



YOUR QUESTIONS IN MOTION

Multimedia diary of a digital creation

By Yanaëlle Thiran



Dear audience members,

*It is up to you this time to interpret the scores,
follow the instructions or just, if you wish, lay
down and let dance take over your imagination.
The freedom to reinterpret and recreate is
there for everyone this time.*

*The future might be unknown, full of surprises,
but we are positive that the answers can only
be found together.*

(Sutinen, 2020)

What is this multimedia diary about



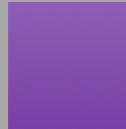
This multimedia diary documents the research, development and online performances of *Your Questions in Motion*, a dance work created exclusively through and for the video conferencing platform Zoom. The work was performed twice, on the 18th July and 8th August 2020.

The following pages include:

 Contextual information

 Informal exchanges with audiences and findings from the audience survey

 Video diary entries drawing from 18 Zoom meetings
(14 rehearsals, 2 online performances and 2 debriefing meetings)

 Descriptions of the work used for marketing purposes

And a bibliography including links to the full footage of each performance

What research questions did this project investigate



Main question:

What is the range of roles that audience members and I might take on in a choreographic work presented online?

Sub-questions:

- How might Jo Butterworth's Didactic-Democratic model of relations between choreographers and dancers inform the range of roles that the dancers, audiences and I might take on this work?
- How might I use a clearer terminology for the range of audience roles?
- To what extent might audiences contribute to the creative process and online performances of the work?



396 likes

sydneydanceco Thank you for helping us celebrate our 50th Anniversary. You, our audience, are our most important **collaborators**. You inspire us, and you are why we continue to create and perform. So, thank you again, and we look forward to seeing you in 2020!

📸@pedrogreig

#sydneydancecompany #SDCTurns50

#contemporarydance #SDC2020

(Sydney Dance Company, 2019)

In what context was the project developed



COVID-19
pandemic

Performance
venues closed

Many events
held on Zoom

Open call for a
digital festival



In June 2020, I submitted a proposal to revisit my participatory work *Questions in Motion* (2019) and adapt it to Zoom.

Renamed *Your Questions in Motion*, the work would aim to place digital audiences' input first and welcome their contributions throughout the creative process and performances.

Who did I collaborate with



EXISTING NETWORKS

Supervisor
Dr Yael Flexer

MA student
Carol Visa Kumar

MAP dancer
Madison Burgess

Producer
Andre Pink

Technician
Hannah-Louise Batt



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE
OF MUSIC & DANCE

tramshed

Contact established through a successful application for *Digitally Charged*, Tramshed's online festival showcasing young artists' works

Musician
Thomas Broda

LCDS alumnus
Deepraj Singh

Student Lydia Swift,
who performed in
Questions in Motion
(2019) recommended

Former student
Sam Reeves

NEW NETWORKS

Why did I collaborate with these people in particular



Rationale for the selection of performers

- Showcasing male and female dancers from a variety of backgrounds, so that diverse audiences might relate to them and, by extension, to their performances.
- Covering a wide pool of potential audiences (the performers and I have networks in Chichester, Bristol, London, Belgium, Canada and India) while also engaging a smaller circle of fellow artists, relatives and friends in our process.
- Not performing in the work as a dancer but as a moderator to coordinate all elements of the production (see Slide 25 for a comprehensive list of roles I took on in this project)

Choice to work with a musician

- Had worked with Thomas Broda before
- Confident that his loops, rhythmical soundscapes and atmospheric vocals could foster the reflective mood of the work and make my choreographic ideas more engaging and accessible.

Participation in Tramshed's Digitally Charged festival

- Giving the work visibility beyond the university setting
- Networking with other young artists
- Gaining production, technical and marketing support
- Receiving a small performance fee

How did audience members' input inform the creative process



The dancers and I invited 17 friends to post us questions in a private Facebook group. Each question inspired one or more improvisations, which we recorded and shared with the group.

Lydia Swift
Question: What can you see?
Like · Reply · 6 w

Yanaëlle danse
Thanks **Lydia Swift**, we'll explore your question on Monday and get back to you with some footage.
Like · Reply · 6 w

Louis Norman
Question: How can we share?
Love · Reply · 5 w

Yanaëlle Thiran
Thanks **Louis Norman**, we'll play with your question on Saturday and with a bit of luck, the response will come with original music!
Like · Reply · 5 w

Yanaëlle Thiran
Hi **Louis Norman**, would you rather see a trio or a quartet in response to your question? (We recorded both of these options for you!)
Like · Reply · 5 w

Louis Norman
Yanaëlle Thiran a quartet!
Like · Reply · 5 w

Prerna Lakra
8 July · 1 person · 3 comments · Seen by 12

Can dance improve our thoughts ?

