

This multi-component output comprises a piece of professional practice on which I was dramaturg and historian, plus two single-authored essays. The three components reflect upon and extend one another to address both historical questions, and the artistic and scholarly questions that arise in relation to inquiry into them. They use multiple registers of research to triangulate an investigation of 'dance's alternative histories,' specifically engaging with works and archives previously unstudied, but that reveal and remedy the erasure of German dance's transnational past.

Methodologically, there are two interrelated core concerns: 1. how scholarly historical research and professional practice can work in tandem in both critical and reparative modes to build and share with audiences a view of history in which a minor work becomes central and simultaneously 2. the performance practice of such an alternative history can develop further insight into dance historical narratives and canons. Developed over eight years, the research draws together primary source materials in three languages from formal archives, as well as from personal archives, oral histories, and embodied practice.

The research has been shared through performance practice, printed academic and non-academic publications, invited academic lectures, public workshops, reading circles, and performance talk-back sessions. The practice component appeared in key performance festivals in Europe and Asia, and two additional performance works were commissioned as a result. The research has been presented in eight invited talks and two artistic workshops in seven countries. The first print essay was one of *Dance Research Journal's* five most downloaded articles in 2014, has been cited in nine peer-reviewed publications to date, and an expanded version was published by invitation in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (2017). The second more recent essay has been cited twice to date, both in the context of new directions in the field of dance.

From 'Future Memory'

Kate Eswit



Materials which comprise or support this submission can be found inside the box or on the USB drive  embedded in the box's interior lid. Within this publication, references for components of the submission are found in the right margin using a lettering system A–H. Items marked with an \* are components of the output, all other items are contextual.

- A\* Full length documentation of *Future Memory* 
- B Trailer for *Future Memory* 
- C\* Peer-reviewed article: Kate Elswit. 2014. 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', *Dance Research Journal*, 46(1): 3–22
- D\* Peer-reviewed essay: Kate Elswit. 2017. 'The Micropolitics of Exchange: Exile and Otherness After the Nation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, ed. by Randy Martin, Rebekah Kowal, and Gerald Siegmund (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 417–38
- E Excerpts from critical reviews of *Future Memory* 
- F Program booklet for *Future Memory*
- G Program booklet for *Evening With Astad* 
- H Peer-reviewed essay: Kate Elswit with Rani Nair. 2017. 'Letters to Lila and Dramaturg's Notes on Future Memory: Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. by Mark Franko (New York: Oxford University Press), pp.177–214 

Further information on these materials can be found on the reverse of the box's interior lid.

Kate Elswit

## FROM 'FUTURE MEMORY':

### A Triangulation of History, Theory and Practice

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama,  
University of London

FROM 'FUTURE MEMORY':  
A Triangulation of History, Theory  
and Practice

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and explicit, for working between  
practice and research.

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## I Overview

This is a multi-component output supported by contextual information, connected to the performance work *Future Memory*, on which I collaborated with choreographer Rani Nair as dramaturg and historian. *Future Memory* is a second-order performance — a performance about a performance — that explores the inheritance of intimate archives associated with *Dixit Dominus* (1975), the last dance by German choreographer Kurt Jooss, which was made as a gift for Swedish-based Indian dancer Liliavati Häger, who gave it to Nair to reconstruct in 2003. *Dixit* is a 'minor work', that has been forgotten between European and Indian traditions and does not fit neatly into the canon of dance history. As I explain in the peer-reviewed article, 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories',

Although Jooss is often central to narratives of twentieth-century dance theater, the solo is not well recognized within his oeuvre, because it was made for Häger almost ten years after what was considered to be his last choreography [...] *Dixit Dominus* has often been seen as an addendum that does not fit neatly into the canon of dance history. Likewise, the intertwined German and Indian dance practices that grounded the Dixit collaboration were each themselves reinvented during the twentieth century. One of the challenges of returning to those materials today was how to resist flattening the distinct temporalities that we negotiated, in particular with regard to practices that have their own histories of redoing (2014: 5–6).

I was involved in the early conceptualization of *Future Memory* based on this inheritance from 2009, through the development and structuring of performance material. The early version of *Future Memory* in 2012 was shown in a few smaller Swedish venues, but there was a substantial revision in 2014 before the Dansens Hus show in Stockholm. In this sense, the earlier version can be understood as a kind of work-in-progress showing. It was the 2014 show of *Future Memory* that then toured internationally to larger venues and important international festivals. Invitations to Singapore International Festival of Arts and the ImPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival came from producers who saw the new work in IGNITE! Festival of Contemporary

Dance in New Delhi in early 2015. I toured with the piece in 2015, to adapt the work to various contexts and venues. I also collaborated with Nair on further work that was developed as a result of that international touring, including 2014 and 2015 workshops, and two additional commissioned performances that are not part of the core outputs in this submission, *Open with a Punk Spirit* in 2015 and *Evening with Astad* in 2017 (see program).

