



Conception · Liz Santoro and Pierre Godard

Choreography · Liz Santoro

Text · Pierre Godard

Sound · Brendan Dougherty

Costumes · Reid Bartelme

With **Pierre Godard, Cynthia Koppe,**  
**Liz Santoro,** and **Stephen Thompson**

Production Le principe  
d'incertitude · Coproduction of  
Théâtre de Vanves, L'Atelier  
de Paris – Carolyn Carlson,  
The Chocolate Factory, and  
Abrons Arts Center · With  
the support of FUSED (French  
US Exchange in Dance), Point  
Éphémère, Jerome Foundation,  
DRAC Ile-de-France, Centre  
National de la Danse, and  
ImPulsTanz Festival.

PRODUCTION 2014

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# 1 Intention

*Relative Collider* is a machine that offers us the opportunity to see, to measure, to quantify, to exchange, to experience information between nervous systems. Like the rings of particle accelerators, its structure holds value only insofar as it allows for the creation of an experience and production of specific results.

*Relative Collider* works on the physics of attention; a collision of watching. We want to know why, we want to know how, and we want to show you what we know. We imitate each other to imitate ourselves, to show what has not been shown. We trust you while trusting that we do not know. When do we start and when do we finish? We are aware of each other, it is all we can do.

*Relative Collider* seeks a point of contact between movement and text, where they each have the sole purpose of their own performance in front of an audience. Atoms subjected to different force fields, recombined into molecules that precipitate or dissolve under the attention of the viewer. Organic chemistry.

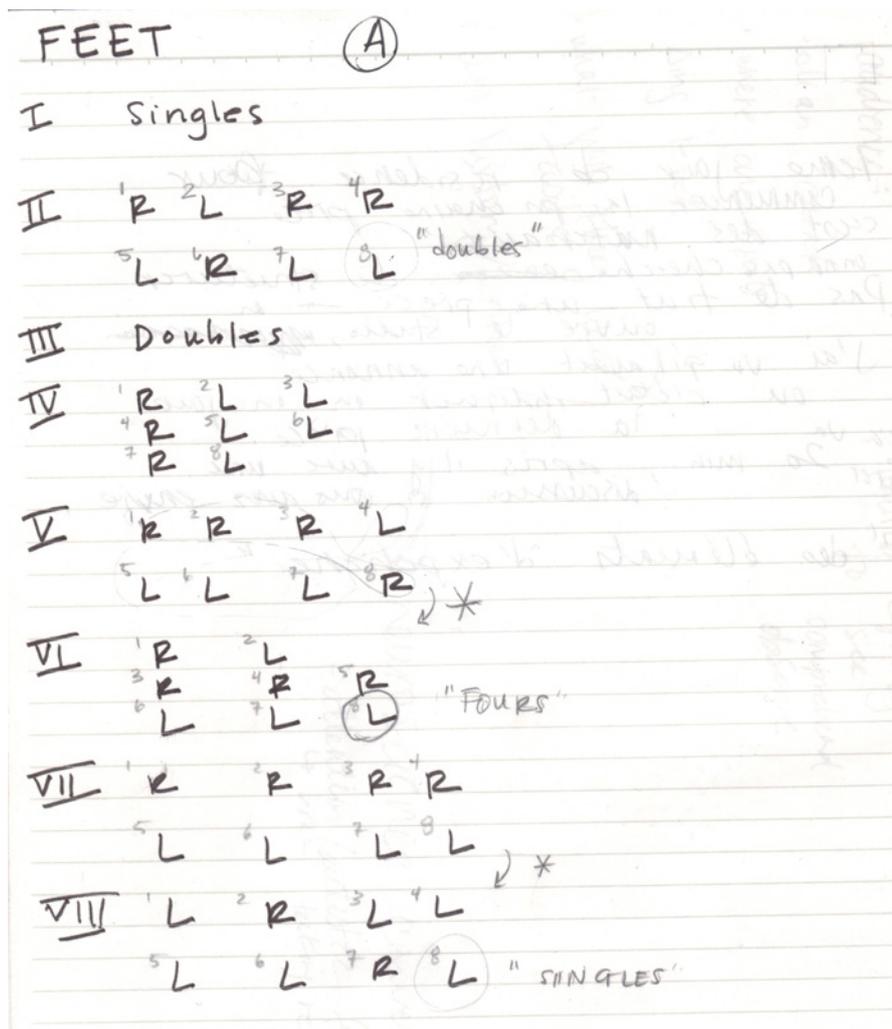
Through a practice in the behavior of attention, in parallel with the study of our experience of time influenced by attention, we seek to describe, explore, and manipulate the interplay of different waves of energy, sound, and attention. In this attempt to understand the physical laws of our presence with each other, *Relative Collider* calls into question what is exchanged, created, and destroyed in the act of observing.

