

David Neumann, Karinne Keithley and Ruthie Epstein of *feedforward*
in conversation, moderated by Alejandra Martorell

Alejandra Martorell: I'm interested in talking about collaboration, not in an abstract way, but in terms of where you're coming from, what have you found out, what were you thinking about and how did it work? One question I have is what does the process of working on this piece talk about to the artist in you? How did it fit with you as an artist, and as a person, as a thinker? Where were you when you started, what connections did you make and what did you bring to it?

Ruthie Epstein: I know for Karinne and me, [we] both worked with David as performers, and for me it was an exciting shift to be involved in your process [David's, who is sitting opposite] in a completely different role—to apply old lessons to a new project. I try to be as honest as possible, and that's what I've learned through your work, it's how to be honest.

David Neumann: I let go of that years ago; I depend on my collaborators to remain honest.

[Laughs.]

Ruthie: In terms of where each of us is coming from, that's been a very enlightening process for me, to be entering the same or a related set of questions or issues, but not as a performer, rather as a viewer.

Karinne Keithley: I feel like my involvement in this piece is sort of a manifestation of the way that I've changed as an artist or the way my manifestation as an artist has changed over the last many years. Dancing with you is basically the last dancing that I did, and some stuff with Chris (Yon). I wanted to hold on to that as I shifted into going to school, but you have to make choices about what you can spend your time with and what you can't. And performing means the exclusion of other long-term pursuits. I think that my unavailability as a dancer is how I became the writer, to kind of stay part of the family. And that actually felt really comfortable because that's the perspective that I have now working, I guess, as a crafter of language: to be able to think compositionally about the piece. Having such a residue of these compositional questions from having performed in *tough, the tough* and *Sentence*, I felt enabled me to think compositionally with that long-term perspective. And that my role as a writer was something that was much more contemporary to me and not based on my understanding of your work. I actually had a long time before I could imagine anybody's voice but Will's (Eno) in relation to your work because he wrote the text for everything that I've been a part of. And I don't possess such a good vocabulary as Will's, so I was really anxious about that. I feel that how I come to this piece in terms of my textual contribution is very much how I've chosen my place. And then how I can talk about it as another eye has to do with the kind of longevity of our relationship.

David: When I think about it, speaking about collaborations, for me it's a lot about relationships, and the reason I wanted to continue the relationships I'd started with Ruthie and with Karinne... It has a lot to do with schedule and where we're at with our lives. I knew I needed help gathering text and thinking about the larger context of where this piece comes from. I thought about the example of the dramaturge in the theater,

who is generally someone who not only is on top of all the lines in the play—maybe even editing the play—but also [what is] the play’s historical context to doing it now. And I thought this subject matter, this sports idea, was larger than I could really handle in terms of doing all that background [work]. I could have assembled my own text, but I really wanted someone or a team to be able to look at it more carefully than I knew I would be able to with the time that I had. And I was really excited! I had talked to Will at some point along the lines of working on this piece, but that was a long time ago and he was always busy. It seemed very much that he was through with our collaboration. He’d decided that somewhere along the way. And because it came clear that you [Karinne] were going to a Ph.D., and were not going to be able to rehearse... I’d been involved in Karinne’s pieces and seen her work over the years. I was like, duh! Karinne is a fantastic writer, right here in front of my face! So, I was very excited.

It’s true of the dancers too—the collaboration. It’s very collaborative in the room. I come in with a lot of ideas and I do sometimes throw out movement ideas. But it’s inevitable that the little stuff that interests me most as a dance maker and as a choreographer—watching a piece through that lens—is normally made by other people. I think it’s because I’m bored of my own stuff. I recognize: ‘oh, I know that trope; I know that.’ Even though I try to interrupt those, but it seems that when they are interrupted most successfully, it’s done by someone else. I like to work that way. I like to throw out stuff and I like to be surprised by what comes back. That’s what I find inspirational about collaboration.

Alejandra: You mention surprise in terms of dancers and I have a question about that since the three of you knew each other very well as people and as collaborators in different roles. You knew you had a lot of common ground with the other two people, but then you enter a particular process, and things happen. I’m curious about what were the things for you, in terms of what you received from the other people, that turned out to be surprising, that took the relationship or the work to a different level?