My article on 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories' was published after the revised premiere in 2014 and engages with a set of artistic and historical questions through my inside-outsider position as dramaturg and historian for the project. As I elaborate in the section on methodology below, this encompasses an oscillation between shaping the artistic practice itself, and reflecting on and through it with a critical academic eye. It was the later work on *Future Memory* that led to the peer-reviewed essay 'Micropolitics of Exchange', published in 2017, which develops a set of historical questions regarding Jooss and German exile that arose out of the project. The underpinning archival research in particular that led to the second essay was carried out in Stockholm in 2014 (especially Jooss and Häger 1975) during the period that we were revising *Future Memory*.

*Future Memory* was funded via peer-assessment panels through Kulturrådet (Arts Council of Sweden), Konstnärnsnämnden (Swedish Arts Grants Committee), and Carina Ari Memorial Foundation, and created during residencies at Cullbergaletten, Dansstationen Malmö, and Dansens Hus Stockholm. My scholarly research and writing around the performance have been funded by the Lilian Karina Grant in Dance and Politics.

## II Questions, aims and objectives

Despite substantial developments in transnational theory over the past few decades, German dance has a particularly complex attachment to nation, as a result of the legacy of the Third Reich. As I elaborate in the essay, 'Micropolitics of Exchange', while histories of German dance have struggled to fully engage with transnational entanglements, 'it is not enough to reassess the place of exile artists in more familiar national dance histories; rather, these artists offer the opportunity to assess the contours of such historical narrations themselves and, with them, other forms of

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A, B

FIG 1 Amid the larger stage installation that has accumulated, Nair amplifies a rehearsal tape recording of Jooss counting the score of *Dixit Dominus*, then begins a “contemporary Indian dance.” Dansens Hus, Stockholm, 2014

belonging' (2017: 417). In the performance of *Future Memory*, the article, 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories' and the essay 'The Micropolitics of Exchange', I ask:

*What archives and methods exist to reveal and remedy the erasure of German dance's transnational past in the twentieth century?*

*How can scholarly historical research and professional practice work in tandem, in a mode that is both critical and reparative, to share with audiences an alternative history?*

*And how can the performance practice of such an alternative history develop further insight into dance historical narratives and canons?*

In *Future Memory*, we negotiated the problem of what it means to inherit a dance, as described above, as well as the artistic questions that surrounded the presentation of such an inheritance, in particular regarding the practice of engaging with archives in performance that will not be familiar to audience members, because their particular periodization and combination of German and Indian dance practices are themselves unstable and also do not comfortably fit into received history — a problem I describe in the article 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories' as 'reconstructing reconstructions on a global stage' (2014: 15). In that resulting article, I use a reflection on the practice research to lead into a larger set of questions around the potential and limits of the current trend of performing the archive, in particular working with creative strategies that engage with archives at the intersection of multiple contested legacies ('reconstructing reconstructions'), and ultimately argue for the importance of balancing the historical specificity of contested legacies with the global nature of their interconnections. With 'The Micropolitics of Exchange', I extend this work of elaborating global interconnections amid contested legacies through the historical case studies of two dance artists who went into exile during the Third Reich, and later remigrated to Germany. Exile has received relatively little attention in dance studies, although forced migration in the mid-twentieth century reconfigured artistic and intellectual landscapes on multiple continents. Drawing on theoretical and historical treatments of exile developed in other disciplines, as well as developments in transnational cultural theory, I use the case studies of Valeska Gert and Kurt Jooss to assess the contours of narrations around transnational German dance history, including engaging with archival materials obtained through *Future Memory*, and propose a theoretical framework to engage with exile in terms

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FIG 2 In the opening scene of *Future Memory*, Nair "sings the score" of *Dixit Dominus*. Singapore International Festival of Arts, 2015



FIG 3 Screen grabs from a film overlay of Lilavati Häger and Rani Nair performing *Dixit Dominus*. Reprinted from the program for *Future Memory*, p.14

## FROM 'FUTURE MEMORY'

of the interconnections of national narratives, and the intimate person-to-person terms on which those must be realized.

