

**ENCULTURATION AND THE TRANSMISSION OF
KINESTHETIC KNOWLEDGE:
*PASSIONE (2017) BY THE BALLET NATIONAL DE
MARSEILLE***

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Contemporary Ballet is an evolving dance genre wedged between innovation and tradition. In these ballets a dialogical relationship between classic canons and postmodern aesthetics drives a variety of approaches, thus generating new choreographic material, idiosyncratic movement vocabularies, and distinct training methods. In framing Contemporary Ballet as distinct, dance scholar Gretchen Alterowitz stresses that “mainstream contemporary ballet is performed by dancers who are classically trained and who use that training and the resulting particular ways of moving to influence the choreographic material.”¹ Alterowitz’s point is particularly salient for the case study we illustrate in this chapter. We examine not only a choreographer’s personal style and movement vocabulary, but also the relationship between specific training methods and dancers’ idiosyncratic ways of moving. We consider this relationship rich territory that deserves investigation, and which in turn can help elucidate important aspects of Contemporary Ballet as its own dance tradition.

We approach these themes in a specific context, addressing the choreographic research undertaken in the long-term collaboration between Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten, founders of the company Emio Greco | PC and Directors of the International Choreographic Arts Centre (ICK) in Amsterdam. Greco and Scholten were Artistic Directors of the *Ballet National de Marseille* (BNM) between 2014 and 2018. This company was established in 1972 by Roland

Petit, who guided the ensemble for twenty-six years until 1998, when he was succeeded by Marie-Claude Pietragalla, former *étoile* of the Opéra of Paris. Following Pietragalla's tenure, the *Ballet National de Marseille* was directed by the Belgian choreographer Frédéric Flamand (2004-2014).

We address the choreographers' methodology and movement vocabulary through analysis of their 2017 re-staging of the piece *Passione*, previously performed as *Passione in Due* by the choreographer Emio Greco himself and the musician and composer Frank Krawczyk in 2012. The musical score is an arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach's sacred oratorio *St Matthew Passion*, adapted and played live for the piano and accordion by Krawczyk. The piece was danced in May and June 2017 by seven dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille* at the *Théâtre La Criée*. Since 1981 this theatre has been the National Theater of Marseille, the capital of the *Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur* region in the South of France. This production provides a concrete focus for our interest in how dancers who are deeply enculturated, by way of their classical training, in "particular ways of moving" can be open to a choreographer's attempts to transmit hyper-specific kinesthetic knowledge. This study is informed by a phenomenological approach, and adopted ethnographic methods including participant observation and qualitative data-gathering in the form of in-depth interviews². In particular, our analysis draws on Emio Greco's own words, as he discusses, in his unique and striking language, his choreographic vision and the forms of training and practice by which he communicates his precise choreographic ideas to the company's experienced dancers. We begin with an overview of the artistic enterprise of Greco and Scholten, to illustrate the stylistic aspects that underpinned the re-creation of *Passione* in the unique version performed by the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille*.

From the early days of their artistic collaboration, Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten have developed a hybrid of classical and post-modern dance. Greco was born in 1965 in Brindisi in the South of Italy. He studied different dance techniques in his hometown, before moving to the French *Côte d'Azur*, where he studied ballet at the *Ecole Supérieure de Danse de Cannes Rosella Hightower*³ and began his professional career as dancer first at the *Ballet Antibes*, and later working with the Belgian choreographer and visual artist Jan Fabre.⁴ Pieter C. Scholten initially worked as dance dramaturg before his twenty-year collaboration with Greco would commence. They established their dance company Emio Greco | PC in the Netherlands with their first work, a solo entitled *Bianco* (1996). Subsequently they created the solo *Rosso* (1997) and the “solo for two” *Extra Dry* (1999). These three works formed the trilogy *Fra Cervello e Movimento* (Between Brain and Movement). From the first production, their distinctive stylistic signature was already characterized by a tension between the so-called “pure dance” and the more expressive “dance theatre”. French dance critic Rosita Boisseau defined Greco’s distinctive style as a hysterization of classical dance, marked by typical arm whirls and rapid twists.⁵ But Greco’s idiosyncratic choreographic style is deeply influenced by the classic ballet repertoire as much as it borrows from more radical artistic influences.

As noted by the Belgian philosopher Antoon Van den Braembussche in his reconstruction of the genesis of Greco and Scholten’s artistic cosmos, the directors’ research from the beginning has been characterized by a taste for the minimalist fashion of postmodern dance, but in the absence of its more “abstract” flavor.⁶ For Van den Braembussche, what Greco and Scholten (referred to in Van den Braembussche as Emio Greco | PC) create instead is a universe “pervaded by an extreme expressiveness, rooted in a minimalist *extremism*.”⁷ For this syncretism of minimalist aesthetic with a thrill for extreme explorations, the philosopher deploys the neologism *extremalism*, which defines the distinctive character of their style.⁸ As Van den Braembussche notes, “this new term reflects the search of Emio Greco | PC for extreme

minimalism and for a maximizing of extremes positioned between the profane and the sacred.”⁹

In the piece *Passione*, this relationship emerges vividly as a central theme of the Greco and Scholten artistic vision—one that is deeply ingrained in all their productions.

