Report on SOUND project

by Shumpei Nemoto

Period of project

22nd January - 11th October 2015

Project member

Choreographer : Shumpei Nemoto
Dancer : Claudio Costantino, Andrea Vallescar, Shota Inoue, Louise Perming and Javier Perez

Summary of the project

The project's aim was to research on the relationship between sound and movement in dance.
It influenced by several artist like John Cage, Steve Reich, Michael Snow.
It pre-premiered at Scenario Pubblico/Catania on 10th October and planned to be premiered in Sweden during 2016.

Process

The project had three phases/residences in the process and they are the questions and approaches that explored during the residences.

I. *First phase / residence at studio in Konstnärsnämnden 22nd January - 8th February 2015*

At first phase, I was inspired by the idea of "Let movement be just movement." which was referred from a composer John Cage's thought "Let sounds be just sounds" and the project aimed to explore the ways to eliminate meaning of the movement and depart from ordinal construction of the choreography.

Questions and Approaches

Q: How can I distance from my ordinal way of creating the movement.
A: I created movement with a chance operation method which was used by John Cage and
      a choreographer Merce Cunningham.
      I listed several actions and body parts that linked to the numbers and by tossing a dice,
      it will determine which action you will do and which body part that you will use.
      I created several sequence in same way for solos, duos and trios.
      In duos or trios, each dancers had different task (determined by dice) to create movement
   but yet aimed to connect each other.

Q: How can I construct the choreography away from my instinct.

A: I applied chance operation method for the contraction of choreography as well.
I gave numbers to the sequences that we created and decided by tossing a dice which sequence you will do and which order.
I also took some reference from artist Sol Lewitt. I put the numbers in the space and by tossing a dice it determine the passage that you will go to and from.
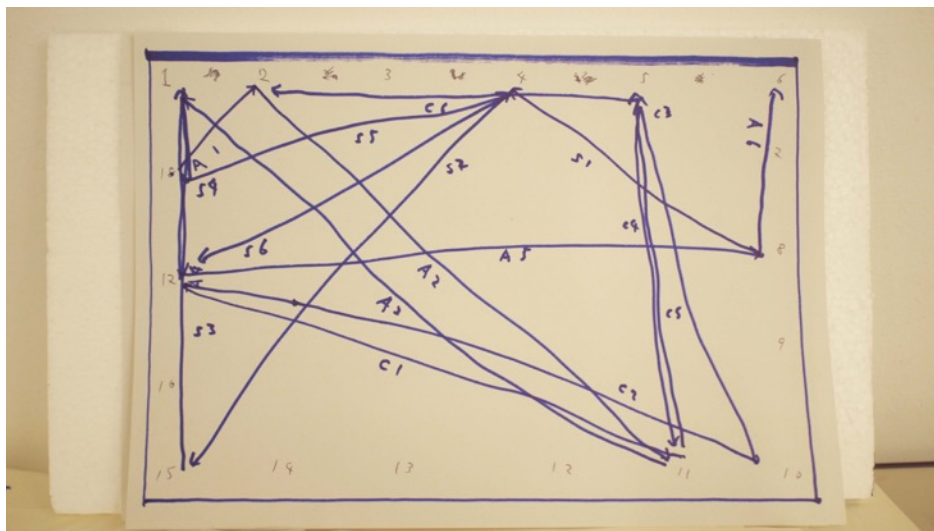
Q: How do I decide who does what and when.

