with such work through new lenses. Akin to Wilkie's "re-location," serialization in this context implies that choreographers undertook a process of recrafting a singular work to fit a series of discrete sites; in other words, while the work at each successive site was clearly similar and would occur under the same project title, it was also markedly dissimilar as it was modified to dialogue with each new site.[3]

It is this strategy of serialization and the corresponding move to alter a site work for touring purposes that has caught my attention. I consider that such a move points to a characteristic of site work that has not garnered as much scrutiny in the site performance genre: *adaptation.* Although Stephan Koplowitz offered a brief analysis of "site-adaptive" dance in 2009, and others such as Pearson and Widrig (2009) have employed the same terminology to describe their work since the 1990s (perhaps borrowing from Bernhardt), the term needs further analysis to determine its historical as well as present applicability and significance. In this paper, I argue for the value of investigating the historical link between site and adaptation, both for the field of site performance and for the larger cross-disciplinary dialogues that could be activated. After looking at some of the earliest site works by such luminaries as Anna Halprin and Trisha Brown, I note that adaptation can be detected as a feature of site dance from initial endeavors in the field, with added importance placed on this characteristic from the 1990s to the present. Then, discovering correlations between the use of adaptation in theater and film studies, mixed ability dance, human geography, and economics, I make a case for a fuller examination of touring site dance that employs not only the lens of mobility, but the lens of adaptation as well. It is through this cross-disciplinary dialogue as well as through uncovering the strategic importance of adaptation in site creation efforts that I believe we can carve out *site-adaptive dance* as a distinct subset of the site performance genre.

Grounding the Field: Mobility and Site-Specificity

It would be impossible to discuss site performances that move from site to site without addressing the concept of mobility. Although it is currently a popular mode of analysis, it has in fact been a conceptual talking point since site-specific art's inception. As Fiona Wilkie neatly describes it in her

article, "Site-Specific Performance and the Mobility Turn," when Richard Serra made his grand statement, "To move the work is to destroy the work" in 1985, mobility had already been haunting the genre (Kaye, as cited in Wilkie 2012, 204). In fact, although Serra and other site-specific visual artists clung to the idea that mobility and site-specificity were two concepts that dangled at opposite ends of a spectrum, such false divisions had been undermined almost since the first experiments on site and certainly since performance began forays into the form in the late 1960s and 70s.

That said, *scholars* did not significantly dismantle this opposition until Miwon Kwon's 1997 article, "One Place After Another" (which blossomed into a full-length text by the same name in 2002) began to break it down. As she chronicled the development of site-specific art from the 1960s to the 1990s, Kwon observed that it went through three phases: an initial one, where site-specific art focused on the physical and phenomenological readings of a site; a second phase, where it addressed a site's social construction and the possibilities of reinserting agency for its occupants; and a third phase, where the site itself became "unfixed" or mobile—it transformed into a discursive location (Kwon 1997).[4] In discussing this third phase, Kwon notes, "while site-specific art once defied commodification by insisting on immobility, it now seems to espouse fluid mobility and nomadism for the same purpose" (1997, 96). This "mobile" work as well as Kwon's discussion of it helped set the stage for the site-specificity/mobility dialogue. By the time Nick Kaye offered his larger analysis of site-specific art and performance in 2000 noting that "the site is mobile, always in a process of appearance or disappearance" (Kaye 2000, 96), mobility was no longer considered an antithetical notion in the site-specific art world. Rather, it had been embraced as a viable framework for analyzing (and perhaps creating) site-specific work.

In an attempt to push this dialogue further and to interrogate it through the lens of individual performance experiences, *Contemporary Theatre Review* published a special issue in 2012 to address the mobility turn in site-specific performance. The issue included examinations of fluidity and mobility in relation to mumming (Peter Harrop) and to performances along waterways (Minty Donald) as well as an article by Victoria Hunter in which she attempted to reframe the idea of singularity in site-specific dance by focusing on the inherent mobility of audience perspectives of a particular site. Hunter, who analyzed her own site-specific group dance for the Leeds Central Library, found that mobility is a profound factor even in performances where travel is not a dominant theme. As she contemplated her work, Hunter developed the following query, "What happens to our located identity when a place becomes 'mobile,' transformed by the site-specific performance event, when 'here' becomes (momentarily) somewhere else?" (Hunter 2012, 265). In pondering this during the creative process and performance, Hunter determined that the identity of the dancers, the audience members, and the place itself became fluid, rather than fixed; further, in analyzing the evidence from questionnaires and interviews taken during the pre- and postproduction time periods, she found that individual perceptions of the site often varied markedly as a result of viewing or being involved in the performance. This led her to the conclusion that "performed" sites do not conform to a fixed notion of place; rather, "the site is metaphorically freed from its everyday, normative meanings and associations and its identity becomes mobilised through the individual's processes of experiencing and perceiving the site in a different manner" (2012, 259). Such mobilization of a "stable" material site rings true with both Kaye's version of a fluid site and Kwon's discursive location.