Along with the debut of their first work *Bianco*, Greco and Scholten’s early collaboration was accompanied by an artistic manifesto, *Les Sept Nécessités* published in 1996.¹⁰ Prompted to define what is necessary for the new dance they were developing, the Directors elaborated seven principles of the body’s logic which stand at the core of the choreographic language they would create. *The Seven Necessities* resemble a phenomenological *credo*, grounded on the physical experience of Greco’s dancing body:

Table 1. Greco and Scholten’s artistic Manifesto “The Seven Necessities”

1	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que mon corps est curieux de tout et moi : je suis mon corps.</i>	I have to tell you that my body is curious about everything and that I am my body.
2	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que mon corps m’échappe.</i>	I have to tell you that my body is escaping from me.
3	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que je peux contrôler mon corps et en même temps jouer avec lui.</i>	I have to tell you that I can control my body and play with it at the same time.
4	<i>Il faut que je vous dise qu’il faut que vous tourniez la tête.</i>	I have to tell you that you have to turn your head.
5	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que je peux multiplier mon corps.</i>	I have to tell you that I can multiply my body.
6	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que je ne suis pas seul.</i>	I have to tell you that I am not alone.
7	<i>Il faut que je vous dise que je vous abandonne et que je vous laisse ma statue.</i>	I have to tell you that I am abandoning you and leaving you my statue.

As a methodology to feed and support this system of beliefs, Greco and Scholten went on to create a distinct training method called Double Skin/Double Mind (DS/DM), aimed at preparing and shaping the body for the specific expressive inflection they wanted to produce.

Greco and Scholten established their choreographic method DS/DM with the basis of Greco’s physical dance experience as the primary phenomenological unit of investigation.

During an interview with the choreographer conducted by Sarah Pini on June 1, 2017 after rehearsals of *Passione* at the *Theatre La Criée* in Marseille, Greco explained how the entirety of their DS/DM methodology stemmed from the specific physicality and intrinsic movement quality of his own body:

I have the chance of having a very hard [inflexible] body, because the more you are rigid, the more you have to break through, you have to find [a way]... and this helped me to find a lot of differentiation, because with a flexible body it is more difficult, maybe because I was so rigid, and I'm still rigid in dancing, so that I really have to... to go and to be so specific and to be really precise. This helped me to find out all these kind of important elements, also because first I did it on myself, because I was reading myself, sometimes it was too painful to watch myself dancing in the recordings, and I'm still very rigid, you never go away from your body in fact, your characteristics stay there, but you can take advantage of it...¹¹

Greco emphasizes the important role played by his specific physicality in shaping the development of his vocabulary and style. He also stresses that the process of researching and creating his own dance language stemmed from his ability to “read the body”. With the expression “I was reading myself”, Greco indicates the reflexive approach he had applied to the analysis of his own physicality and movement quality from the beginning of his choreographic career.

READING DANCE AND THE TEXTUALITY OF THE BODY

This ability to “read the body”, according to Susan Foster, is a matter of expertise that is not easily acquired. To be able to understand and make sense of a dance, one has to first “develop a knowledge of the body and its motion”, attainable through attention and awareness to one’s own movement, and the movement of others.¹² After the “reader of dances” has learned “to see

and feel rhythm in movement, to comprehend the three-dimensionality of the body, to sense its anatomical capabilities and its relation to gravity, to identify the gestures and shapes made by the body, and even to re-identify them when they are performed by different dancers”, only then, Foster claims, “the viewer can apprehend the choreographic codes and conventions that give the dance its significance”.¹³

Foster’s *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* introduces the methodological interest in literary studies and its theoretical framework to inform dance scholarship. According to Ellen Goellner and Jaqueline Shea Murphy, Foster showed how the concept of *textuality*, developed by French semiotician Roland Barthes, can inform a suitable language for the analysis of dance.¹⁴ As Foster illustrated, the semiotic understanding of dance as a system of symbols comparable to language has a long history. As choreography is “writing dance”, reading becomes synonymous with “interpreting” dance, and consequently, with understanding the bodies that enable the dance. This brief excursus on the semiotic approach to dance studies helps our understanding of the conceptual framework on which Emilio Greco | PC’s entire choreographic system is based. Pini asked the choreographer about the source of inspiration for his dance. Greco replied that his movement vocabulary is mostly based on physical experience, rather than being characterized by preexisting aesthetic forms that are only subsequently superimposed onto the body. Further to this, he explained his prioritizing of experience by saying: “I can read the other bodies, what is the type of nature, the type of writing that a body creates and then I can support it, I can start from there, but never from the form.”¹⁵