David: I can speak to that. What was exciting is that I tend not to give, correct me if I’m wrong, too detailed or too specific an assignment to anybody.

Ruthie: Yeah. I’m not going to correct you there.

David: But, intentionally!—especially when the contribution is at the level that you two have given. I can be a control freak and I can also be on the other side of that, of letting it all happen. There’s a conversation somewhere in there. I remember being amazed at what was interesting to Ruthie initially, in the text that was sent to me. I found that fascinating and that really helped shape how I was thinking of structuring the actual dance itself, the dancing parts. Because I kept getting stuck in imitation or completely not imitating, and then I found ways to combine these ideas and these approaches that led to surprise. And then I remember getting specifically Neal’s inner monologue from Karinne, and it completely opened up how I was going to end the piece; it completely made it possible. I was surprised at how it made me laugh. It made me laugh so hard! Karinne is a very funny person, but I didn’t ask her to write something funny.

Karinne: You asked me to write an existential crisis...

David: Somebody having an existential crisis.

Karinne: ...which, of everything that I contributed, is the only thing that you asked me for that I wouldn’t have thought to do.

Ruthie: And that's when we decided to take off and figure out how that was going to happen. Because all I do in my work is interview people and it's one of my favorite things to do ever, to ask people questions. And this was a great opportunity to ask athletes what they are experiencing. Because I can make up stories—we can all make up stories—but people have real experiences that we can mine for this.

Karinne: Yeah, I think that the material for that monologue all comes from what you [Ruthie] sent, and mostly from your brother. That was actually the coolest thing for me, to be in charge of taking that language and turning it into something that could be used, without actually doing the fundamental research. I felt so free to be like, 'okay, I'm going to take what Ruthie gives me and I'm going to use that'. That's the way that I work anyway, to collect and then use, but usually I'm using my own ears to collect. And I think maybe that's why it turned out surprising to you, because I was so emotionally tuned in to certain parts of that interview. And what I tended to write was always like 'oh, yeah, people are competitive and aggressive, but everyone is sensitive underneath, and they are all thinking about sweet things...' and it was nice to see what are the dynamics of...

Ruthie: And my brother is like "I hate the batter."

Karinne: Yeah, humiliated and... Also you're sort of interested in the technicality of what's the difference between different kinds of pitches and stuff that I had no idea about. That was definitely the most collaborative part of the writing for me.

David: That section is where all sort of came together, because then Neal... I originally planned several voices for that text. I wanted to hear the possibility of having several voices, someone who really was more kind of an instructor, you know—do this, do that—second person vs. first person vs. private thoughts, playing those mental games... Eventually it ended up—I think it had to—it ends up just being Neal; it was what Karinne intended... But I went through a circuitous process trying to find what that voice really is. I had to blow it up before finding the focus again.

Ruthie: I think working on that piece [the pitcher monologue] also highlighted for me the theme of performance, in every layer of the word: the internal experience of performance, the external experience of performance, and the overlaps between performance and a sport's arena; performance on stage and performance in life. And it all came crashing down and came together in this one monologue of self-obsession and anxiety.

Alejandra: If you had to choose one thing that the piece is about for you, like I don't know if this is it for you Ruthie, what you were saying about the piece being about performing...

Ruthie: I think I overlay that on all of your work because that's what working with you has been about for me. It's exploring what it is to perform and what it is to project oneself in space and with other people, and be honest on stage and off stage—it's always that. So that's me just projecting...

Karinne: One of the things that's most moving to me about the piece is actually watching the kind of gateway of the sports world to ask people to dance differently. I remember being in MASS MoCA, and watching a run-through and having the opportunity to talk to you about it—about how does this get performed? Wondering what are the questions that need to go into the performance [of it] because it's so layered that it has the danger of floating off the edges if the performers aren't directing towards some kind of point. And feeling that the answer was in fact to give up what was really known about dance performance and actually engage—I guess this is a virtue of task-oriented movement and that's a movement heritage that we have. My favorite part is when they

just run at each other and it's so much more physical and the stakes are a little bit higher, even though it's still in this very strange, intelligent, and slow at times, world. I also have that experience of watching the piece in relationship to a context which is readable for many more people than dance sometimes is because of that perspective of...