I, too, have found that questions of mobility can come aggressively to the fore when creating site-specific work. In 2008, as I was creating a site-specific dance film in the Calgary Skywalk system, I found myself struggling with the typical terminology embedded in site-specific discourse. As I attempted to dissect a "singular" site that covered ten miles and that had pedestrian travel and corporate consumerism as its raison d'être, I discovered the need to widen my frame in order to decode a homogenized space—a "non-place" as Marc Augé would categorize it (Augé 1995). This led to an embrace of mobility as tied into the very fabric of the site-specific work I was creating, a situation that caused me a certain level of consternation (Kloetzel 2015). I maintained this

focus on mobility as I began to examine the dynamics of creating site works for portable architectural venues in "Have Site, Will Travel :– Container Architecture and Site-Specific Performance" (Kloetzel 2013). However, in delving into a project where choreographers made works for repurposed shipping containers that could travel between cities, I began to question the limits of the discussion around mobility and site-specific performance. After viewing (and presenting work) in and around the shipping containers at the 2012 and 2013 Fluid Movement Arts Festivals in Alberta, I found myself disappointed by the cursory connection to site that developed in such a scenario, a result, perhaps, of the overly brief dialogue between the creators/performers and the portable site. In the end, I asked somewhat rhetorically, "Will efforts toward the site-specific merely slip off of these mobile shells as they head out of town in pursuit of their next rendezvous?" (2013, 27).

In 2012, Wilkie, who has been contributing to the discourse on mobility and site-specificity since her first charting of the site performance field (2002), began to examine site works that engaged more directly with mobility, particularly differential mobility. In her contribution to the aforementioned *Contemporary Theatre Review* issue, Wilkie offered a thorough account of the developing discourse between site-specificity and mobility, in part, through a consideration of the mobility turn in the social sciences, but also through an analysis of the work of Mick Douglas (that takes place in and along trams) and Mike Kelley (that takes the shape of a portable replica of his childhood home). Wilkie argues that the work by Douglas and Kelly is "not unusual or contradictory in its position as a site-specific artwork that only makes sense in relation to contexts of mobility" (2012, 203). Moreover, as she notes, mobility has always been at the heart of site-based performance in the guise of transportation to and from performance sites, tours during the work, and walking performances. Her recent book, *Performance, Transport, and Mobility* (2015), takes this dialogue deeper as she investigates multiple works—site-specific, performance-based, film, visual arts, etc.—that comment (and sometimes take place) on the various modes of transport available to humans, i.e., by train, plane, boat, car, and on foot. In particular, she analyzes such artworks with a keen eye on the relational aspects of mobility; as she states, "the various scales on which mobility operates, and the vastly different levels of privilege and empowerment in experiences of being mobile, exist not in spite of but in direct relation to one another" (Wilkie 2015, 6). By shining a light on the power implications that exist along the mobility spectrum, Wilkie offers a reminder of how hegemony and personal sovereignty are deeply intertwined with the various modes of mobility.

The mobility turn is now a given in analyses of site performances, and deservedly so. As these scholars illustrate, places do not have a fixed meaning over time or across populations, and performance—particularly dance performance—cannot be detached from a very basic acknowledgment of mobility as the basis of the medium.

Un-Fixing the Field: From Mobility to Serialization

In the site dance community, assumptions of a mobility/site-specificity dipole seemed unfounded from the start. In contrast to Serra's grand statements, site choreographers directly mobilized both performers and audiences from their earliest creations. Meredith Monk, for example, considered one of the founders of the site dance genre, was heavily invested in the notion of the tour. Rather than a static or stationary audience, Monk forced her audiences to travel, either through one particular site, such as the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in *Tour: Dedicated to Dinosaurs* in 1969, or to many sites over a period of time, such as in *Juice* (1969) or *Vessel* (1970) where audiences traveled to three separate sites over the course of a week or month.

This idea of encouraging audiences to travel is now a common strategy in the site dance field. From Martha Bowers' *On the Waterfront* (1993) in Red Hook where audiences moved from pier to pier along the Brooklyn waterfront, to the Seven Sisters Group's *Salomé* (1999) where audiences followed a red thread that wound them through the decaying St. Pancras Chambers in London, to

Barrowland Ballet's *The River* (2014) that included an audience jaunt along the River Clyde in Glasgow, almost every site choreographer has employed the tour at some point in his/her career to foster audience movement through a site.

The concept of mobility also found its way into site-specific performance by way of a predetermined topic. Again, departing from traditionalist notions of site-specificity espoused by Serra, certain site choreographers find that a particular subject matter sparks their interest, after which they seek out an appropriate site where the issue resonates. This rearranges notions of site-specificity toward considering site in "discursive" terms, as Miwon Kwon (1997) puts it; a site becomes a lightning rod, rather than a material singularity, for addressing larger social or cultural issues. Joanna Haigood and Jo Kreiter, for example, both based in San Francisco, have tried this approach. As Haigood, who has a long history of making site-specific work, describes it, "Sometimes I'll feel deeply inspired by a place and want to make something there. Sometimes I am moved by an event or by a period in history and then I try to find a place or a site where that history is relevant" (Haigood 2009, 53). Haigood's works *Invisible Wings* (1998) and *Departure and Arrival* (2007) are two examples of this second type of work; for *Invisible Wings,* Haigood wanted to explore slave narratives and was able to do so when she gained access to a former trail along the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts (this piece, incidentally, also employed the tour strategy), and for *Departure and Arrival* access to the San Francisco Airport terminal enabled her to have a platform to comment on the forced migration of the African diaspora and its links to current migration narratives. Kreiter, too, observes that she often takes a discursive approach to site. For example, driven by her shock in regard to the issue of water scarcity in communities around the world, she has been attempting to find a place to investigate this topic:

> I am looking for a site, ideally a rural site, where I can explore the issue where it is expressed in the world, maybe at a dry riverbed, maybe at the disintegrating Lake Powell, maybe at a dam. I am still searching. So in this case, the broad idea came first but the specifics of its development will come later when I find the site. (Kreiter 2009, 243)

The site artist Ann Carlson enjoys combining all of the above, framing mobility itself as a topic to explore. For example, in her work with Mary Ellen Strom, *Geyser Land* (2003), the performance took place on a moving train; both performers and audience were able to move freely through the train cars as well as witness from the train windows film projections and reenacted historical images along the route. *Geyser Land* accessed the area of land between Livingston and Bozeman, Montana, mining it for its specificity (for example, by engaging local cast members for the performance and by using archival photos of the area as source material). But the work also drew on the discursive potential of the site in order to comment on the advent of train travel itself. In contrasting the speed of the traveling train with the still images seen as the train flashed past, Carlson and Strom focused on the mobility-immobility dichotomy, precisely corresponding to performance works Wilkie examines that demonstrate "something about differential mobilities … rather than … simply us[ing] transport settings or themes as backdrops" (Wilkie 2015, 15). This pairing of the still reenactments and the speeding train left no doubt as to one of the main themes of the Carlson's work—the effects of mobility (and differential mobility) on the human form and psyche. One of the main effects—that of feeling simultaneously overwhelmed by speed while the body was perceptually experienced as at rest—is, curiously, the very depiction of train travel offered by Michel De Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984, 111).[5]

It was in her earlier *Night Light* project (2000) that Carlson first began to explore the strategy of juxtaposing mobilities. In this work, Carlson contrasted a mobile audience with an utterly immobile performing cast, this time by treating audiences to a walking tour along which they could witness a series of historical photographs restaged in exact replica and placement to the original. After the work premiered in New York with the presentation support of Dancing in the Streets, *Night*

Light was restaged in three additional communities. Drawing from archives local to the three new sites—in Chicago, in San Francisco, and at Jacob's Pillow—Carlson created a similar tour structure but with photographs unique to the communities. In doing so, Carlson *serialized* a site-specific work, relocating the structure of the work but maintaining its "specificity" to a local place.

Can Site Work Tour? Or, How Adaptation Crept into the Picture

The serialization of site work suggests a new dilemma for the mobility project. Wilkie was already aware of this dilemma in 2002, when in her mapping of site work she observed, "the overriding issue of contention arising from the survey turns around the question, 'Can site-specific performance tour?'" (Wilkie 2002, 149). After posing this question, Wilkie stayed attuned to questions of mobility, examining the relationship between site work and modes of transportation. However, her question of site work and *serialization* remained, leaving a new specter to haunt the genre.

Carlson, for one, found a strategy that could maintain *specificity* and at the same time enable a site work to tour. By accessing historical archives in each city where *Night Light* was restaged and then using a simple (although challenging for the performers) strategy built of precise costuming, exact placement, and mimetic stillness, she was able to establish a very distinct connection to each site of performance. And although Carlson was not the first to consider moving between sites (as I detail below), her work highlights questions and concerns regarding touring and/or serializing site-specific performance.

Since the 1960s, choreographers have experimented with presenting work in a series of alternative venues. Choreographers such as Twyla Tharp, Gus Solomons Jr., and Marilyn Wood began to toy with these ideas as early as 1968.[6] And later others in different countries did so as well; for example, Lea Anderson and Susanne Thomas in the United Kingdom and Sylvie Bouchard and David Danzon in Canada began experimenting with resiting and/or touring their site-oriented work.[7] Among the first to discuss this effort to serialize site work were Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig of the U.S.-based PearsonWidrig DanceTheater. As they observe in regard to their work *Common Ground* (1993), economics featured heavily in the drive to serialize. As Pearson explains, "It all began when presenters would invite us to make a site-specific work that they couldn't afford on their own. So they would team up with another presenter who was interested in a completely different site and then ask us to adapt the same choreography for each of them" (2009, 217). After making *Common Ground* for the bucolic grassy hillsides of Wave Hill in the Bronx, Pearson and Widrig, according to the terms of the contract, had to translate the work to the cement block plaza of Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. Pearson goes on to explain: "It was a wonderful, terrible assignment that we resisted mightily, but we needed the job, and so we said yes" (217–18). As they note, this project, though extremely challenging and prompted by economic demands, ended up being a learning experience that "opened the door to a whole new world of site-adaptive dance" (218).

Pearson and Widrig have now been making what they call site-adaptive work for several decades. In one of their earlier attempts, *Ordinary Festivals* (1995), they took an evening-length stage piece and adapted it to the large grassy quad at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Widrig notes that for the quad performance at Bates, the expansive depth of field allowed for a very different use of space, one that for him was filmic: "This spatial magnifier was incredibly effective in increasing not just the visual but also the emotional impact of the entire work" (Pearson and Widrig 2009, 222).[8] Since this time, Pearson and Widrig have continued their focus on site-adaptive dance, creating a number of works that consist of a set of structured scores that they then adapt to quite diverse sites. The most well-known of these works, *A Curious Invasion* (1997–2014), has been tailored for nine different sites (and nine different communities of performers) from Slovakia to New Hampshire. As Widrig describes it:

Photo 1. PearsonWidrig DanceTheater, A Curious Invasion*, 2001, Wave Hill, The Bronx, NY. Dancers: Lisa Mercer, Jennifer Harmer, Alex Holmes, and Melissa Glasgow. Photographer: James Murphy. Photo courtesy of PearsonWidrig DanceTheater.*