### III Context

As elaborated in the performances, print outputs, and program, this research is situated first across dance history and contemporary dance practice. In addition to the historical problems of German dance history elaborated in the research questions (see II. Questions, aims and objectives, building on the work of Guilbert-Deguine 1998; Müller, Stabel, and Stöckemann 2003; Franco 2007; Kant 2012; Manning 2012; Giersdorf 2013; and others), in the field of contemporary practice, the research engages with and critiques the trend of 'performing the archive' (see Franko 1989; Foster 2004; Lepecki 2010; Siegmund 2010; Hardt 2011). At the time in which *Future Memory* was made, most projects in this vein were based on well-known works of the European canon, around which historical narratives were relatively solidified, and thus they focused on what could be made in the present by using the past (in the article, 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', I use the examples of Barba 2011; de Soto 2012; and Nachbar 2012). By contrast, *Dixit Dominus* was neither well known, nor solely European, and also involved practices that each re-invented themselves during the twentieth century (on Indian dance see Chakravorty 2000; Meduri 2004; Chatterjea 2013). The performance and related article identify and reflect on this unstable ontology of 'thinking through the temporal other in relation to racial or spatial complications of otherness' (2014: 17), and its implications for the interventions of artistic practices that engage with archives as themselves reworking our understandings of history — in particular the need 'not only to ask what kinds of history are being done, but also what that doing does or can do' (2014: 18). The project of performing this particular archive is also used to launch a historiographical investigation of the ways in which trans-national dance history has been narrated, in particular in a German context, and to propose an alternative approach that decentres the priority afforded to the nation-state in such historical discourses (see article and essay). The research around German transnational history and performing the archive is further supported by memory studies, German cultural studies, migration studies, exile studies, and performance studies, among other fields (including Hoffmann 1998; Huyssen 2003; Rothberg 2009; Therborn 2003; El-Tayeb 2011).

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- ← FIG 4 Nair uses a hairdryer to animate the spotlight haute couture costume that Häger never wore on stage. ImPulsTanz Festival, Vienna, 2015
- FIG 5 Display of inherited costumes, jewelry, and other items. ImPulsTanz Festival, Vienna, 2015
- FIG 6 Nair voices and embodies an interview with Jooss regarding *Dixit*. Danstationen, Malmö, 2012

## IV

## Methodology

Methodologically, the multi-component submission works in two directions.

On the one hand, scholarly historical research and professional practice are combined (in both critical and reparative modes) to build an alternative history that reveals and remedies the erasure of Germany's transnational past in the twentieth century. As noted above, I was dramaturg and historian on *Future Memory* from the early conceptualization of the project through the development of the performance itself, as well as its aftercare in the world. I was brought into the project as both a historian who had written about Kurt Jooss and transnational German dance history, and as a scholar-artist who was exploring different ways of working with archives (for details on the nature of this work, see 1. Overview). This strand of research combined studio exploration with historical contextual research, including from previously unexamined and underexamined materials in formal and informal archives, which I further linked together through oral histories and other less formal conversations with project stakeholders. I write about this iterative process in 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories' in terms of my role as 'the "first spectator" an acute observer and interlocutor who watches over and over and articulates what she sees' (2014: 16) and, through this process of observing, shapes the work itself.

On the other hand, the performance practice of such an alternative history develops further insight into dance historical narratives and canons. In the article 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', I describe the friction of being both a historian and dramaturg in terms of my method of 'writing alongside' in order 'to give written form to a series of thoughts that have developed with, through, and sometimes even against the process of making *Future Memory*, in a manner that combines multiple registers of research' (2014: 17). Whereas *Future Memory* negotiated how to stage the inheritance of such an alternative history, the essay 'The Micropolitics of Exchange' in particular searches for a way to bring such a reparative model back into a historical argument. Although the 2017 essay relies on more conventional historical methods of archival analysis, historiography, case study, and close reading, and does not directly engage with the practice, it is nonetheless

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made possible by it, both in terms of the access to archival materials and oral histories that personal networks of the practice research afforded, and also the ways in which the theoretical and historical aspects of the essay build up new models in the space that the performance and 2014 essay created. This historical/theoretical intervention proposes an alternative way of thinking about exile and otherness that is built from detailed engagement with a series of examples, producing a focus that 'is methodological first, at the same time as the microscopic variety that appears in these examples troubles a more systematic approach to method' (2017: 419; see essay).