And I think that it's not just that the language is readable—sports, we all know what it is—but that emotional language that most people have experienced either as a fan or a player, in school or whatever, of doing something so fully that you have to just do... 'Cause it's not like you're out there pitching and you're like 'oh, I think that's my pinky spiraling' and 'what's the angle of my neck'. That all just falls into what is the most useful technique to get the ball there as fast as possible. I think that's what I see in it and that's what I enjoy the most watching it. Watching my friends... Like what is it to sit out and watch this group that I could have been a part of, that's what I take the most pleasure in.

David: Hauling ass, yeah.

Karinne: And fighting actually.

David: I like the fight at the end a lot.

Karinne: And not just the fighting, I mean the quality of fighting, physically, to get something done.

David: I remember in MASS MoCA, you talking about the performance in those terms. I found it very helpful. It scared the shit out of me, like—is it totally dissipating? What have I done? I couldn't tell. I count on these guys to say the things... And I remember it was great because I just gave a note and it started to evolve; the performers started to own it more.

Karinne: They started to relate to each other in a different way, because they'd been very... I thought that I was watching everybody doing their own material, their job, their stuff, but...

David: And that's definitely where they were at that point. It was still in the figure-out mode in a lot of ways, or some of the material they've been doing for a long time, too. So, the discovery of the dance, which is the performative part of the performance we talk about. I sometimes give notes like 'discover what this is; you know what to do, but discover it with the audience. Don't direct them too much'. It's that sense of keeping it alive.

Ruthie: In terms of your collaboration questions, and you can see this unfolding as we talk, is that we've known each other for a long time, and through a lot of phases of lives, for me, all my adult life I've known you (David), and I really shifted over that time. And this is something that happens with friendship and any sort of working relationship, is that you let each other grow together and find new roles in the relationship with each other. That's what's been a really great part of the process with both of you. It's nice to find each other in a space together trying to discover these new things together.

Alejandra: What's the dialogue between dance and sports? Along the lines of what Karinne is talking about, in terms of how is intention different? What are you looking at or what have you found out?

David: I feel like sports, in a weird way, is a convenient framework to make this dance with this aesthetic. I didn't spend too much time in a sort of purist—'what movement really makes tennis...' I did a certain amount of that, and it's found throughout the piece. But I think I was looking for a way to bring everything I'm interested in into a performance, in the sense of: text, commenting, trying to describe what's happening,

one's internal experience, juxtaposition—what people are watching, what the people are seeing, what the events are—music, a sense of chance, patterns that are choreographed right next to chance operations, a way of looking at culture without being too didactic or literal, and all of that was found in sports. I'm not particularly a big great sports person at all. I do find beauty in it. It's curious, I got a question this morning about Neal's monologue. Someone asked do I experience that, as a choreographer, do I experience that kind of self doubt, or the way the mind goes, wanders away, comes back. Of course, it's part of my creative process. I'm looking around at things, I'm collecting things, I'm trying things, I forget that I've done something over here.

There's a point in the process where I have to try to bring everything together. I usually write 200 or so index cards of phrases and ideas. I have post-it notes on big foam-cord sheets, you know, just to help organize it. I don't actually follow what I did, because in the room it's different. In the room, with the performers and the actual music and the lights, 'Holy shit, green!' So, I wanted a framework that gave me permission to talk about everything, to allow dance to be as complex as it can possibly be. And not just as a formal curiosity.