Questions

4 comments · Seen by 12

Like · Comment

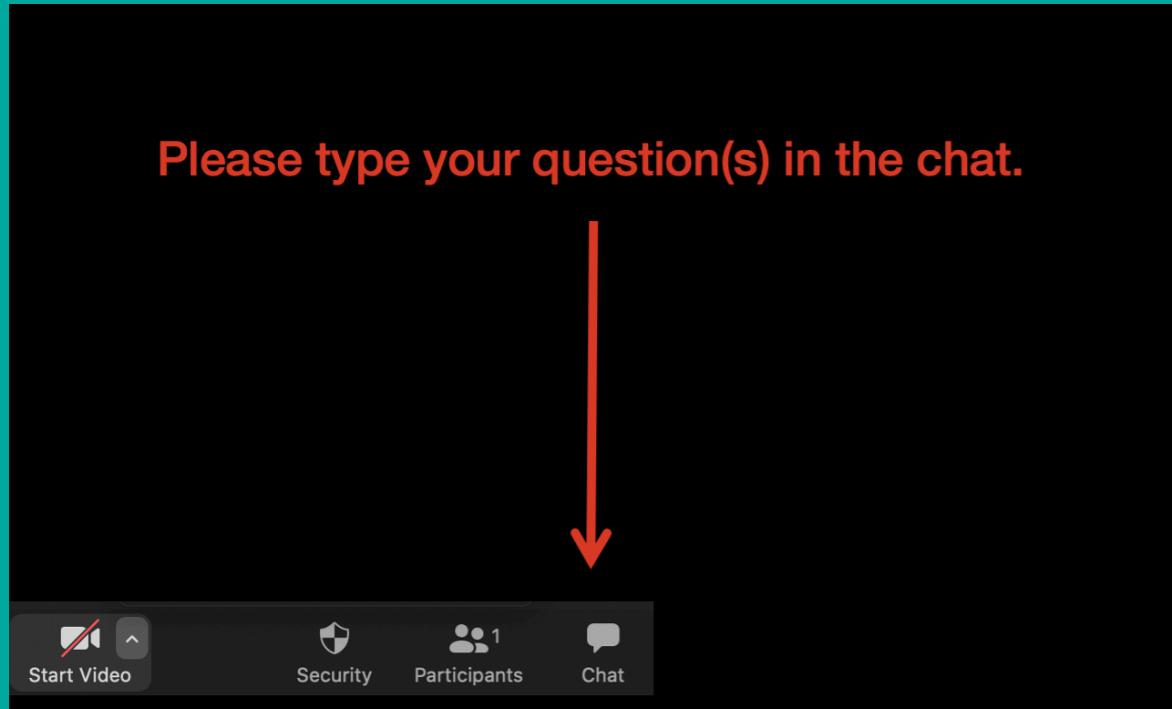
Yanaëlle danse
Thanks for this question **Prerna Lakra**! We will spend some time on it at our next rehearsal and get back to you with a video or two this weekend 😊
Like · Reply · 5 w

Prerna Lakra
Thank you ❤️❤️❤️
Like · Reply · 5 w

Yanaëlle Thiran
Hi **Prerna Lakra**, would you rather see all 4 dancers responding to your question at the same time, or 2 dancers at a time? We recorded both of these options yesterday 😊
Like · Reply · 5 w