While illustrating his particular attitude towards movement, Greco emphasized his opposition to the rigidity he observes in more canonical dance forms. When asked how he developed his understanding of the body and what prompted his choreographic research, Greco replied that certain limitations encountered along his formation in ballet and contemporary dance precisely served as stimuli for his own research and method:

When I started with Pieter 21 years ago, to create the first piece, I was completely confronted with the limits of my education, and the fact that to achieve a certain technique you condemn a lot of awareness of the body, sometimes you kill a lot of other expressions, other pathways in the body, I was confronted by a kind of rigidity...¹⁶

To which Pini asked: “do you mean in ballet?” And Greco replied:

Yes, not only in ballet, but if you have formality it is the same, even contemporary techniques, because sometimes there is such a formality in modern contemporary dance that it is just the same. Then because of this I start to think, and from the first work that was *Fra Cervello e Movimento* I start to see that the key, the solution would be to start to detach the moment when the movement starts, when your mind recognizes it [internally], and [from there] to create a different awareness or a ‘trust’ in the body.¹⁷

Greco and Scholten DS/DM’s methodology, as the director emphasizes, is aimed at enhancing physical and mental awareness to make intention and form coincide. This idea contrasts with many classical forms of dance, such as ballet for instance, in which emphasis on the movement form and on accurate reproduction and fidelity to the traditional vocabulary is the basis for any choreographic production.

In the book *Capturing Intention*, which provides interdisciplinary analysis and documentation of the work of Greco and Scholten (referred in the book as EG | PC), Corinne Jola discusses the dialectic of intention and form from the perspective of cognitive neuroscience. Despite the fact that cognitive scientists have paid little attention to this aspect of dance practice, Jola emphasizes that movement intentionality and its relation to form is worth investigating, and so she addresses Greco and Scholten’s methodology.¹⁸ She points out how “in the work of EG | PC the reliability of the movement form within dancers is secondary. The idea is that the intention itself is the goal and random effects are within the voluntary range of individual expressive bodies.”¹⁹

According to Jola what is important in EG | PC's work is the *intention* that stands as the source of the movement, not solely the form that a certain movement realizes and represents. She states that "in the work of EG | PC intention is used as a deliberate practice. The assumption on the part of the artists is that, when consciously attended to, the intention within a movement becomes somehow perceivable, e.g. it may register with the viewer as the motivation for the movement."²⁰ The kind of deliberate practice mentioned by Jola, through which such intention becomes manifest, can be traced in the Double Skin/Double Mind (DS/DM) method elaborated by Greco and Scholten. Their methodology is composed of four basic principles: *Breathing*, *Jumping*, *Expanding* and *Reducing*. This method aims to infuse every movement with a specific goal, to bring forth external manifestations of inner thoughts as Greco makes clear in his account of the distinction between form and formality:

Then I create the form but to go in the form is the extreme, I love the form, in fact at the end I search only for new forms, because the form contains the content, it is very important, but then you have to be very precise, [since] the form is not formality, but it is [only] a very specific position of the body that can catch, that can contain a certain state.²¹

For Greco the aesthetic component of his movement vocabulary doesn't come from a pre-given shape but has to be researched and expressed through the underlying intention at the origin of the movement.

According to Emilio Greco, there is a close correspondence between a specific position of the body, a specific shape that a dancing body can sculpt, and the intrinsic mental state that is contained or held in such aesthetic form. In the following section we illustrate how Greco's methodology is coupled with the idea of *intentionality*, which term comes from the Latin verb *intendo*, meaning to aim, to stretch. As Edward Warburton has observed, dance scholars often draw upon phenomenological methodologies. Since phenomenology is "essentially a philosophical argument for the foundational role that perception plays in understanding and

engaging with the world” a relevant issue in this branch of philosophy is the idea that intentionality is deeply rooted in our bodies.²²

The concepts expressed by Greco during our interview echo philosopher Joel Krueger’s phenomenological definition of intentionality. Krueger underlines that “in this technical sense, intentionality refers to the way consciousness can stretch out or be directed toward objects internal (images, memories, etc.) and external (things, relations, and events in the world)”.²³ But how is this infusion of meaning into specific dance movements related to Greco’s artistic universe? In the following excerpt from our interview, Greco provided a rich description of his method DS/DM:

The method Double Skin/Double Mind is a method based on the regeneration of the energy, that works on the stamina, and the stamina becomes the element that recreates the body, it cleans off the old memories and it creates space for new information. Also the long exercise of breathing and stretching, the breathing is like the way of reaching something, is not [just about] the stretching, the reaching, but of course with [this exercise of] reaching you can also train your body to get longer, but again the reaching is from inside, and with the breathing you can catch something from inside [your body] that can nourish, that can let the body grow. That’s why the body can reach out, otherwise it is only stretch, there is no reaching, and the extremity became a pose, in fact [through] the way I train with this reaching and breathing [exercises], you arrive to the edge [of your movement] and you can still see there is something that travels through the edges and continues, it is never a pose. All this also helps to develop their [the dancers’] strengths, it is also mental strength, it strengthens a lot the body, the joints, and it really goes into the joints [...]²⁴