Karinne: I think that idea of the framework is really good. I think 'sports' is such an amazing syntax. Because it's a language that is totally recognizable; we use it in so many ways to sort of take advantage of familiarity. But there are so many different versions of it, and it's experienced in so many different ways: there's amateur and professional, and T.V, and participatory, and it's metaphorical... And it's also a really energetic, competitive arena, which also has a lot of good will. One of the things that I wrote into most of the interviews that I absolutely love about ESPN is the philosophy. I used to watch a lot of NBA, and no matter what they're doing out there, you know: 'I really respect these guys, they're really great.' 'You gotta go out there and do what you can'. They're very kind of stoic and generous off-court [culture], even though obviously it's not always; there are a lot of human-interest stories, spats, etc. But I really believe in collecting as a base for making work that is intelligible to others and ['sports'] is a broad-base area to collect from and also such a wonderful form of syntax to take advantage of. It sort of falls into all these compositional things that you're talking about. It's immediately available to that and yet it's not obscure.

Ruthie: And it is a physical arena unlike so many of the other parts of our culture and our society that you can step into. It's one space where people are physical.

David: As a collector, there's a lot of material there. There is a bit of an agenda, I have to admit, because this subject matter, if you will, of sports—although I would argue is something different—but it does have the potential of being more interesting to a wider audience. And whatever the piece I'm doing, I do imagine some of my relatives on one side of the family, who normally wouldn't go to a performance—it's not part of their lives, they don't go to museums, they are not interested in the arts in general—what would their experience be? And how do I keep to my ideals completely, and still feel like it's a generous enough experience...

Ruthie: I think you're like reaching a hand out and I think that that's the purpose humor also serves for you, to let people in who might not...

David: But that is always there, in a way...

Ruthie: Not intentionally, not like that is why you use humor, but I think that's the purpose it serves.

David: I think you're right.

Karinne: Not to oppose complexity with meaningfulness, but it's funny I was just thinking of *tough, the tough*, and how it opens with people essentially getting up and going to the bathroom, which is another shared physical activity.

David: I keep doing the same piece over and over.

Karinne: I talked to Chris when you came back from Florida and I asked him: What did you do? And he said: "*tough, the tough*, subtract the Marx brothers, replace with basketball"—in terms of the strategies of how we begin to learn this vocabulary.

David: It's absolutely true!

Karinne: Also, and this is taking it a different place, but one of the things I want to say about collaboration and your talk about surprises, is that you are open to suggestions, from basically everybody and at all times. Even when we did *tough, the tough*, that the first part we remade every time we did it, like 'oh, let's try this, let's try that'. I think it's one of the ways that it becomes complex. One of the things that I love the most about this piece and your work in general is that you really try to deal with complexity and complex systems, not in an equation-based way—like here's the key to this type of complexity—rather actually trying to add and add and add. And I think that being able to absorb and then place that somewhere into the system that's been evolved is part of how you collaborate with everyone that's in the work, as well as, maybe designers are adding from the outside. 'Cause definitely my strategy wasn't to go sit down and write the text for the piece on my own. I wrote a huge array for you and said, choose what you want, and then we narrowed those down. But it feels like offering that place. And then that process of inclusion is the collaborative...

David: I like to engage all the brains in the room. It's important to me. First of all, a piece of this size, that kind of complexity—I admittedly can't handle. And also I like that everyone is invested in a way, in the process of the work. It's not just like 'I'm handing out assignments or you have to learn this off a videotape and tomorrow I'll plug you into the dance'. It's also like, well, who are you? I often do that with the movement too; I give the movement and then don't give notes for a long time. Sometimes it turns into arguments—'no, I think it's like this: it initiates from the elbow, and the head turns and the spine follows...'—you know, those kinds of discussions. And I let the dancers figure it out, to a certain extent. But it's ongoing too, even from performance to performance, people feel slightly different, people feel the piece shift. And I enjoy that. How much can this piece shift? Like, ooh, that's interesting, suddenly this feels very precious... and it's not that I'm so interested in it, but it landed there... That just means that there's a real conversation going on, from performer to performer and from performer to audience.

Ruthie: In terms of surprises, that brings up something that I started to remind myself throughout this process, which is trust in this process and trust that this is your mode of working, and things will be discovered through that process. I remember some early rehearsal where some text was being tried out and I was like 'that's the wrong way for that being said; it's too smart ass, too New York'. I find that very alienating. I had just got out of having these sincere conversations with people who love baseball, and I was hearing some kind of tone and that was irritating to me, and Karinne of course reminded me that your instincts come through at the last minute...