Prerna Lakra
Two dancers at a time
Thankyou 🎉

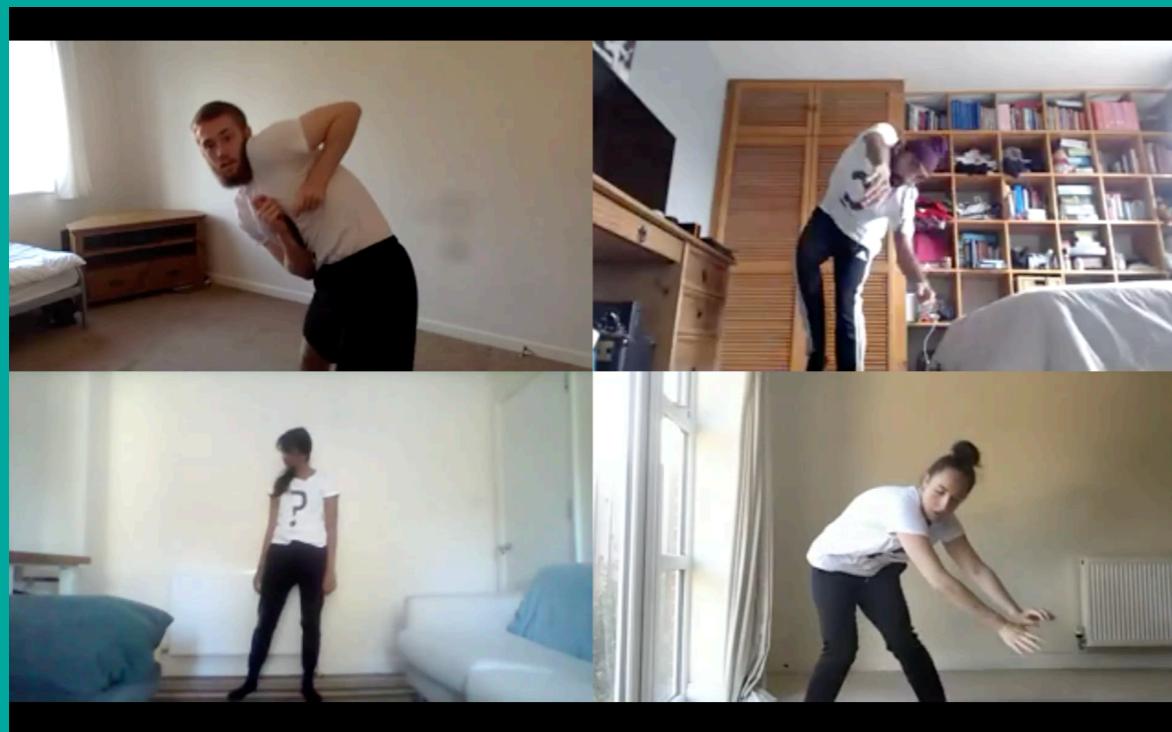
What was the intended role of the audience in the performances



Similarly to Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad's work *GO* (2005-2020), *Your Questions in Motion*

**invites transformation from spectatorship
to active “audiencing”**

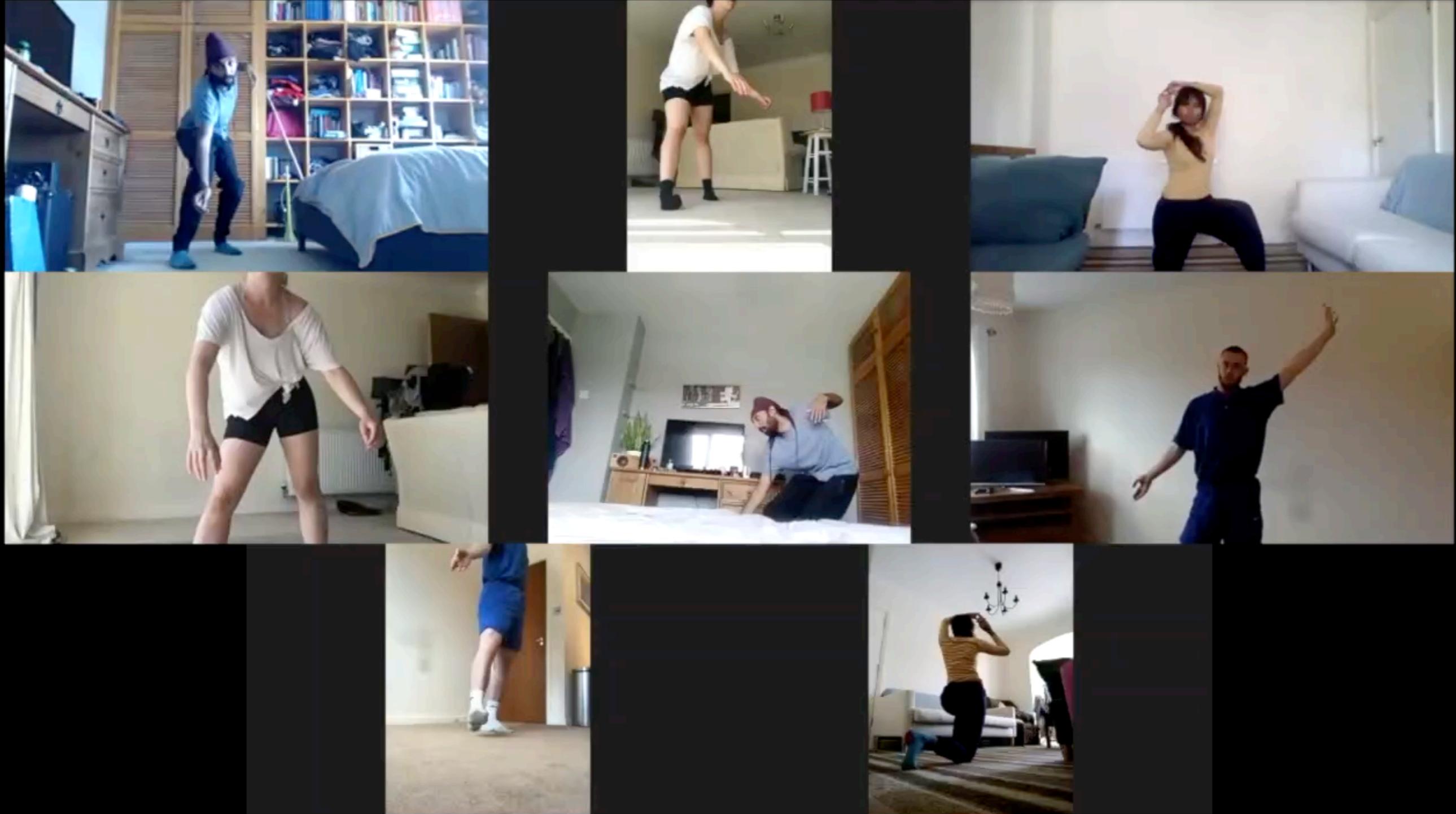
(Bieringa and Ramstad, 2020).