> We built a structure that is easily adaptable to almost any kind of site, natural or architectural. This allows for the restaging of certain sections as well as for the creation of new dances in each site. The elements are all there, and we string them together in different ways, varying the emphasis and embracing tangents made possible by the particular site. Each performance is distinct, yet they all feel like a continuum. (Pearson and Widrig 2009, 224)

While certain sections of *A Curious Invasion* may appear wholly specific to one site, the series is linked by a similar aesthetic: large groups of performers clad in bright solids of oranges, yellows, reds, and blues celebrate a landscape by playfully rolling along cement and/or grass surfaces, climbing trees, gesturing out of windows, wrapping themselves around vertical poles, and creating sound using the environment itself. The adaptability of the work comes from an initial attention to detail; in their first iterations of the work, Pearson and Widrig attuned themselves to specific attributes of the sites, crystallizing these characteristics into a fundamental few. Then, in subsequent iterations, they tried to identify similar attributes in order to adapt the template to these new sites. For example, one section of *A Curious Invasion* is crafted for any two-tiered structure that can be accessed; it

Photo 2. PearsonWidrig DanceTheater, A Curious Invasion*, 2003, Darmouth College, NH. Dancers: Bethany Formica, Alex Holmes, and Dartmouth College dancers. Photographer: Margaret Lawrence. Photo courtesy of PearsonWidrig DanceTheater.*

Photo 3. PearsonWidrig DanceTheater, A Curious Invasion*, 2011, Connecticut College, CT. Dancers: Connecticut College students. Photographer: Patrik Widrig. Photo courtesy of PearsonWidrig DanceTheater.*

was performed on a stone ledge with two levels at Wave Hill but has also appeared on leather couches (using the two levels of the backrest and seat cushions) at the Hopkins Centre for the Arts at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Another group that has helped push the parameters of site dance on tour is Eiko & Koma. In the 1990s, Eiko & Koma began to experiment with performing at several similar or "generic" sites, and they have continued this focus to the present[9]; as Eiko Otake states, "we have somewhat of a ground design. . . .But we adapt the piece to the space we are in" (2009a, 179–80). For example, in their first effort, *River* (1995), Eiko & Koma crafted the work to mesh with the flow of a river. When the time of the performance arrives, they enter the selected river upstream of the audience, float with a driftwood log across the audience's view enacting detailed and deliberate Butoh-based movements in relation to the log and to one another, and finally drift out of sight downstream, ideally as the sun disappears. They have performed this work in eleven different bodies of water across the United States and in Japan.[10] Interestingly, Eiko & Koma do not link their interest in serialized site work to economics although it is clear, as I will touch on later, that the support of multiple presenters features prominently in their ability to create the work. Rather, their interest stems from the idea of linking similar sites to underscore the correspondence between geographically separated contexts. As Eiko Otake remarks,

> In the end, what we like to bring to the audience is the very essence of the river; we show what connects one river to another river—water that runs. . . . We do start by addressing the specifics of the place, but the darkness of the night usually brings out the core of the place, so that River X becomes all rivers. . . . If two people see the same piece in different sites and then they talk over the phone, I want them to find a kind of intentional commonality in the work they have seen. (2009a, 183)

In 1999, Eiko & Koma decided to try a new approach to touring site work. Purchasing a used trailer that they then modified using cheesecloth, tree branches, and stage lighting, Eiko & Koma crafted a portable site for *The Caravan Project* (1999). This portable site could be transported from place to place by hitching the trailer to a jeep; at each venue, presenters would merely open the four doors of the trailer to reveal the performance. As Eiko Otake notes, the performance was almost identical at each place although it moved from parks to beaches, to parking lots, and to a backyard. Yet, in

Photo 4. Eiko & Koma, River, *2011, American Dance Festival, NC. Dancers Eiko and Koma Otake, Photographer: Anna Lee Campbell. Photo courtesy of Eiko & Koma.*

writing about this work, Otake's awareness of the larger site translates into her comments. She observes that as people gather intimately around the four sides of the trailer,

> Viewers see another group of viewers in the background who are looking at us in the opposite direction. In this way, audience members gain other possible viewing experiences that deprive them of the sense of an absolute place. . . . Beyond the circle of audience, we all see trees or sky. Wind moves particles of our installation, making our shining jewelry box a part of its outdoor environment. (2009b, 194)

Otake is acutely aware of how mobility acts as a theme in this work due to the portable nature of the site. Drawing links to her ancestral sense of place, Otake describes *The Caravan Project* as a mobile library that dispenses artwork or "an old Japanese bicycle man who delivers illustrated stories" (2009b, 192). In later projects, Eiko & Koma continue this exploration of portability in site work, consistently testing the boundaries around adaptation and mobility in site performance.

Embracing Adaptation

Stephan Koplowitz, another choreographer who has welcomed the idea of touring site performance, began toying with the model of Pearson and Widrig's relocated template in his work *Off the Walls* in 1996, which was created both for the Portland Museum of Art in Maine and for New York's Hudson River Museum. Later, like Eiko & Koma, he became more interested in making work for a series of "generic" sites as evidenced by his *Grand Step Project* (2004), which was created for grand staircases (at museums, libraries, and the like). In this project, Koplowitz hired fifty dancers to perform at six sets of grand staircases around New York City; at each, they performed a very similar version of the piece, including such activities as rolling down the stairs, sweeping widely with their arms, and leaning precariously across the steps in large accumulations of bodies.