A: I had several kind of dices (1-3, 1-4, 1-6, 1-8, 1-10, 1-12 and 1- 20) and I asked dancers to toss these dices to decided how many steps they will do at once and I add the pause after single sequence. Dancers was counting numbers while they are pausing which was determined by the dices.
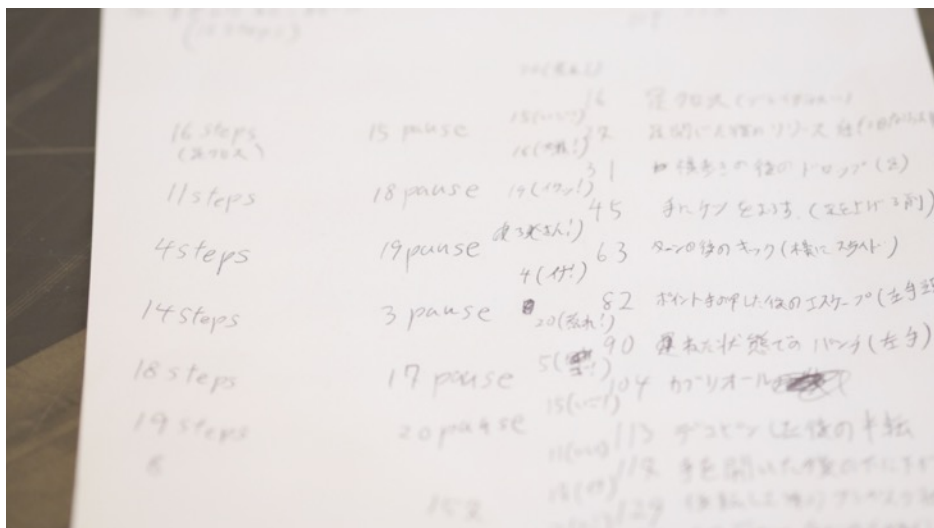
Acknowledgement and future directions

It was really challenging to choreograph with the way we tried but I definitely found huge possibility in this process and I would like to carry on.
Next challenge will be to add direction, tempo or intensity of the movement and find new way to decide length of the sequence for instance.
Most difficult things that I noticed is to create the partnering movement.
Since the project is seeking for independency of the movement, I found difficult to move without reacting to others when you partnering someone.

Beside creative acknowledgement, it was very new for me to have no dead line in the process.
I could decided freely how long one task can continue or how quick I switch one task to the another which I never experienced as choreographer.
It was very delightful experience but at same time it was difficult since I was the one who gives dead line to the things and no one else.

All the references I took from different artists were very helpful and using their methods probably aren't new for dance but I am still interested to see what comes out using their method merges with contemporary dance technic.
John Cage said "I'm working on my like and dislike" and I think that is a key to continue progressing the project.
To distance from my like or dislike and explore the unknown possibilities.

Result of residency

You can see more photos and videos at http://www.shumpein.com/a-sound-blog
And you can see whole documentation of the showing which took place in end of residency.

http://www.shumpein.com/video-of-a-sound-does-not-view-it-self-as-thought

II. *Second phase / residence at Choregraphisches Centrum Heidelberg 22nd June - 3rd July 2015*

In second phase I was inspired by the work of Steve Reich.
Phasing is one of compositional technic that Reich used and I would like to challenge my compositional skill by exploring a way to use the phasing in dance.
Reich says that phasing should played by two identical instrument and sometime he used prerecorded material order for solo musician to play at performance.
And I thought of using video projector to duplicate each dancers, thus that dancers can dance with video projection to achieve the phasing effect.

Questions and Approaches

Q: What kind of movement material suit for phasing.
A: I created movement that can be repetitive and be able to link each other without any

changes in the movement. Which means most them kept very simple but in certain rhythmic pattern. Sometime I put a music in short repetition order for me to keep in short movement and to examine that movement can be repeat it as much as possible with any harm in body.

Q: How can I develop the sequence that fit in the idea of phasing.

A: I tried several way of setting the sequence in relation to the phasing and it ends up in looping system that shift one movement at the time.
For example, (A or B represent movement)

A1 -----------A6	A5 -----------B1	B1 -----------B5
A2 -----------A7	A7-----------B2	B2 -----------B6
A3 -----------A8	A8 -----------B3	B3 -----------B7
A4 ----------A9	A9 -----------B4	B4 -----------B8

Q: How do I know the length of the sequence or amount of looping.