While Krueger reminds us that “phenomenologists insist that minds are irreducibly embodied” and that “the things we think and experience—and the way we think and experience them—reflect aspects of the physical structure of our body as well as the things our body can do”,

Greco's method Double Skin/Double Mind appears literally to incorporate this phenomenological notion of intentionality into its dance training.²⁵

The DS/DM technique is envisioned to develop dancers' corporeal and mental awareness to make intention and form coincide. Greco revealed that the difference between the method DS/DM and more established dance techniques consists in its radical kinesthetic awareness and conscious attention towards the different *layers* of the body:

you don't choose what is used in a more normal technique, in ballet or in modern you use the limbs, [...] but it is not so physiological, certain techniques have a more mechanic understanding of the body, and this [DS/DM method, conversely] is a kind of physiological understanding, so with this method you also develop the sense of the liquid, of the soft organs inside your body, you distinguish the more harder parts, which is the skeleton, you distinguish the muscles, and then at the end the skin, which communicates with the external world, so you start to have multiple layers of interpretation with your body, you can imagine how you can grow, how you can strengthen your personality and your technique.²⁶

This idea that the body has multiple layers of interpretation lies at the center of Greco and Scholten's methodology, hence the name Double Skin/Double Mind, as Greco explained, stands for the multiplicity of layers and possible interpretations embedded within the dancing body. Such embeddedness of multiple meanings is a major characteristic of the work of the two Directors. In the next section we address the re-creation of the piece *Passione* for the *Ballet National de Marseille*, focusing on the complexity of its stratified structure and development.

EMBODYING A MANIFESTO: THE SEVEN NECESSITIES OF *PASSIONE*

Passione encompasses and brings to life Greco and Scholten's foundational principles *The Seven Necessities*, encapsulating the entirety of their artistic manifesto. The version of *Passione* danced by the *Ballet National de Marseille* is the re-creation of their previous work *Passione in Due* performed by Greco and the composer Frank Krawczyk in 2012. Inspired by the *St Matthew Passion* of Johann Sebastian Bach, *Passione* is a re-adaptation of the original solo work. The choreography of *Passione* has been elaborated according to the seven principles that inform the Directors' artistic manifesto published in 1996, at the time they founded their company EG | PC in the Netherlands.

To each of Greco and Scholten's *Seven Necessities* corresponds a distinct concept: *Curiosity, Dialogue, Choice, Contradiction, Doubt, Challenge, and Heritage*.²⁷ *Passione* is performed by seven dancers from the ensemble of the *Ballet National de Marseille*, who in turn interpret seven different solos [figure 1].

[Insert Pini & Sutton-Fig 1 here]

The choreography of the solos is informed by these seven qualities or properties that delineate the respective characters the dancers embody and communicate. To each of these tableaux is associated a different musical tempo, adapted from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and performed live by the musician and composer Franck Krawczyk, who collaborated with Greco on the previous version of *Passione in Due*.

This well-received adaptation was successful in embodying the choreographers' method: as the synopsis presented at Romaeuropa Festival in 2016 noted, "The bodies of the dancers replace the vocal aspect of the opera and explore the narrative and themes in an extremely subjective and at times ironic manner. As the first point of the EG | PC manifesto reads: "I need to tell you that my body is curious about everything and that I am my body"²⁸

Each scene is also characterized by a reference to the circus, so every dance solo is inspired by an allusion to a different circus performer. An additional layer of complexity is

added by the idea that through each solo the dancers can accomplish a sort of expiation of the corresponding capital vice associated with their respective characters, to whom is also linked a specific body fluid, symbolized on stage by seven bottles containing colored liquids as part of the scenography.

Table 2. The multilayered structure of the piece *Passione*

BNM Cast	The Seven Necessities	Distinct Properties	Capital Vices	Body Fluids	Circus Performers	Music Tempos
Denis	<i>I have to tell you that my body is curious about everything and that I am my body.</i>	Curiosity	Wrath	Gall	Marionette	Overture
Valeria	<i>I have to tell you that I am not alone.</i>	Dialogue	Envy	Blood	Equilibrist	Chorale
Anton/ Gen	<i>I have to tell you that I can control my body and play with it at the same time.</i>	Choice	Greed	Sweat	Tamer	Scherzo
Angel	<i>I have to tell you that my body is escaping from me.</i>	Contradiction	Lust	Sperm	Illusionist	Fugato
Aya	<i>I have to tell you that you have to turn your head.</i>	Doubt	Pride	Tears	Clown	Aria
Vito	<i>I have to tell you that I can multiply my body.</i>	Challenge	Sloth	Urine	Fire Eater	Recitativo
Nonoka	<i>I have to tell you that I am abandoning you and leaving you my statue.</i>	Heritage	Gluttony	Saliva	Ventriloquist	Coda

These are among the most salient features characterizing the piece *Passione* [table 2], along with the clear reference to the figure of Jesus Christ and his celebrated Passion, a central theme of Bach's famous oratorio. Harmonized by the sounds of the piano and the accordion, Greco's *Passione* is a dance concerto where sacred and profane are skillfully blended, and where the

universal themes of suffering, sensuality, and sacrifice are revealed through the power of the dancers' bodies.