In 2009, these efforts in serial creation inspired Koplowitz to develop a larger analysis of how touring and site work might mesh. In a chapter in *Site Dance*, where he divides site work into four categories, he asserts that what he terms "site-adaptive" work (category two) consists of two types of touring site work: pieces that utilize a set structure or score with content that adapts to sometimes quite different sites and pieces that are adapted for a series of similar sites and employ similar content. His other categories, site-specific work, reframed work, and work that moves from studio to site fill out his continuum of site art (Koplowitz 2009a, 73–76).

Photo 5. Stephan Koplowitz, Grand Step Project: Flight*, 2004, Winter Garden, Manhattan, NY. Photographer: Julie Lemberger. Photo courtesy of Stephan Koplowitz.*

Photo 6. Stephan Koplowitz, Grand Step Project: Flight*, 2004, St John the Divine, Manhattan, NY. Photographer: Julie Lemberger. Photo courtesy of Stephan Koplowitz.*

Photo 7. Stephan Koplowitz, Grand Step Project: Flight*, 2004, Borough Hall, Brooklyn, NY. Photographer: Julie Lemberger. Photo courtesy of Stephan Koplowitz.*

Prior to Koplowitz's analysis, Pearson and Widrig had already embraced the term "site-adaptive," and they, along with Koplowitz, are now quite open about the use of it to describe their work. Other site choreographers who have been invested in the field for decades, such as Heidi Duckler and Marylee Hardenbergh, also employ the term "site-adaptive."[11] Yet, although the term was, as indicated above, arguably introduced by Elise Bernhardt in 1989 to describe work being presented by Dancing in the Streets (Blau 1989),[12] it is a term that has not enjoyed significant analysis and is by no means universally adopted to describe a category of site work. Even Eiko & Koma do not readily employ the term in their written materials, often choosing the much more vague "outdoor work" to label their creations.

Pearson and Widrig as well as Koplowitz and others began employing "site-adaptive" as an applicable term only after creating serialized site works themselves. In short, they embraced the concept of *adaptation* as the key principle to emphasize after analyzing their processes in a series of sites; to put it another way, after noting the *adaptive labor* required at each new place, the verb "adapt" appeared as a pertinent and accurate descriptor. As Koplowitz observed, although a piece would emerge in direct conversation with one site, from the beginning of the creation process, a choreographer would stay cognizant of how it needed to "easily adapt[] to" the particulars of another site (2009a, 75). In this instance, Koplowitz is discussing work that can adapt to a series of similar sites. But he goes on to claim that work, such as Pearson and Widrig's, where "the structure is the same but the content varies depending on the site" could also fall into the site-adaptive category (Koplowitz 2009a, 75).

Although mobility within site performance has undergone a detailed analysis through the efforts of the theorists mentioned above, this has not been the case with adaptation. Yet, ironically, adaptation as well as mobility stands as one of the fundamental principles of the site dance genre. In preliminary ventures in the field, for example, Anna Halprin in the 1950s was sending dancers into the

woods, onto the beach, or into urban environments, encouraging them to acclimatize to these sites and underlining the benefits of adaptation for their training. As she notes, in the early 1960s she became increasingly "preoccupied with movement in relation to environment. I began to feel that we had paid such strict attention to self-awareness, kinesthetic responses, and each other, that we developed a stifling introspection. So we began to extend our focus to *adaptive* responses in the environment" (Halprin 1965, 146, my emphasis).

This was an experiment that Trisha Brown—considered to be one of the founders of site dance—carried out quite strictly in her equipment pieces of the 1970s, where dancers had to adapt the precision of walking on a street to walking on a wall, managing the pull of gravity in a completely altered setup. For *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), for example, a solo figure in a harness walks the length of a building from roof to ground, allowing the speed of a natural (albeit, a bit slow) pace of walking to determine the length of the work. In many ways, although the adaptation at play in this work is quite obvious, the work has only lately been revealed as a site-adaptive dance when it was restaged, not at the same building in Greenwich Village where it was in 1970, but at the Walker Art Center in 2008, the Whitney Museum in 2010, and at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance in 2013. At each of these sites, the performers (including, famously, Elizabeth Streb at the Whitney and Amelia Rudolph at UCLA) needed to adapt to the height of the individual building to determine the work's length as opposed to any "original timing" of the 1970 presentation. As such efforts demonstrate, although Bernhardt in 1989 and then Pearson, Widrig, and Koplowitz were the first to introduce the label "site-adaptive dance," adaptation has been a guiding principle in the field of site dance since its inception.

Joining Forces, or Accessing the Cross-Disciplinary Potential of Adaptation

In addition to the link to the mobility turn within the social sciences as noted above, calling forth a term such as "adaptive" or discussing "adaptation" in relation to site work inevitably sparks a number of connections across disciplines. For some, as I will detail, such connections may come laden with connotation, throwing doubt on the use of the term; for others, the alignments may be surprisingly acute, offering new possibilities for the site performance genre. Overall, I believe the cross-disciplinary associations triggered will serve to strengthen, provoke, and inform our discussion, rather than undermine it.