A: This was the most crucial and difficult question that I had in the process of the work.
I tried several variation of it and I and dancers were examined what length could be done physically. Last variation of repetition was up to two to four times for each sequences.
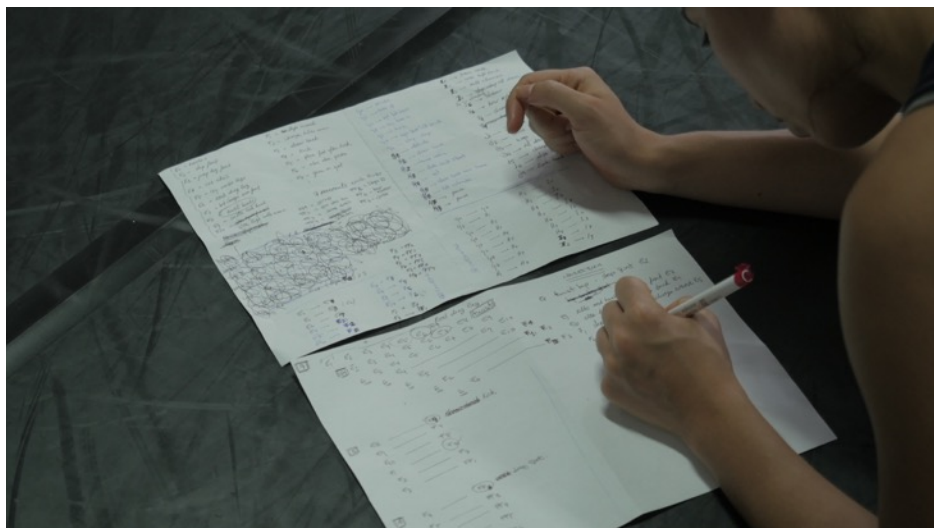
Q: How dancers relate to the video projection.

A: I took reference from Reich composition. It's start with video projection and dancers join to do same movement as video to sync and slowly shift amount of looping, thus that the dancers goes ahead of video. And in the end, they go back to unison with video projection.

Acknowledgement and future directions

It was very difficult to defining the system that works best.
It also required huge effort from dancers to remember the sequence and all the changed that I made through the period of experiment.
It was demanding project but I could determine the way of working clearly from the begging of the process which helped to progress the idea without much of conflict and confusion.
I will carry on to progress the same idea and I would like to research more deeply and try out all the possibilities that came up through the residency.
Especially, I did not have so much time to explore the possibility of using video projection and since I have an idea how it works, I could take it further with more consideration of involving the video itself.

Result of residency

You can see more photos at www.shumpein.com/a-sound-33-blog
And you can see whole documentation of the showing which took place in end of residency.

http://www.shumpein.com/video-of-a-sound-33

III. Third phase / residence at Scenario Pubblico 14th September - 11th October 2015

In third phase I tried to merge all the experience from other residences with new inspiration from Michael Snow's film works. Most challenging part of this phase was to find right material for movement, sound and image that can co-operate each other rather than disturb each other.