David: Even though the instincts of the first minute weren't quite right!

[Laughs.]

Ruthie: But also that...

David: Well, I have to learn too; it's a learning process.

Ruthie: ...it is a process. That reminder that you try things and they work and they don't work. And there are different presences in the room and something will emerge. Let it be discovered as opposed to decide what it is ahead of time, and then just...

David: Well, think about it, everyone in the room—they're amazing artists. It's bound to be fruitful. It's bound to be a really interesting something! A dynamic conversation happening at all levels, if you allow that to happen in the room. We'll find our way, for sure.

I know what my traps are. I've come to a place where I'm comfortable with them. I don't need to avoid them and I don't need to edit them: Here's the big joke, here's the silly thing, here's the trap fall, or here's the smart ass, ironic New Yorker who thinks he knows what's going on. And then I listen to a more humble voice or a more curious voice, something in there, trying to find those spaces. And that space often happens with the interaction with you guys, that's how I'm reminded of 'do you really want *that* there?' 'I do, but, alright...'

Alejandra: David you mentioned that you always make the same piece again, which of course is a trope. I was reminded of the hockey piece. What was the name of that piece?

David: It was called **Adirondack**. My God!

Alejandra: I wanted to ask you, I don't know how conscious you are of that lineage, but if you had to think back on that piece and this piece, what new tools do you have, or...

David: None.

Alejandra: What did you want to still resolve?

David: I recently I was up for some grant thing, and I looked through a lot of old work, old footage. I remember starting each process going, 'okay, what have I not done? What am I curious about? What do I not know how to do? Or what feels more scary? And I'll try to make a piece starting from that place. Where am I less sure of myself? What do I want to improve, for instance, as a choreographer or thinking of myself as a director? So, I keep thinking, 'oh, this piece is totally different. I'm jazzed. This is totally different. I've never seen anything like this.' And then of course, looking back, 'oops, there's that part of that piece... exactly the same as... and they almost have the same... Are you going to show this to anyone? They almost have the same structure. It's fascinating! And the thing that I realized is, and I'll talk more about **Adirondack** in a minute, but the thing that I realized... The other day I was in a Q&A, and what I'm concerned about, what I'm doing on this planet, and thinking about, in the form of a performance, all that stuff is already there.

I find them in each of my pieces. The difference in this piece is that I trusted it. I didn't gear the material toward: 'I want to say this!' I knew that it was there and I knew that in rehearsal, if I was in touch with what it is that I was feeling, what I was thinking, it'll come out. I'll find a way that it will come out, through the format and the structure that I was playing with. I didn't bother trying to be totally different; I can't. I know that now. I'm not worried about that. I'm not going to worry about that. I still give myself challenges. I think this is much more complex than anything I've done before. I think the pieces fit together much more successfully. I don't know what I mean by successful, but it feels that way. I'm still pretty close to it, so it's hard to really step back.

But in terms of *Adirondack*, *Adirondack* was a great discovery. I had to do a piece for P.S.122—Mark Russell asked me to do a piece. I knew I wanted to do an evening-length piece. I don't know if it was actually.

Ruthie: This is back in 1990 what?

David: '98, '99 maybe.

Karinne: I think it was earlier. I think it was before I moved here. Because the first piece I saw of you was at DTW, and was the Spaghetti Western.

David: Oh, yes! That was after it.

Alejandra: A couple of years after.

David: So then it was '95. That's when I did the Tom Waits piece and then I did *Appropriate Behavior* with Archie (Burnett) and (Brahms) Bravo (LaFortune). Is that right?

Alejandra: And the hockey piece was the last piece.

David: Yes, it was about half an hour, about 30 minutes, I remember that.

Alejandra: Nami [Yamamoto] and Matt [Heyner] were in it.

David: Yeah, I remember that.

Alejandra: When they run around, I remembered Matt running around.

David: And Matt and Neal are really similar, aren't they! Oh, wow, it's the same piece! You know what I'm going to do tonight? I'm going to bring out the videotape of *Adirondack*—these guys can take a break; they've been dancing really hard.