When all four dancers improvise simultaneously, audience members might experience what Yvonne Rainer calls **‘spectatorial multitasking’** if they attempt to watch all performers at the same time or accept that their perception of the work will be partial.

(Fabius cited in Butterworth and Wildschut, 2018:420).

How did I frame choreographic ideas on and for Zoom



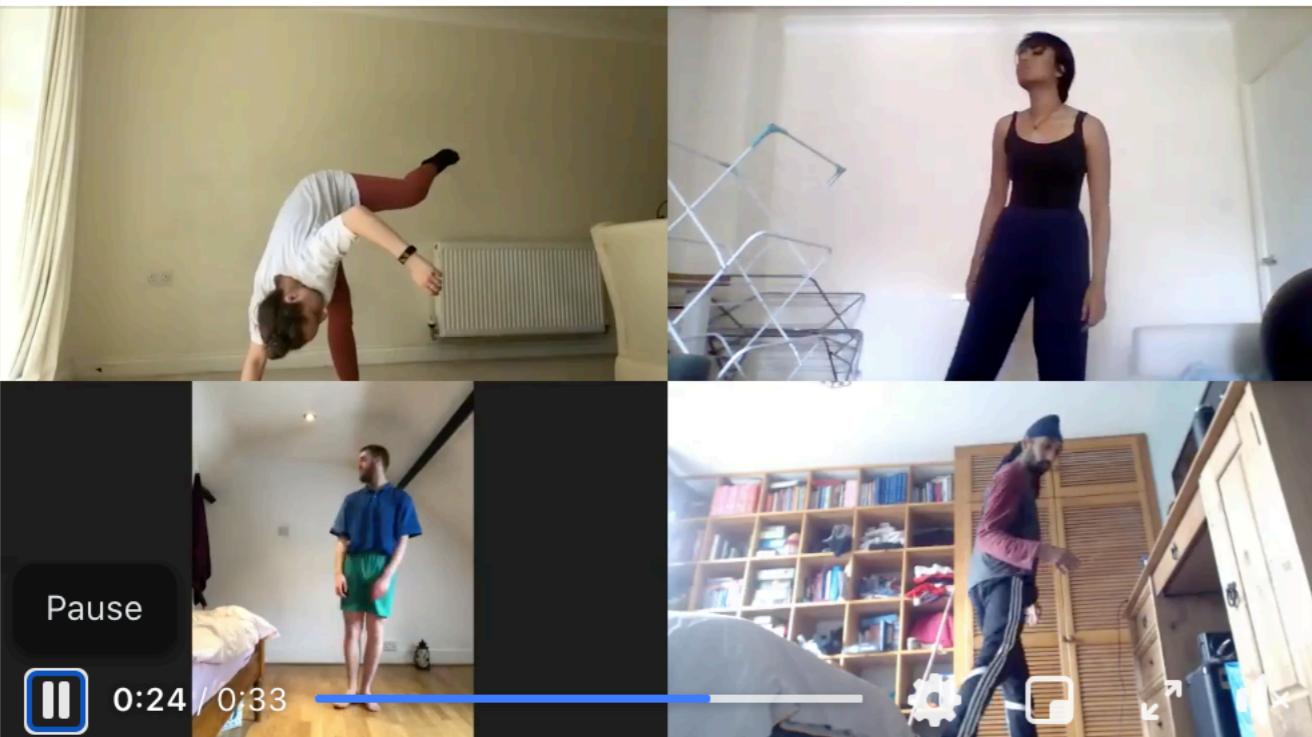
Video available from: <https://vimeo.com/465744165/3ac47b136b>