Analysis of the creative processes underlying the re-adaptation of this particular creation of Greco and Scholten for the *Ballet National de Marseille*, can help us understand the framing of Contemporary Ballet as a recognizable dance genre. We aim to tap the transmission of kinesthetic choreographic ideas, pursuing Alterowitz's point that classically trained dancers' "particular ways of moving" are the key influence on Contemporary Ballet. Greco and Scholten's work has been studied by researchers concerned with the development of different forms of archives for transcribing and recording a dance work through different notation systems and technologies, including documentation research,²⁹ interactive installations³⁰ and motion capture experiments.³¹ Our focus, in contrast, is on the lived experience of the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille*, addressing some of the strategies for the transfer of kinesthetic knowledge across different bodies in this unusual and challenging case where a work originally performed by a solo dancer is now spread across seven different dancers. The dancers of the Marseille ensemble are thus required not only to embody the choreographer's vocabulary and aesthetics, but also to embrace the complexity of his artistic vision. In order to do so, they have to make sense of his entire conceptual framework and meet not only the audience's but the choreographer's expectations. Given the fact that Emio Greco originally performed all seven characters and corresponding solos, Pini asked Greco what predominant aspect guided his choice of the cast for this new version of *Passione*, and how he managed to translate into the dancers' bodies his vision for each specific character. Talking about his casting decisions, Greco revealed:

before being technical, [the decision] was more linked to some human aspects of the dancers, certain ways how they are, how they stand with their bodies, beyond the technique, also the dramaturgy of their bodies, the structure, the psychology that you can read through it [...] so first I used the human, and the relation that there is with

this technique, what kind of dialogue is there, because of this dialogue [with the technique] then you can enter between the two things and we can expand. Certain people don't have that dialogue, and then it's very hard, but if there is a dialogue, then you can enter also with your [own] dialogue [vocabulary], with your indications, and the body starts to expand, starts to receive many other elements and also many other dimensions, and it keeps giving back...³²

Greco thinks of the dancers' bodies on the one hand as a medium shaped by technique, and on the other hand as an instrument to interpret an idea. Greco's relationship with the technique echoes Foster's view of the dancing body as a vehicle for aesthetic expression. Foster stressed that "training not only constructs a body but also helps to fashion an expressive self that, in its relation with the body, performs the dance. Aesthetic expression can result when a self uses the body as a vehicle for communicating its thoughts and feelings, or when the self merges with the body and articulates its own physical situation."³³ When asked how Greco sought to transfer his aesthetic expressive signature to the different bodies of the *Ballet National de Marseille* one of the company dancers Nahimana Vandebussche revealed how the specific "texture" of the choreographer's research is precisely elicited through the practice of the training method DS/DM:

in the beginning, we were doing always the Double Skin/Double Mind which is a kind of warming up exercise, but it is like warming up in the sense that you keep going, going, and going, it's building up, and then at some point it is like you get so tired but then he [Emio Greco] ask you even more, and actually if you see their [Greco and Scholten's] pieces, it's like that, they work on pushing till the limit and then, if you reach the limit, that's where they suddenly are like "ok, now we can grow further", because for them it is not like a form...³⁴

Given Greco's peculiar relation to formality and the "forms" that his dance vocabulary assumes, it is relevant to ask how this relationship is mediated across Greco's methodology and

the diversity of the *corps de ballet*. How do dancers negotiate their identities and expressive selves during the choreographic process? We agree with Warburton that “dancers as interpretative artists must be able to both physically reproduce a choreographer’s movement vocabulary and faithfully represent her expressive intention. When dancers are successful, viewers not only see the movement, but they also feel its expressive intent.”³⁵ Nevertheless, during fieldwork at the *Ballet National de Marseille* we observed that having a highly distinct movement signature might become problematic for the dancers. They are required to adjust their movement qualities to the choreographer’s expressive needs and incorporate his idiosyncratic language. In the following section we discuss some forms of negotiation and transmission of such kinesthetic knowledge.

In regard to this issue of owning a highly distinctive movement quality, Angel Martinez Hernandez, a “veteran” of the *Ballet National de Marseille* ensemble, exposed some problematic aspects at play with this transmission. Martinez Hernandez’s performance in *Passione* eloquently evokes the figure of Christ and revolves around the principle of the “escaping” of the body associated with the capital vice of Lust. In figure 2 we can see Angel Martinez Hernandez performing a suggestive Christ pose held by two other dancers of the ensemble.