Questions and Approaches

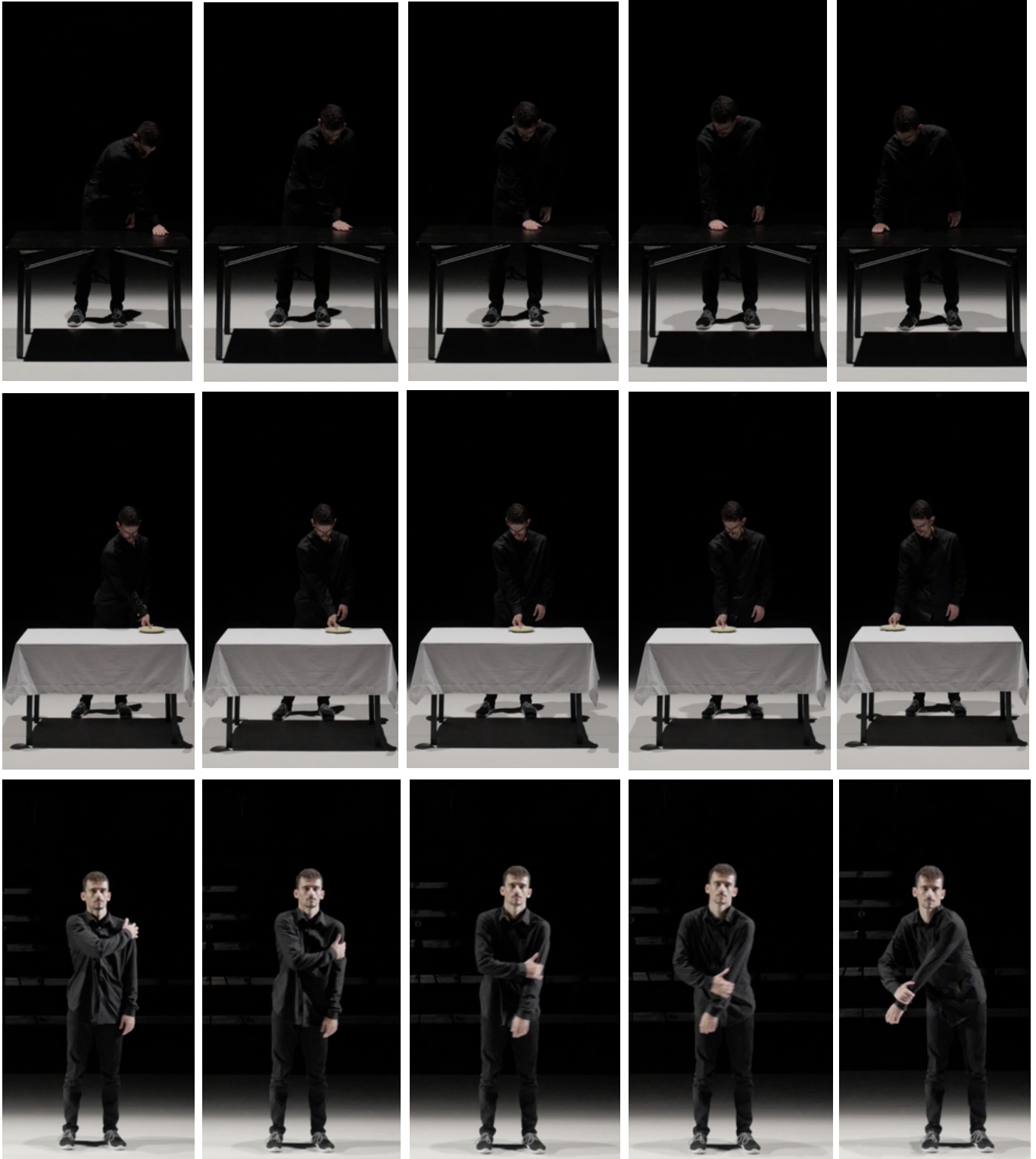Q: What kind of images/video could co-operate with dance movement and sound.
A: I tried several ideas like, shooting the dancer's movement with moving camera or
create a movement based on origami instruction and project origami object.
But in the end I decided to do same thing as I did in Heidelberg which is to project recoding of dancers doing same movement as they do in the performance with little tempo change, thus that video 1 and 2 do a phasing.

Q: What kind of movement material could co-operate with video and sound.
A: One of the idea that I tried was to create the movement with the object like Table or Chair
   and do the movement in the performance without object. I didn't deliver that idea in
   the performance but during that exploration we came up with the hand sequence on
   the table which became the theme of the all movement that we created for the performance.
   I inspired to create variation of the hand sequence by one of Michael Snow's interview,
   "It features something I continue to be involved in which is themes and variations – in music
   one of the greatest examples is The Goldberg Variations by Bach"

Q: What kind of sound could co-operate with movement and video.
A: It was hardest question I had and I seek for a music or sound that could work both with video
    and movement. But I felt wrong about just to pick any music or sound.
    After trying several idea like, using the Goldberg variation by Bach, recoding of sound
    that emitted by the movement, metronome and more, I found nothing that stronger than
    actual sound that goes on lively in that moment. By knowing John Cage's work and thought,
    it supported and encouraged me to take that decision.

Acknowledgement and future directions

It was hardest residence period I had since I started this project.
It was simply, so much elements to think about and co-operate with.
But in the end I feel I have a piece that I'm confidence of and I could take it further and keep
developing it while presenting to the audience.
The project started with a simple idea of relating to the sound with movement.
And by encountering with all the thought and works that artists made, it was pure inspiration.
There is so much to take from them and so much things that I still don't know about them.
Further I get to know about things, I more feel there isn't really "new" idea or "new" way of doing
things. I work in field of contemporary dance but I think it is only contemporary just because
it is happening now but not because it is new.
Taking the reference from the past is a great way of refreshing the a way of seeing things and
I certainly expanded my knowledge about art itself.
I found it is extremely important to have a place and time to do whatever I wanted / needed to
try and all the residences gave me that space and time.
What I miss now is simply to show and share this work with audience and to have
communication with them, thus that I could enriching the project more.

Result of project

You can see documentation of the performance at http://www.shumpein.com/video-of-side-side