What was shared with audiences before the shows and why



 Yanaëlle Thiran
10 July · 

Each of our Zoom rehearsals starts with a warm up, in which we use question words to explore movement qualities (how?), directions in space (where?), body parts (which?) and so on. Can you tell which body part each dancer had picked in this improvisation? The task was to create a 'solo' for one limb and let the rest of the body support and follow the 'soloist'.
Music: 'Bus Ride to Gulu' by Pete Kuzma



Pause
0:24 / 0:33

  Deepraj Singh, Madison Burgess and 4 others Seen by 12

 Like  Comment

When I interviewed the British choreographer Adrienne Hart, she told me that some audience members saw her work *Puzzle Creature* (2018) more than once. When they came back, they told their friends where to sit to get the best experience of the performance.

This suggests that audiences might get more out of a work if they are invested in it over a longer period of time than a single performance. That is why I posted rehearsal videos in our Facebook group throughout the creative process.

How did I describe the work to audiences



Your Questions in Motion

Not all questions have answers, but your questions can inspire dancers!

What now? How does it continue? An audience member asked these questions a year ago, and yet they couldn't be more relevant today. Four dancers will attempt to respond to these and more questions through their medium of expression - motion. While you watch them move, you will have a chance to type your own questions about the current situation or the (un-)foreseeable future. The dancers will take turns to go live and improvise in response. Together, we will look for movements that speak to you, activate ideas and trigger new thoughts through dance actions.

 **Where**

Zoom

 **When**

Saturday 18th July
5.30pm-6pm
30 mins

(Tramshed, 2020)

This description emphasizes that *Your Questions in Motion* originates from, and is shaped by, you – the audience.

The word ‘together’ suggests our potential relationship as collaborators in the performance.

What happened in the first Zoom performance of the work



Video available from: <https://vimeo.com/466080599/44438bad54>

What did people think of this first online performance



Digitally Charged

a festival of online performance work

Innovative

The split screen idea is a great way to take advantage of the format, I see a lot of potential in that.

An interesting and wonderful way of creating an online performance

Clever and brilliant

Shame it wasn't longer. The dancers were very talented and you were a wonderful presenter and producer.

Really innovative use of the zoom platform. Loved the audience interaction and the range of times and camera frames used!

What did I discuss with the dancers during the creative process



Madison suggested setting movement phrases to question words (where, why, what, etc).

SETTING MATERIAL

Deeps and Sam seconded this idea, because it would give them the option to use set material when improvising to any question starting with one of these words.

BRINGING THE AUDIENCE ON OUR SIDE

Carol highlighted the importance of writing about the piece clearly to manage people's expectations.