[Insert Pini and Sutton - Fig 2 here]

Martinez Hernandez was chosen for this specific role in virtue of his characteristic physicality and movement qualities of suppleness and sensuality, which to some extent, radically differ from those of the choreographer. Martinez Hernandez revealed how the complex process of adapting his movement modality to Greco’s material was not always an easy task:

he [Greco] wanted to see [reproduced] what he was feeling [when he danced this solo], so in the beginning it was hard to get into that point because you cannot feel like someone else feels, and then he was not really... I could see that he was not identified

with what I was doing, because he would say “ok this I don’t feel it” [...], so in the beginning it was hard to get into that point because you could see he didn’t know how to direct me, and how to give me the informations [*sic*] to take out what he wanted. Then little by little, I think he started to let me do and we start to find a code to talk between us, to get into a line where, I think he would have agreed, let’s say, he was agreeing with what I was doing, and let me go through this way, always directed by what he was saying.³⁶

Intrigued by the complexity of the piece and the fact that all seven characters were originally created and interpreted by the choreographer himself, Pini asked the dancers what kind of method Greco deployed when he started to work with them on this re-adaptation, and how the choreographer managed to translate into their bodies the specificity of each character. All the dancers involved with the production of *Passione* reported that at the beginning of this production, in order to make them acquainted with their respective solos and characters, Greco requested that they start with improvisation on their assigned musical score:

in the beginning we started with the improvisation, Emio gave us the papers with the informations about the liquids, about the body statements [corresponding to the Seven Necessities] we started for about a week or two [...] each of us we had a part [assigned], and we had to improvise with our character, and our liquid and the idea of the solo. Then we proposed it to him and from there we started the work, in the beginning he was much more restricted, because I think he had in his mind the feeling of what he was doing, while he was doing it.³⁷

As experienced performers, the *Ballet National de Marseille* dancers were well aware of their duties as interpreters. But the dancers might also hold different understandings of certain choreographic concepts. To illustrate how a transmission of meanings takes place we report the account of Vito Giotta, another “veteran” of the Marseille ensemble. Giotta refers to his understanding of Greco’s concept “multiplier”, “multiply”, evoking the “multiplication” of the

body, which encompasses both a specific awareness of the body in motion and a quality of movement:

to explain it to me he [Greco] used the idea of the water, like when we split the water, it multiplies itself in more particles. In the body it is the same, he talked to us like ‘you are talking with each single molecules of your body’ and this means that everything is always in movement, every single point of your body, and the meaning is that you are conscious of each little point that you are moving, because otherwise we fall down in the idea of the escape, the body that escapes, that’s why you always need to know that you are moving one part of the body and you decide to stop this and move another part. It is super conscious work [...] There is always a mental state that it is involved, but in this solo, you need more because you don’t have to put your focus on your feet or on your arms, or on your head, but you have to put your focus on each part, it is like you are multiplying, it is more about the skin, the multiplication is more about the skin.³⁸

[Insert Pini and Sutton – Fig 3 here]

Figure 3 depicts Vito Giotta performing *Passione*’s sixth solo which represents the necessity of *Challenge* (“I have to tell you that I can multiply my body”) associated with the circus performer the “fire eater”, here symbolized through the spray of water from his mouth. Referring to the specific case of Greco’s layered concept of the *multiplication* of the body, another dancer reported that in some cases the way they integrate Greco’s kinesthetic ideas into their different movement qualities doesn’t correspond to the idea that the choreographer had already in his mind. Vandebussche particularly underlined the challenge represented by having to express such a specific choreographic concept with improvisation:

for him “multiplier” (multiply) it is something really strong, it has to be really from every inch of your body that has to multiply, and also when he [Greco] does it you see it, you understand it, but then, after the thing is that we have our own way of improvising, because in the beginning [of the re-creation of *Passione*] we were just

improvising on things, so I have another way of moving, which isn't completely the same as him...³⁹

As we observed during the fieldwork, their different ways of interpreting and expressing a certain idea might clash with the choreographer's embodied perception of how such an idea should be conveyed and performed. Another dancer of the Ballet precisely emphasized this point:

when you improvise of course you go on your own way, but it is normal that he doesn't want me to be... I should be myself but in his way of seeing, of dancing, this is quite hard to do. But it is also something good for me to challenge myself, even if there are days that it's blocking me, because I'm saying "oh my god, I don't dance like this", or "my body would go in another way but I have to be in this other" and Angel said to me when we did *Passione* in Bilbao: "ok you [Greco] don't like when we improvise naturally, but I'm me, I'm myself, ok, it's normal that I have to go in your way, because it's your work, but still it's me."⁴⁰

To describe the ability of dancers to absorb different movement qualities to allow the transmission of kinesthetic knowledge across their bodies and the body of the choreographer, dance scholar Edward Warburton argues that, alongside somatic and kinesthetic forms of empathy, dancers develop a "feel for" the movement and a connection to the choreography through *mimetic empathy*. For Warburton, mimetic empathy is "a form of cognitive empathy, ... the ability to put oneself imaginatively in the place of another, reproducing in one's own imagination and physicality the emotional tenor and movement form of another."⁴¹ The process through which the sharing of embodied information occurs in dance, according to Warburton, is not merely a re-presentation or replica of the choreographer's movement but involves "bodily experiences of the choreographer's way of dance-making, which, through mimetic mirroring of movement qualities and emotion and intent, becomes a shared vision."⁴²

Warburton's reference to "mimetic mirroring" should not be read as suggesting that the process of transmitting kinesthetic knowledge is simple, automatic, or romantic. This process often presents more difficulties than one could imagine if only attending to the show from the audience's perspective. For the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille*, expressing the choreographer's ideas through their very flesh and bones entails a deep transformation of their mindful bodies. This often requires further efforts beyond the ability to empathize with the choreographer's emotions and intentions.