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## V

## Timeline

*Future Memory* (as dramaturg and historian)

2009–2012		Initial research and development.
2012	4, 5, 7, 8 December	Initial performance.
Performance substantially revised (2014), subsequently performed in:		
2014	March	Dansens Hus (House of Dance), Stockholm (film documentation);
	May	Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance, Salzburg
2015	January	IGNITE! Festival of Contemporary Dance, New Delhi (first production of program)
	July	ImPulsTanz Festival, Vienna
	September	Singapore International Festival of Arts, Singapore
2017	May	Stenkrossen, Lund
	September	Four Boxes Gallery, Skive

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In addition, two further performances were commissioned as a result of *Future Memory*, which Nair and I worked on together. The first was an "Archive Box" performance for the 2015 Singapore International Festival of Arts, involving the archives of Japanese contemporary choreographer Chia Ito. The second was seed funded by the Indian Ambassador to Sweden, who saw *Future Memory* in Stockholm and

proposed a new work involving the living Indian contemporary dance artist Astad Deboo. The new work *An Evening with Astad* (program) received additional funding and premiered in 2017. G

## Print Outputs

- 2014 Kate Elswit. 2014. 'Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', *Dance Research Journal*, 46(1): 3–22. C
- Invited re-publication, expanded, and reprinted interspersed with Nair's letters, as Kate Elswit with Rani Nair. 2017. 'Letters to Lila and Dramaturg's Notes on Future Memory: Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. by Mark Franko (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 177–214.
- 2017 Kate Elswit. 2017. 'The Micropolitics of Exchange: Exile and Otherness After the Nation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, ed. by Randy Martin, Rebekah Kowal, and Gerald Siegmund (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 417–38. D

Over this time, I have done talk-backs and co-led workshops with Nair at various performance venues and festivals, and I have also given multiple invited talks and keynotes on my own in relation to the trio of outputs, including at the Dansmuseet in Stockholm, Princeton University, the Temple Dance Studies Colloquium, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, among others.

## Invited academic and non-academic talks, and workshops

- 2014 10 March Curated Public Conversation with Rani Nair and Olga de Soto at Dansens Hus, Stockholm.
- 14–15 March Post-show talk with Rani Nair and Sandra Chatterjee at Dansens Hus, Stockholm.
- 3 May Invited roundtable at University of Salzburg, symposium on Material and Bodily Archives, Oral Histories, and Kinesthetic Connections, Salzburg.
- 5 November Invited talk at King's College London for the German in the World lecture series, London.
- 20 November Invited talk for the Lilian Karina Foundation, Dansmuseet, Stockholm.
- 2015 31 March Invited talk at Temple University, Temple Dance Studies Colloquium, Philadelphia.

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	2 April	Invited talk at Princeton University, Dance Program, Princeton.
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2017	16 May	Invited talk for Department of Dance, University of California, Riverside.
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2018	8–9 March	Invited talk for Global Dance Studies Seminar, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
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Workshops		
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2014	7 March	'Gifts, Inheritance, and Passing Things On' workshop with Rani Nair at Dansens Hus, Stockholm.
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2015	16 January	'Gifts, Inheritance, and Passing Things On' workshop with Rani Nair at IGNITE! Festival of Contemporary Dance, New Delhi.



## VI Findings

The associated components and contextualising material comprise three performances, three peer-reviewed publications, two programs, and a series of talks and workshops. A,B C,D,H F,G

Across these items, the project models new ways in which scholarly historical research and professional practice can work in tandem, in a mode that is both critical and reparative. Through these methods, it provides a new vantage point from which to reveal and remedy the erasure of German dance's transnational past in the twentieth century. This further pushes scholarly and artistic conversations regarding the ways in which performance practice can develop insight into dance historical narratives and canons.

The live performance of *Future Memory* has been selected for presentation to public audiences in Singapore, Austria, Sweden, India, and Denmark. These invitations include high-profile performance festivals such as ImPulsTanz and the Singapore International Arts Festival (see critical reviews for evidence). Across these performances, the show has been seen by approximately 1200 audience members. Many of these presentations have included talk-back sessions, and some also workshops, both involving Nair and myself (see v. Timeline for full details). Since 2015, a program also accompanies the performance, including a dramaturg's introduction and a series of imagined letters from Nair A,B F F

FIG 7 In the "Memory of Lila" scene, Nair sits on top of a television and comments on a film of *Dixit Dominus* as it plays, without seeing it. Danstationen, Malmö, 2012

to Häger. The ideas that inform the related essays have been shared with audiences in these various formats, at the same time as the related writing has been developed through responses to the presentation of practice.

The print outputs in turn, in particular the 2014 article, C, D have been cited in peer-reviewed publications and taught, both in terms of their specific interventions in German dance history and more broadly the treatment of dance archives, as well as their model of practice research. The first print article was one of *Dance Research Journal's* five most downloaded articles in 2014, has been cited in nine peer-reviewed publications at the time of writing, and an expanded version was published by invitation in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (2017). The second essay is more recent, and has been cited twice at the time of writing, both in the context of new directions in the field of dance. C

In addition to invited talks, a key marker of ongoing value is the further work commissioned as a result of these components, both the two additional pieces of practice (elaborated in v. Timeline), and the invited expanded essay. H

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