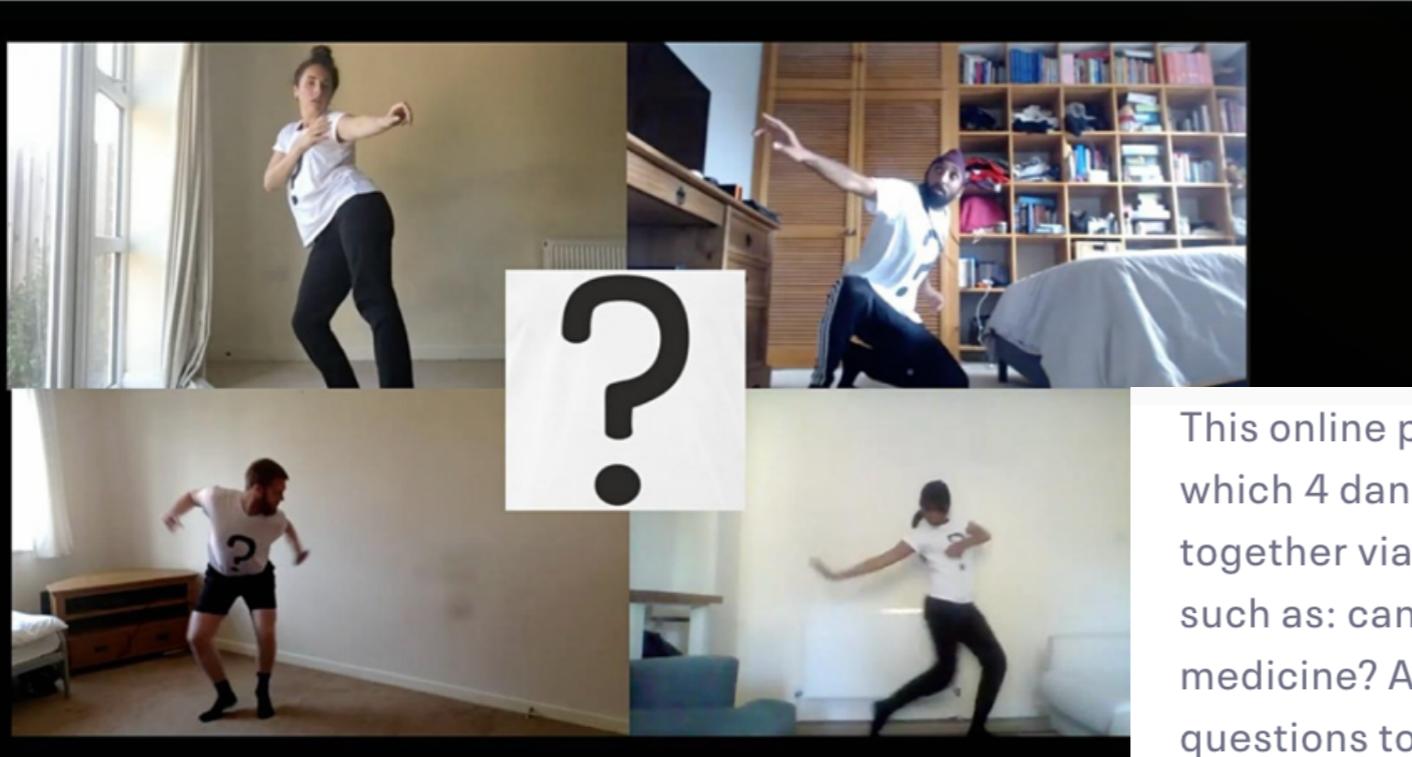
Deeps questioned my way of announcing that he and the other dancers were 'responding to the questions'. He suggested saying 'we are improvising to the questions that are provided' instead, to emphasise the importance of improvisation in the work.

Deeps agreed and suggested giving audiences a pre- or post-show insight into the process, such as a video diary.

A few minutes after he said this, I used the phrase 'responding to questions' again, but I eventually switched to 'improvise to'!



What changes were made when rewriting the event description



AUG
08

Your Questions in Motion: an interactive Zoom performance

This online performance wraps up a 6-week creative process during which 4 dancers, a musician and a choreographer (myself) worked together via Zoom. Over this period of time, we received questions such as: can dance improve our thoughts? Is laughter the best medicine? Are we going to hug again? We took inspiration from these questions to devise improvisation scores that can be applied to any other questions, including yours, in order to yield new sounds, movements and interactions.

To let audiences know what they were signing up for, I listed some of the roles they might take on during the performance. This followed Deep's and Carol's advice and addressed my research question on the potential clarification of terminology for audience roles.

What to expect: Whether you like to be an audience member, a contributor, a participant, a thinking observer or a multiple role-player, you are welcome to join this Zoom meeting! You will have the option to type questions about the current situation or the (un-)foreseeable future in the chat. The performers will improvise short responses to some (or, if time allows, all) of these questions. Their performance will last approximately 45 minutes. It will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A, in which we will answer any questions you may have about the way we devised and rehearsed this work. We would love to hear your thoughts on this and other experiences of engaging with online performances,

(Eventbrite, 2020)

How did the second Zoom performance go



WELCOME TO
THIS PERFORMANCE OF
YOUR QUESTIONS IN MOTION



Video available from: <https://vimeo.com/466084622/f4e6f5dbc7>

How did I acknowledge the role of the audience



Thank you for attending and **contributing to**

YOUR QUESTIONS IN MOTION

Concept and choreographic scores Yanaëlle Thiran

Dancers Madison Burgess, Sam Reeves,
Deepraj Singh & Carol Visa Kumar

Music Thomas Broda

With thanks to Yael Flexer, University of Chichester

Could you answer our questions?