One area where the term "adaptive" is in frequent use is in relation to disability studies or practices. In this sense, the word "adaptive" is meant to point to how different pedagogical methods, equipment, or technology are adapted to suit the developmental needs of people with disabilities; it may also refer to the adaptive behaviors, skills, or abilities that people with disabilities offer in a developmental context. It is in this arena that "dance" and "adaptive" have already been linked, perhaps casting doubt on its usefulness in the context of site dance. For example, in 2002, the Boston Ballet began to refer to the dance training and opportunities it offered to mixed ability communities as "adaptive dance," and the presence of such adaptive dance classes has been expanding rapidly in North America.[13] Yet, rather than immediately dismissing the term as already deployed, many in the site dance community would see a sensible link between the use of "adaptive" in both contexts. Ann Carlson, for instance, explicitly notes how dance, on site or not, is inherently multisited: "As choreographers, perhaps the first "site" is the body and all the visual, cultural, and behavioral signs ingrained in the body that impact the work. It circles out . . . from the site of the body to the context of where the body stands" (Carlson 2009, 107). To put it another way, I would argue that site choreographers, like those in the adaptive dance community, recognize the body in all its abled uniqueness as the first site in an expanding circle of sites that all require degrees of adaptation (through acquired familiarity and adjustment).[14]

Bringing up adaptation in relation to performance also inevitably triggers thoughts of theatrical, film, or even gaming adaptations of a variety of texts (Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Euripides, and the like). The application of an "already-made" text (or, in our case, choreography or a score) to a series of sites might be likened to the way that *The Tempest* has appeared at an endless variety of indoor and outdoor sites over the past hundreds of years. Each version must undergo an adaptive process to facilitate the performance at the new site or with the new cast. Like the site-adaptive dance work described above, these adaptations may involve more or less adaptive labor as an individual production dialogues with the new venue. In the past few decades a turn to adaptation studies has grown within the theater, literature, and media and film studies disciplines, leading to a number of edited volumes and even a journal dedicated to the field.[15] In her anthology, *Theatre and Adaptation*, for example, Margherita Laera describes the numerous and wide-ranging considerations that emerge in theater adaptations by noting that "the process of adaptation implies negotiations of numerous kinds, such as interlingual, intercultural, intersemiotic, intermedial, but also ideological, ethical, aesthetic and political" (Laera 2014, 5). But before charting the details of these negotiations (negotiations that, I might add, not only have current parallels in the site-adaptive dance community but could also be fruitful for future site-adaptive projects), she also reaches poetically across the disciplinary aisle: "Theatre repeats … [and in]doing so, it adapts itself to present contingencies and situations, like an animal species struggling to survive through evolution. … Theatre, one could say, never stops adapting its features to the world and the world to its features" (2014, 1). In this way, she nods to the scientific meanings of the term, to the evolutionary adaptation that animals (including humans) must make to survive in a given environment.

As Laera insinuates, popular concepts of adaptation typically harken back to the natural and social sciences; for our purposes, its prevalence in human geography, in particular, acts as one of the most intriguing and, perhaps, fertile connection points across disciplines. Borrowing from the biological definition of adaptation, human geographers have been examining human adaptation to environmental conditions for over a century, often with a deep focus on space and place. And scholars of site performance have long appealed to such geographers—Doreen Massey and Yi-Fu Tuan, among others—to facilitate analyses of site performances.[16] Referencing human geographers' history with both the terms "adaptation" and "adaptive" helps once again to cement the interdisciplinary links between site performance and geography. And although adaptation comes with its own controversies within geography,[17] geographers' concern to underscore the *process* of adaptation, and their sophisticated methodologies for studying how social systems and cultural occurrences—potentially including performance—can affect the human relationship with the environment, bode well for examining the possibilities and pitfalls of adaptive processes in site performance.[18]

One final alignment that could spur discourse around site-adaptive dance emerges when considering adaptation from an economic perspective. As neoliberalism has made inroads into performance production, a discourse clearly laid out in Jen Harvie's, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (2013), performers and performance makers have been forced to seek entrepreneurial, efficient, and adaptable approaches for creating and presenting work. Indeed, such adjectives are the hallmarks of neoliberalism, and presenters and artists, forced to keep step with the neoliberal market, have met such demands with a greater focus on serial and/or adaptable formats. Unsurprisingly, site-adaptive dance as both a form and an identifiable genre began to emerge just as neoliberalism's effects intensified in the 1990s, sending artists and presenters scrambling economically.[19] To recap Pearson and Widrig from their experiences in 1993, "It all began when presenters would invite us to make a site-specific work that they couldn't afford on their own. So they would team up with another presenter who was interested in a completely different site and then ask us to adapt the same choreography for each of them" (2009, 217). And this push in the 1990s to economize through serialization has continued. For example, all of Eiko & Koma's works have emerged through the support of multiple presenters who banded together to facilitate the initial development of the work. *Offering* (2002), for example, which took place on a rotating structure covered with dirt that they transported from performance site to performance site, was

cocommissioned by Dancing in the Streets, the Walker Art Center, and the University of Arizona; it appeared at multiple sites across New York in 2002 and 2003, with coproduction by neighborhood organizations and park committees, as well as at various sites in Eastern Europe and across the United States.