But what I did was, I was on tour with Doug Varone, and we were upstate New York and I was going... well, going through an experience, and I was alone in the house we were staying and I had the radio on and I wanted to cook something and there was no food, and the supermarket was closed. I was really pissed off and making peanut butter and jelly [sandwiches]. And there was a hockey game being announced and I loved the guy's voice. And suddenly I heard the repetition of names: '*Clutché* with the outside' and, 'oh, a hard hit on *Clutché...*' and he had this voice from the 1930s. It was unbelievable! I thought it was the most entertaining thing. And I had one of those things: It's a description of action! That's what I'll do!!! So, I recorded the whole game.

I knew that is a trope that I'm interested in: How do you describe this shit. I'm always mad at reviewers; about the attempt to describe it. It seems so futile, but... interesting nonetheless. Academics would be really pissed at me to hear me say that.

Karinne: I'm not, as an academic.

David: But I think as a challenge it's really interesting. I have to do it every time I write a grant—'please describe the piece you're going to make'. 'I haven't made it yet, how do I... Where does the process fit in there?' So I recorded that stuff and we played with the text. I transcribed the entire game, word for word. And I gave it to my sound designer at the time. He had a program—it's a thing that you plug in a couple of sentences and it spews out another text based on rules of those two or three sentences. So, based on the word order, frequency of words and... It's pretty simple, though, some three rules it looks at. And I did that with some Beckett, which was totally weird—Gertrude Stein riffing on Beckett. Anyway, it was exciting. And I had a ref figure and... yeah, it was very similar.

But I guess the line is that, yeah, I think there's a direct line obviously. And with every piece afterwards...

The Spaghetti Western piece—Spaghetti Westerns are this great masculine thing; I had five women do it with a live band. It was great to also do that. A trope for me as a kid, I used to play with the other boys in the neighborhood, we went around and shoot each other. And we would come up with the most elaborate death scenes. Wait, I'm going to fall off the tree, onto the roof, fall off the roof, down onto the hay or whatever, and then roll off the hay and down the hill. And we would come up and practice it like stuntmen or something. And the beauty in the Spaghetti Western is the death.

So, yeah, I'll be resurrecting **Adirondack**...

Alejandra: I think it's really interesting this idea of narrating what's going on, and with the sports thing, the whole idea of framing I think it's part of what you're doing. That by framing movement as sport you're giving the viewer the information that they maybe don't have to worry about dance or about what is dance or what isn't dance or do I understand, or how am I looking at it. Because guess what! You look at it all the time, whether it's sports or people on the subway. It's sort of like you really take this cap off and steam comes out. And then every body is in the same place. For me, it gives a lot of information to people about their position as viewers, and it gives them a reference that they know. Poses the question, you know, scratch the word dance, call it peanuts, it doesn't matter, here you are. These are bodies.

David: I think it's cultural too. In this country, there's a tendency of abstract bodies. There's a fear of bodies. It's a puritanical thing in this country. You know, in older times, there's this thing, I think still now in some way, it's ungodly or something. There's that baggage. There are other things too. It's seen as, you know, high art, it's class-related, you know, like blue collar people are not supposed to enjoy it or use that part of their brain. And I disagree with all that. Even with bad dance, I think it's this cool thing that we do.

I have this quick story I want to tell. I had this argument with a theater director who said: 'oh you're one of those downtown dance choreographers who make dances about nothing. It's not about anything.' I was like what? 'Well, you're involved in theater—speaking in allegory and metaphor, trying to pick out meaning out of every fucking moment, shoving it down our throats. Fuck you! We're doing stuff and you can watch it. That's simple, that's a little more honest. You want to talk about being in the moment?' All these actors saying I want to be real. 'You want to know what really is happening? There are 200 people sitting in seats facing you. So, let's start with that reality, and then...' 'No, man, I want to be real'. 'No, you're being earnest. And I appreciate the effort, but I find that more alienated and more insulting to my intelligence. You don't trust me as a person, as an audience member.' It's a different lens, you know. It's a different lens of what's important in performance and what's important to me as a performer, and what we're doing in front of each other.