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/IVRFDN/>



I shared this slide at the end of the Zoom performance to say more than just 'thank you for watching'. Attendees had not only watched the performance, but also asked us questions and selected durations for the dancers' improvisations.

Did the dancers feel the audience's presence through Zoom



Deeps: *We're often taught that we need an audience there to create that energy, but I think there's something interesting as well about being in your own space and creating that energy for yourself in some way.*

Carol: *I was still having the same adrenaline rush before the performance, so that was very interesting. I was like 'ok, this is my personal space, but it's still a performance'.*



Video available from: <https://vimeo.com/466089239/8e148298ac>

What role did the dancers think their audience had



<i>Distribution 1</i>	<i>Distribution 2</i>	<i>Distribution 3</i>	<i>Distribution 4</i>	<i>Distribution 5</i>
Choreographer as expert	Choreographer as author	Choreographer as pilot	Choreographer as facilitator	Choreographer as co-owner
Audience as receiver	Audience as interpreter	Audience as contributor	Audience as co-player	Audience as co-owner

We shared a set of rules and the audience presented the questions.

(Sam)



Did audience members indeed feel like contributors



Only 2 out of 16 respondents did.

1. What word(s) best describe your role in this performance? Please tick all that applies.

Create Chart

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Audience member		93.75%	15
2	Co-creator		6.25%	1
3	Collaborator		0.00%	0
4	Contributor		12.50%	2

In fact, 5 people felt 'more like contributors' while 11 positioned themselves on the 'consumer' side.

5. Overall, would you say that you were a consumer or a contributor when watching this performance?

Create Chart

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A consumer		12.50%	2
2	More of a consumer		56.25%	9
3	More of a contributor		31.25%	5
4	A contributor		0.00%	0

What words did people pick to describe their own role(s)

?

CO-CREATOR

WITNESS

MEMBER

INDIVIDUAL

OBSERVER

PARTICIPANT

RECEIVER

VIEWER

AUDIENCE

INTERPRETER

ROLE PLAYER

CO-CREATOR

WITNESS

MEMBER

INDIVIDUAL

OBSERVER

PARTICIPANT

RECEIVER

VIEWER

AUDIENCE

INTERPRETER

ROLE PLAYER

Did they feel separate from, or incorporated in the performance



1	Totally separate		6.25%	1
2	Rather separate		18.75%	3
3	Rather incorporated		50.00%	8
4	Totally incorporated		25.00%	4

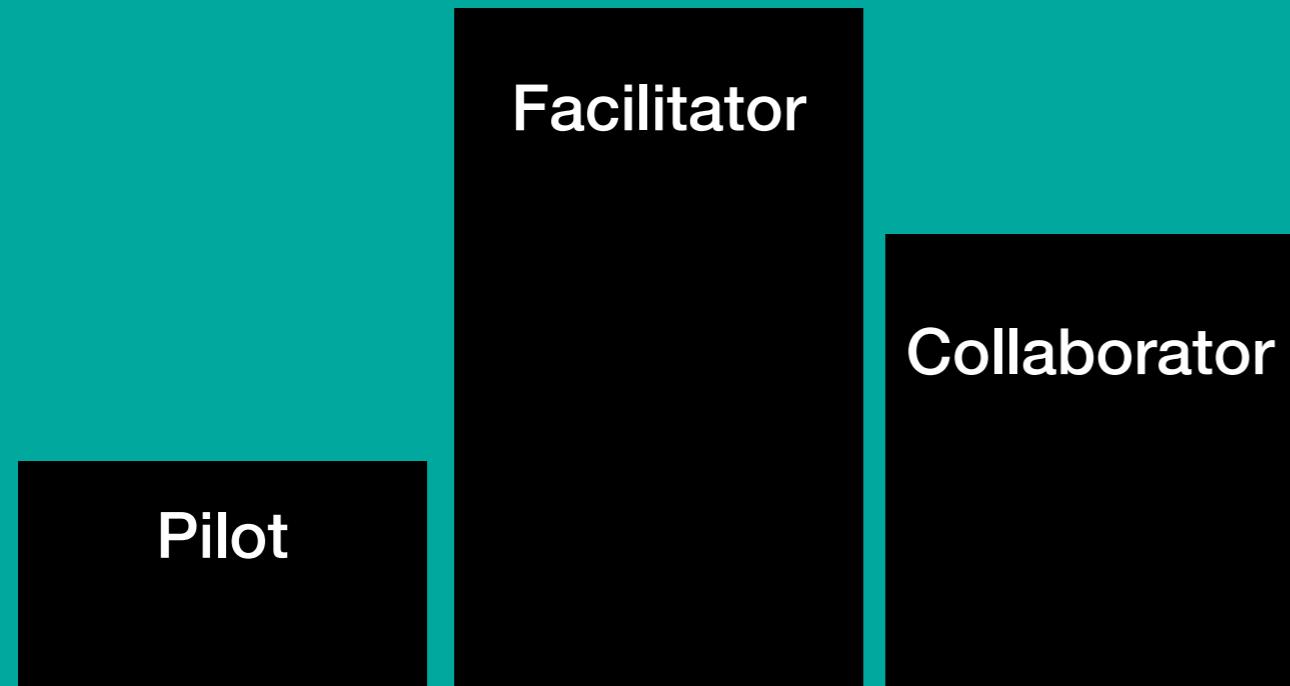
The virtual system seemed to me just too "cold" and especially did not allow the feeling of belonging to a unique audience group.