For Greco the dancing body is a body that needs to be transformed through strenuous physical training. The dancers of the ensemble revealed how this practice of pushing the body to the limit of its physical abilities, in both daily training routines and rehearsals, is one of Greco's key techniques to prepare the dancers for his choreographic work. The dancers often reported how both the Directors incite them to push the boundaries of their physical resistance, to bring forth what lies beyond such limits, beyond the overly controlled and polished forms encouraged in much classical ballet training:

they like when it is dirty [unpolished, rough]! because they say "from dirty it can become something more, but if you go safe, if you don't push it, you don't even go there to challenge yourself", because it has to be always a challenge [...] and this how I think this training is how he make us actually to understand [...] I think it's this, at the beginning it's a bit complicated, because you don't understand why you have to tire yourself so much, but then when you go through it and you realize "oh my god, actually it really helps" then it's nice, because then you feel you have grown a little bit.⁴³

ENCULTURATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING IN EMIO GRECO'S BALLET

To be able to respond to the choreographer's expectations and demands, and ultimately to successfully perform his work the dancers of the Marseille ensemble needed to find a common intelligible code for aligning their mindful bodies to the Directors' universe of meaning. As evidenced from the fieldwork, understanding the choreographer's artistic enterprise and making sense of his complex idiosyncratic choreographic system could be a challenging task. In order to successfully interpret the choreographer's directions, dancers are required to understand his universe of meaning, including the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavior that inevitably shape his artistic and cultural framework. Through this process the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille* have acquired a specific movement vocabulary and learned how to interpret Greco's kinesthetic language. They have become enculturated into a new and highly specific set of bodily and movement practices.

Margaret Mead defined *enculturation* as "the process of learning a culture in all its uniqueness and particularity."⁴⁴ From an anthropological perspective, dance is generally considered a cultural practice and the experience of dance a culturally embedded event. As Warburton says, "to be trained as a dancer today is to be enculturated into a world of meanings and movements".⁴⁵ Cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins observes that "cultural practices are not cultural models traditionally construed as disembodied mental representations of knowledge. Rather they are fully embodied skills. Cultural practices organize the action in situated action. Cultural practices are emergent products of dynamic distributed networks of constraints".⁴⁶ Following Hutchins' definition of cultural practices, we observed how "making sense" of the choreographer's aesthetic and dance language pertaining to the re-staging of *Passione* is for the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille* a process of enculturation and a cultural practice. The dancers interviewed reported how important it has been for them to find their own motivations for making sense of the choreographer's poetics and demands. Their accounts illustrate how the process of enculturation into the choreographer's language

permitted the construction of sense, and consequently determined the success of their performance and interpretation.

In our analysis of the work of Greco and Scholten, *Passione*, we illustrate, not only the specific varied and idiosyncratic dance vocabularies that populate the contemporary choreographic panorama, but also the importance of addressing the underlying processes that inform the construction of meaning in dance. If Contemporary Ballet can be considered an evolving dance genre, the framework around or surrounding the interpretation of the dance form is an important component of its trajectory. The work of Greco and Scholten skillfully blends together canonical elements of classical ballet with postmodern inspirations. The choreographer's vocabulary and movement style, permeated by such *extremalist* use of the body to encompass dialectic communicative tensions, is an emblematic example of Contemporary Ballet.

Exploring Alterowitz's account of Contemporary Ballet as a dance form that encompasses classical technique with specific training methods to produce distinctive movement vocabularies and new choreographic material, our analyses of *Passione* demonstrated how the choreographer's methodology and movement language is embodied and re-enacted by the dancers' performances. We have examined not only a choreographer's personal style and dance vocabulary, but also the relationship between specific training methods and dancers' idiosyncratic ways of moving. We investigated how the dancers of the *Ballet National de Marseille* articulate their kinesthetic understandings and their diverse forms of agency in relation to the choreographer's artistic vision and demands, addressing the specificity of this case study to exemplify how meanings are negotiated across different bodies.

We considered the role played by the Directors' aesthetics embedded in their method Double Skin/Double Mind (DS/DM) in shaping the transmission of kinesthetic knowledge. This method is aimed at training and fostering the multiplicity of layers and expressive

possibilities of the dancing body. This idea that the body has multiple layers of interpretation is central to the work and artistic methodology of Greco and Scholten, and the dancers working with the DS/DM method, according to Greco, can attain a specific *intention* from which their communicative power can emerge. We identified in the method DS/DM a physical and embodied manifestation of the phenomenological conception of intentionality, which aims to encompass both dancers' mental intentions and their physical gestures.