Karinne: That's something that basically I just devoted my life to... trying to articulate that very question. What does it mean to create a performance that isn't sort of on-topic, or to be an impact with a certain kind of message in the sort of theater that you're describing. Two thoughts I have about what you just said. One is that one of the things that I carried with me as a choreographer who started to write is that I understand the purpose of performance to be basically a bunch of people in a room in the presence of mind, essentially—the activity of thinking that goes into watching a piece, and also the sort of activity that goes into just dealing with mind and recognition of pattern and

complexity. There's a comfort in the dance world that we're creating things to experience the act of being in the room together as the parameters of what we're doing, and not a political message or mythological message or that kind of story-telling. I think dance can be confusing to people—this is on the point about class. That's one of the things that this sports thing does. You're able to create a piece that is a sort of exercise in complexity, but with a vocabulary that isn't distinguished by class.

One of the things that I've been looking into lately is disciplinary authority and what kind of vocabulary and knowledge and criteria go with different categories of disciplines of investigations and also disciplines in the art world. And when you refuse to use the vocabulary that comes with a discipline and instead use a vocabulary that is much more broadly accessible, but then pursue the same inquiry that you were doing with this rarefied vocabulary... you know, I see the sports thing as a gateway, not an endpoint in that sense.

David: Yeah. I agree.

Karinne: That what we're watching is some sort of strange articulation of events, more than getting that point or social message about bodies.

David: And of course that's there too, but it's not pointed out.

Karinne: It's not that you're to, you know, press the button, get the feeder tape and come out 'the point of this performance was...' That kind of message, you know? It doesn't have a message because it's a thing, it has reverberations.

David: I think there's an accumulative effect; I think there are ideas in it that are about the culture and politics. I allow that to be part of it. What I'm trying to avoid is what I call thesis art, where the hypothesis is the title and the proof is the piece. I want to open the experience. And I think part of the culture doesn't want to be troubled with dance when it doesn't offer that: This is a dance called "Backwards" and they all move backwards. 'Oh, wow, they really did backward—really cool.' This is much more open than that.

Karinne: I think too one of the things that is great about sports is that commentary and messages are actually embedded into all of the language that surrounds it, and so there's access to that without having to make it as the structure of the piece, but you can sort of pour that art into the world of it.

Ruthie: I'm curious about what you were getting at in terms of using sports to reach a hand out, like I was saying, and thinking about class and the elite and high art and all of these things. I'm curious when it comes to it, what are the demographics of the people who've been coming these past couple of weeks. I always look around and say: 'Who are these people? Who's here?'

Karinne: It's interesting. We were talking with one of the trombone players after a rehearsal who probably wouldn't come to this show if he wasn't playing in it. We were talking about Neal's monologue and he was talking about how much he related to that anxiety. But it's also about who does DTW attract.

Ruthie: Yeah, there's a whole bunch of different... Who comes to David Neumann's work; who comes when they see Karinne Keithley's name, who comes to DTW.

Karinne: When we performed in Milwaukee was one of the first experiences I've had performing for a non-New York audience that wasn't at a college. And I was like, 'oh, yeah, this really could travel out'. I don't know if it effectively does, in terms of how and where it happens.

Ruthie: I mean, we're so saturated here in New York by opportunities. Audiences are very, very self-selected. You make a very deliberate choice to go to something. Whereas, I remember years ago, a friend of mine was living in Montana and she was telling me about some dance show that was coming through. And it was a well-known person that I probably wouldn't go out of my way to see here. But it was one of the three dance shows of the year in Missoula and she was super excited about it. And I was like, right, there's a different thing going on when you're outside of the city in terms of an audience. But here, you had a bunch of high school kids today, which is super.

David: Yeah, they had a great time. They were very engaged. I was nervous but I was excited too. I didn't know if it was going to be the kind of show where they would go: 'uh, you said fuck!' or something on that level. I was really excited 'cause I feel like the performers can get kind of confident, you know: successful show, good audiences, we know what we're doing. That's a trap! So, that sense of trying to get them back to discover the piece. And they were a little more nervous than they have been when the high school kids showed up. So there was just a slight edge to it that was really kind of nice. And the kids responded. There were a bunch of adults in the audience as well, and as a matter of fact, they were the ones that laughed more.