I felt connected to other audience members as I could see their reactions being typed in real-time.

I felt much more connected in that my questions were interpreted. If they hadn't had a response, and being inaudible and invisible, I might have felt excluded.

Very nice to be an indirect part of it.

What role did the dancers think I had



You were creating the frame [...] and then we took – not co-ownership, but we took the decision-making into creating what was seen within that frame.

(Madison)

Process 3	Process 4	Process 5
Choreographer as pilot (leading, guiding)	Choreographer as facilitator (nurturing)	Choreographer as collaborator (shared authorship)
Initiates concept, directs, sets tasks and shapes the material	Provides stimulus, negotiates the creative process, concept and intention.	Shares research, negotiation and decision-making with others, adapts content and structures.
Dancer as contributor	Dancer as creator	Dancer as co-owner
Responds and contributes.	Responds, contributes and actively participates	Contributes fully to concept, dance content, form and style

(Butterworth, 2018:100-101)

What is the range of roles I took on in the process



- Audience member Observing dancers throughout the process and performances
- Choreographer Creating movement sequences and devising movement tasks
- Copywriter Writing about the work for online marketing
- Curator Organising my own online event via Zoom and Eventbrite
- Dance teacher Warming up and cooling down the dancers in rehearsals
- Evaluator Instigating reflective discussions and collecting feedback
- Group motivator Maintaining a safe and stimulating rehearsal environment
- Host Starting and ending each Zoom meeting on time to let people in
- Marketing manager Reaching out to audiences and communicating about the work
- Moderator Checking posts in the Facebook group throughout the process and moderating the Zoom chat during performances
- Presenter Introducing the performance, reading people's questions out loud and chairing the post-show Q&A
- Producer Applying for performance opportunities
- Project manager Ordering t-shirts, scheduling and rescheduling rehearsals, paying invoices at the end of the project, documenting the work
- Researcher Conducting my master's dissertation research, sharing questions and insights with the dancers
- Student Liaising with my supervisor throughout the process
- Usher Helping audiences get comfortable before the performances

To conclude, how much agency did audiences feel they had



Seeing the first questions made me understand better the possibilities of the show [...] I was curious to see where the audience would take it.

The event organiser/performers actively sought audience input, which isn't always the case.

The power is on the audience's side, rather than the artists, since we can choose to leave or stay with more impunity than in person!

Here we were sure to have a voice (whereas in real life, one is not always sure its voice will reach the performers).

I felt more involved in the process of watching the piece through the various actions needed before and during the show to get zoom functioning properly and giving feedbacks during the performance.

I felt very close to the performers. Especially because the views were changing, with solos and duets, allowing for a bigger view on the screen.

I felt I had more agency - if we chose to we could influence the length of a dancer's response, and to some extent how they responded through the questions we asked (although ultimately it still felt that response was in the hands of the performer).

What resources does this portfolio draw from



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(2020b) *Your Questions in Motion: a Zoom performance (August 2020)*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/446198209> (Accessed: 15th September 2020).

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Thank you for browsing this multimedia diary



Yanaëlle Thiran

University of Chichester

November 2020