The case of the *Ballet National de Marseille* and Greco and Scholten's re-creation of the piece *Passione*, with its intrinsic complexity and stratified structure, exemplifies a form of Contemporary Ballet in which an idiosyncratic dance vocabulary operates within the institutionalized context of a National Ballet.

Image Credits:

[Pini and Sutton Fig 1]: The dancers of the Ballet de Marseille performing the seven characters of *Passione*. [Credit line: Photo © Didier Philispart, Courtesy of the artist.]

[Pini and Sutton Fig 2]: Dancer Angel Martinez Hernandez in the center held by two other dancers of the ensemble. [Credit line: Photo © Didier Philispart, Courtesy of the artist.]

[Pini and Sutton Fig 3]: Dancer Vito Giotta in *Passione*. [Credit line: Photo © Alwin Poiana, Courtesy of the *Ballet National de Marseille*.]

NOTES

¹ Gretchen Alterowitz, "Contemporary Ballet: Inhabiting the Past While Engaging the Future", *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies XXXV: Network of Pointes*, eds. Kathrina Farrugia-Kriel and Jill Nunes Jensen (2015): 21.

² Doris J. F. McIlwain and John Sutton, "Methods for Measuring Breadth and Depth of Knowledge", in *The Routledge Handbook of Sports Expertise*, ed. Damian Farrow and Joe Baker (New York: Routledge, 2015), 221–3.

³ Rosella Hightower (1920–2008) was an internationally acclaimed American ballerina, teacher and dance director born in Oklahoma in 1920. Hightower joined the *Ballets Russes* in Montecarlo under the direction of Russian dancer and choreographer Léonide Massine (1896–1979) in 1937. After retiring from the stages, Rosella Hightower opened the *École Supérieure de danse de Cannes* in 1962, which soon became a renowned ballet center, famous for the international reputation of the Artistic Director and the multidisciplinary training offered to young professional dancers. Hightower received France's highest commendation and was made *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* in France in 1975. Candy Franklin Short, "Hightower, Rosella", *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed 17 August 2018, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=HI003>.

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⁶ Antoon Van den Braembussche, *It's Life Jim, but Not as We Know It: A Philosophical Approach on Emio Greco | PC's Trilogy*, ed. Klazien Brummel (Amsterdam: Stichting Zwaanproducties, 2001).

⁷ Van den Braembussche, *It's Life Jim*, 72.

⁸ The term *extremalism* was coined by François Le Pillouer, Director of the Théâtre National de Bretagne. Van den Braembussche, *It's Life Jim*, 72.

⁹ Van den Braembussche, *It's Life Jim*, 72.

¹⁰ Van den Braembussche, *It's Life Jim*, 20.

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¹³ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 58-59.

¹⁴ Ellen W. Goellner, and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press 1995): 2.

¹⁵ Emio Greco. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 01, 2017.

¹⁶ Emio Greco. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 01, 2017.

¹⁷ Emio Greco. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 01, 2017.

¹⁸ Corinne Jola, 'Movement Intention: Dialectic of Internal and External Movements', in *Capturing Intention: Documentation, Analysis and Notation Research Based on the Work of Emio Greco /PC*, ed. by Scott DeLahunta (Amsterdam: Emio Greco PC and AHK/Lectoraat, 2007): 62–67 (62).

¹⁹ Jola, *Movement Intention*, 67.

²⁰ Jola, *Movement Intention*, 63.

²¹ Emio Greco. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 01, 2017.

²² Edward C. Warburton, "Of Meanings and Movements: Re-Languaging Embodiment in Dance Phenomenology and Cognition", *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 02 (9 February 2012): 65.

²³ Joel Krueger, "Intentionality", in *The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, ed. Giovanni Stanghellini et al. (Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–13. (online)

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²⁶ Emio Greco. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 01, 2017.

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³⁴ Nahimana Vandebussche. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 05, 2017. Marseille, France.

³⁵ Warburton, "Of Meanings and Movements", 73.

³⁶ Angel Martinez Hernandez. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 04, 2017. Marseille, France.

³⁷ Angel Martinez Hernandez. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 04, 2017.

³⁸ Vito Giotta. Interview by Sarah Pini. May 30, 2017. Marseille, France.

³⁹ Nahimana Vandebussche. Interview by Sarah Pini. June 05, 2017.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ballet de Marseille dancer. June 04, 2017.

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⁴⁴ Margaret Mead, "Socialization and Enculturation", *Current Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (1963): 187.

⁴⁵ Warburton, "Of Meanings and Movements", 68.

⁴⁶ Edwin Hutchins, "Enculturating the Supersized Mind", *Philosophical Studies* 152, no. 3 (2011): 441.