I mean, I have to admit it, it's not too deliberate that I have this agenda that I'm trying to reach across audiences, because the reality of it is to really do that, the effort must be much larger.

Ruthie: Yeah, I understand that. That's a whole other project.

David: If I was really trying to reach... yeah... I wouldn't do it just at DTW and it wouldn't be this piece. In the back of my head, maybe on tour, it helps some people talk about it. The idea itself is sort of self-sufficient. 'Oh, a dance about sports, you're using sports, I can totally see that'. I think that helps initiate certain presenters in considering bringing this on tour, and some grants, not others. But in the end I'm not backing away from my interest in really allowing the mysterious to bubble forth and live and open timing.)(_

Ruthie: I think it's more a reflection of probably your... I don't want to tell you what your principles are, but...

David: Will somebody, finally?

Ruthie: the a) value in the larger world, and an interest and engagement that you have in the larger world, which bubbles through and can have this effect of opening up your work to different audiences, or offer entry points. Not that it's a deliberate kind of political choice or agenda, but it's a reflection of your interests which are broad and diverse.

Karinne: It's also important to remember that it's reciprocal, though, that to think about the dance audience, let's sit here as an audience and watch a piece that doesn't possess a limited vocabulary. Maybe that... Actually I don't see that the dance world as limited in vocabulary as when I started studying. But it doesn't just have to be about reaching new audiences, but reminding any audience member of their position as just a person in relation to the material and not a fellow practitioner. You know, that that kind of expansion can happen internally to a community, as well as by the model of getting it out to people who we think might like it if they could see it.

David: Yeah. Those agendas I think would end up distracting from making the work. It starts to sink into a commercial realm, getting more people... I just want to make something homemade that's kind of cool to go through. I really do, it's that simple in a

way. Carefully raw, and considering a lot of different levels of thought that can happen and try to address them.

Karinne: My favorite audience members for *tough, the tough* were some friends of mine from the dog park, who came to see it and just went crazy and just danced around afterwards for like days, and they came to the show because our dogs like each other.

Alejandra: There's this other layer that occurs to me in relationship to the language of sports that is interesting. I really picked up on the interview after you perform in sports, when Taryn gets interviewed and she responds like every person always responds: 'I gave it my best; I was really focused; I really respect the opponent', etc. Talk about a critique of criticism of dance! It's like there's a language that is irrelevant in some way, and we still go through the motions of it. It's a comment of what is the place for language in this form, this non-verbal form. Well, in dance we try to go on and on, trying to get to the depths of meaning and philosophy and it's really intense and meaningful. And in sports there's like three lines that people say.

Alejandra: I want to hear from Karinne and Ruthie what do you think was your main contribution to this piece?

Karinne: I think the way that the text work that I contributed—the interviews, the fragments that I chose to push for their inclusion in the commentary, all—I feel they added my emotional perspective maybe, which is a kind of sympathetic, contemplative position inside this language of sports: To think of victory, in Taryn's interview, as a form of benevolence and not a form of mastery; To think about loss as a form of meandering curiosity. I feel that what I added was a kind of pitch or a tone that it's maybe softer within the same material—that has a kind of sympathetic, contemplative...

Ruthie: Well, in terms of specifics, I felt like my greatest contribution was with the baseball pitcher interviews. And I'm not even sure about the Maori war dance. I never knew if I found that or you found that or we found them at the same time.

David: I think we found it at the same time, but I wasn't convinced that we were going to use it. And I think you pushed me over the edge. 'Oh my God, check this out!' And I looked at it with new eyes with your enthusiasm and I was like 'oh, yes'.

Ruthie: I didn't realize that some of the earlier things that I had sent you might have shaped some things. I guess what I do is ask questions and get clarification from people. That's kind of my process of life. I think that's what I bring. Like, what are you really talking about, and is that what you meant.

David: Yeah, Ruthie is a good editor in the true sense of the editor, who sort of directs.

Alejandra: Do you have any final words David?

David: Purple... bird... popcorn...