By the time Koplowitz discussed site-adaptive work in 2009, neoliberalism's focus on efficiency, mobility of goods, and adaptability had been integrated into the choreographers' rhetoric. As Koplowitz states, he sees site-adaptive work as the "most economical or attractive to make because of the repeatability factor" (2009a, 75), and by 2009 such work had become his main driver: "At this point in my life I'm interested in site-adaptive works because I'm hopeful that they will be able to travel, they will have more of an artistic life, and they can continue to have an impact" (2009b, 66). Koplowitz even created a "site-adaptive touring group" called TaskForce, whose aim was to create site work for a series of spaces "on a small, more economical scale" (2009b, 66).[20] Pearson and Widrig's comments also demonstrate the drive toward efficiency and site-adaptive work's ability to provide it:

> Site-adaptive work helps in terms of time as well. We know that we've got preexisting dances that we can adapt to age and site that can be taught with a minimum of rehearsals. Twenty years ago, we would rehearse daily with five people for two months. That is what we needed, and everybody had the time. It is different now. (2009, 224)

Conclusion

As the above cross-disciplinary alignments indicate, site-adaptive dance is rife with analytical potential. It is a form that is keenly aware of the individual nature of development, while also drawing attention to the connections between geographically discrete sites around the globe; it coincides with neoliberalism's rise and many of its characteristics, while also finding ways of stressing the importance of place in the face of globalizing imperatives. All of these elements serve to underline the contemporary relevance of both the form and its attendant analyses. In addition, and of particular significance to the dance community as pointed out by Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1997), site-adaptive dance is a form that is both inherently and perpetually *process*-oriented. Due to the fact that each iteration of a given work involves adaptive labor, a deconstruction/reconstruction dialogue at each successive site, the form highlights the active practices and dialogues that can develop between people and not just one place, but a multiplicity of places. As Eiko Otake states in reference to their touring site work, "We are not necessarily looking for some place that is just right. We are looking for some place that is workable. … Then when we get there, we will de-prepare and re-create. That is a joy of site work" (2009a, 181). Otake, Carlson, Koplowitz, Pearson, and Widrig all undergo such work, underscoring the importance of process when critically engaging with space and place.

Today, more and more efforts are being made to tour site dance or, to put it another way, to adapt dance to a series of sites. From Jacky Lansley's *Standing Stones* (2008), where dancers performed in a series of thirteen cathedrals across the United Kingdom, to Archeoptryx 8's *Murikamification* (2008–16), where audiences from Dordrecht to Montreal travel along with (and over and under) performers that create curious attachments to a variety of local environments, to Milan Gervais's *Auto Fiction* (2009), which involves an acrobatic romp with a parked car that moves from place to place, site-adaptive works are popping up across the globe.[21] Although I do not have the time or space here to discuss today's proliferation of site-adaptive works, after examining the historical precedents listed above, it is evident that now is an opportune moment for a thorough examination of serialized site work to take place. By understanding the roots of this form and by scrutinizing past and present site-adaptive works via the disciplinary lenses mentioned above, we can move forward to a fuller understanding of the relationship between adaptation and performance practice, an

understanding that can expose the intricacies of the human-environment relationship at a critical juncture.

Notes

1. In upcoming articles, I will be delving further into presenters' interest in site work. I would argue that visibility, diversification, and accessibility are the main factors that spur presenters' interest. Other advantages include: sharing the development fee for a work with other presenters, an ability to demonstrate commitment to and investment in the community local to a presenter, and, as can be seen from the large numbers attracted to many of these festivals, the apparent popularity of such work.

2. For some of the earliest efforts to offer new terms to analyze the different strategies/categories at play in site performance, see the chart offered by the group Wrights & Sites as well as the surrounding discussion (Wilkie 2002, 147–51) or the distinction between "site-specific" and "site-based" offered by Gay McAuley (2005, 31–33). In recent years, others have offered some cursory possibilities for a new lexicon to describe the strategies at play, but none with detailed, in-depth analysis of the choreographic strategies at hand. And from viewing presenters' marketing brochures, it is clear that these new terms are rarely being adopted to describe the work presented.

3. Serialization as a concept stems from the effort to create serial literature in the 1800s, where a larger work would be broken down into a sequence of shorter parts, all under the same project title. The more common understanding of serialization in entertainment terms today indicates that it is merely a sequence of works presenting a common story. I would argue that in the site performance genre discussed here this "common story" indicates those similarities mentioned (i.e., the different works performed at successive sites are linked by certain characteristics or sections, which at times may almost be identical), but that the sequential nature of them and their differences from site to site mark them as different "chapters," so to speak, within the same work.

4. In rough terms, Kwon sees the tiers progressing from tier one (in the late 1960s and early 1970s), to tier two (in the 1970s and 1980s), to tier three as a product of the 1990s. But Kwon also points out that these paradigms are "not stages in a linear trajectory of historical development. Rather, they are competing definitions, overlapping with one another and operating simultaneously in various cultural practices today" (Kwon 1997, 95).

5. Wilkie describes De Certeau's (1984) shrewd unveiling of this dichotomy in this way: "Movement is often an illusion, and may be untidily caught up with its apparent opposite, a lack of movement" (2015, 47). In my rendering of this relational dichotomy (as a solo performer in Carlson's work), my own initially calm, still body that afterward demonstrated the inundation of the senses through wild-eyed trips and falls in the train aisle was often disquieting or even alarming for the audience/passengers of the train.

6. Many in the dance scene began to dabble with site work from the 1960s onward. For some, this involved multiple iterations of a single site piece, and the site-adaptive genre can find many "founders" if you will. For instance, Marilyn Wood began experimenting with environmental work occurring as a series in 1968 with her *Celebration in City Places*; this work involved Wood traveling to various cities, both in the United States and abroad, to coordinate large-scale, festival-style performances that included local performers dancing in a sequence of urban sites. Another who experimented in this area is Twyla Tharp who created a work, *Medley*, for a large grassy field in 1969. The work premiered on the Lyman Allyn Museum lawn in Hartford, Connecticut, but was re-sited at Central Park and MOMA in New York City, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, and then later in 1976 and 1977 on stages in Edinburgh and Brooklyn. "The *Medley* event begins an hour before sunset in an open field when a crowd of sixty student performers emerges from the audience and into complex, choreographed formations. . . . There is no designated seating for the audience and performers wear everyday clothing while executing pedestrian actions, blurring the lines between audience and performers" (http://www.twylatharp.org/content/medley; accessed May 16, 2016). Looking back, Gus Solomons Jr. also discusses

what he would now call "site-adaptive dance" in the 1970s in relation to his works *PocketCard Process* and *AudiencePlay Process* (1974), and *Hits and Runs* (1977); see http://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/05/04/everybodys-guide-gus-solomons-jrs-dances; accessed May 16, 2016.

7. This article focuses on efforts in the U.S. regarding site-adaptive work due to the ability to draw from *Site Dance* as a resource. But many efforts exist around the world to tour site work. In the UK, Lea Anderson's group, *The Cholmondeleys*, for example, experimented with performing on a parked car that would move from one outdoor venue to another as early as 1995. And Susanne Thomas' *Trainstation*, which drew from the experiences of both waiting and reunions in train stations, toured to stations across Europe from 1998 to 2004. In Canada, Bouchard and Danzon began creating site works for touring with their very popular *Flock of Flyers* (1996), *Carousel* (1997), and *Rendez-vous* (1998), which were all crafted for open, outdoor settings, at times with a portable site/set that would move from place to place.

8. In witnessing *Ordinary Festivals* at Bates College in 1995, I too noticed the remarkable dwarfing of the body that could take place in the work. Pearson and Widrig used the notion of a jovial outdoor festival to influence the sited version of the work; performers rolled oranges through the green grass and employed buoyant folk dancing to encourage a celebratory sense of space. Although I would argue that in many ways the work was not substantially different from the stage version of the work, seeing dancing bodies romp through the grass while hurling brightly colored props into the blue sky helped spark an altered sense of both the Bates quad and the work itself.

9. "Site-generic" is a term originally coined by the group Wrights & Sites to describe works that are re-sited in very similar sites: bedrooms, stairs, parking lots, etc. (Wilkie 2002).

10. Forcing the issue of adaptation, Eiko & Koma have not only presented *River* in multiple rivers across the United States, such as the Delaware, Winooski, and Platte rivers, but they have also adapted the work to still waters, such as Medicine Lake in Minnesota and the Japanese Pond in Durham, North Carolina.

11. In *Site Dance*, Duckler mentions making work that is "re-sited or site-adapted" and Hardenbergh notes that "*migrating* dances merit the word *site-adaptive*" such as those that move from site to site or stage to site; see Duckler (2009, 84) and Hardenbergh (2009, 158).

12. This first official coining of the term "site-adaptive" was in reference to the Dancing in the Streets Festival that took place over three weekends in three New York City boroughs.

13. The syllabus offered by Boston Ballet in collaboration with the Boston Children's Hospital has spread quickly to such companies as the Pittsburgh Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, and Ballet Arizona. This terminology is also used by the Houston Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance to refer to dance classes for mixed ability, senior, or health-compromised populations.

14. As an example of this link between mixed ability dance and site dance, Stephan Koplowitz is currently creating a site work at the Yerba Buena Gardens with AXIS Dance Company, a mixed-ability dance company. Many other mixed-ability companies also see themselves as site dance companies, such as Candoco, Marc Brew Company, and Stopgap Dance Theatre, all based in the UK.

15. The journal *Adaptation* that began in 2008 and is published by Oxford University Press offers, as it states, "academic articles, film and book reviews, including both book to screen adaptation, screen to book adaptation, popular and 'classic' adaptations, theatre and novel screen adaptations, television, animation, soundtracks, production issues and genres in literature on screen"(http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/adaptation/about.html; accessed May 16, 2016).

16. Works such as Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005) and Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) have been highly influential in the site performance field, and other geographers, namely Nigel Thrift, David Harvey, and John Wylie, have enjoyed multiple citations in the field as well.

17. As Michael Watts explains, although adaptation has produced a long and fruitful analysis within human geography, "the term 'adaptation' has … always been saddled with the baggage of structural functionalism on the one hand and biological reductionism on the other" (Watts 2009, 8).

18. In another upcoming article addressing site-adaptive performance, I observe how this "human geography" definition of adaptation has become critical in the climate change debate, used as an indicator of whether humans can/not manage environmental transformations on a planetary scale. I also note that the roots of the term in the ideology of "survival of the fittest" are highly problematic for site-adaptive performance (Kloetzel forthcoming a).

19. As political scientists Steger and Roy explain, "Friedman had an influential hand in guiding neoliberalism from constituting a mere minority view in the 1950s to becoming the ruling economic orthodoxy in the 1990s." To underscore, "in its heyday during the 1990s, neoliberalism bestrode the world like a colossus" (Steger and Roy 2010, 17 and x).

20. TaskForce, funded by the Transatlantic Arts Consortium, performed in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany between 2008 and 2010.

21. Much of this increase is due to the rise and proliferation of the urban arts festival, a phenomenon that I analyze in an upcoming article, "Site Dance on Tour: From Serialization to Spectacle" (Kloetzel forthcoming b) where I also chart a taxonomy of contemporary practices in site-adaptive dance.

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