## 2 Movement

### 2.1 Structure

Two independent systems of movement overlap in *Relative Collider*.

The first system (*arms*) consists of a sequence of sixty-four arm positions taken from photographs of *We Do Our Best*, a work that premiered in 2012. The sequence could have an artificial or arbitrary appearance, yet it is derived from physical postures whose original law was purely organic. Gestures captured in these images were movement responses produced by the nervous system's exposure to an audience; the material is therefore neither improvised nor written.



In parallel with this first system, a second system (*feet*), is superimposed. It consists of two separate sets. The first set (*A*) consists of eight phrases of eight counts, each count corresponding to a left or a right foot. The second set (*B*), also consisting of eight phrases of eight counts corresponding to a left or right foot, when joined with set (*A*), forms a palindrome.

From the point of view of an information theorist, there is very little difference between *set A* and *set B* (information necessary to decode one from the other is almost null). However, despite being imperceptible to the viewer, the sliding from *set A* to *set B* while maintaining the same arm sequence (system *arms*) requires the dancer to relearn the linear sequence from scratch.

For us, there is as much an aesthetic interest as a political one in trying to destabilize our perceptual hierarchies. I watch the execution of a sequence, I do not perceive the change, and yet the whole body of the dancer has undergone a profound alteration in its operating system. We try to displace the spectacular and to question the value that we bestow upon it.



## 2.2 Fields and energy

Our mind uses multiple filters to effectively process the information that surrounds us. The research engaged in for *Relative Collider*, from the point of view of the body, proposes converging the faculties involved in the act of seeing—in the act of being present—which is itself experienced in the effort invested to retain the attention of others. To do this, we dove into variations (or “atoms”) of the system of feet (*walk, pony, turn-out, jump, skip, jeté*, etc.) inside varying “fields” (*relative space, fixed space, curves, lines, facing, focus*, etc.).

It was a question of adding, or removing, some of the filters mentioned above to short-circuit our habitual patterns of visual processing, it was also a question of constructing variations in the energy level and entropy (measure of disorder) present on stage. If the piece has a tendency to move towards more energy and disorder, it is not from a desire to create narrative, but simply an act of thermo-

dynamics. A lightbulb is hotter after forty minutes of being turned on, even in the absence of any dramaturgy in the room.

As we work on the gaze to displace the acquired experience and personal history, the body can commit itself simply to that which the eye perceives. The immediate physical expression of this treatment constitutes the material we explore to design a new movement vocabulary.

### 3 Text

The second movement system mentioned above, we call *feet*, was in relationship to another system: one of text. In a locomotive variation of feet, each repetition of a right foot generates the need for a syncopation with the left foot in order to move through space. For example in the locomoting foot pattern of right, left, right, right, you are required to take a syncopated step with the left foot in order to repeat that last right foot. During the creation of the work, these units inhabited the studio with the vocal equivalent counted "one two three AND four five six seven AND eight", using the example of the second phrase in *set A*.

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----- 3 -----  
k: 1   eyes, look your last! arms, take your last  
k: 2   across the ocean, AND to talk with london AND paris  
k: 3   up AND down, double AND single, in AND out, round AND round,  
k: 4   went on AND it grew worse AND worse, he gave  
k: 5   feed AND clothe AND house him, AND play AND sing AND dance to  
k: 6   AND dim i seam, AND gusset, AND band, band, AND gusset, AND seam,  
k: 7   liver AND lights AND gall AND all! liver AND lights AND gall AND all!  
k: 8   AND dirt, was thin AND drawn AND old, AND his tired eyes,
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From these sixteen vocal patterns (each *set* contains eight phrases, or sentences), created through movement, we defined sixteen rhythmic patterns and lexical equivalents (eight words in a row with a certain number of "AND"s located in precisely the same place of the sequence as in counting of the syncopated movement phrases). A program was written, which sought out occurrences of these patterns from a crop

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15 ▼ def compose_pattern():
16     space = r"[\s,;:!?\\.\\(\\)]+"
17
18     word = r"\b(?:?!and)[\w'-]{1,6}" + space
19     ET = r"and" + space
20
21     # 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8   RLRL RLRL
22     pattern_a1 = word+word+word+word+word+word+word+word
23
24     # 1 2 3 and 4 5 6 7 and 8   RLRR LRL
25     pattern_a2 = word+word+word+ET+word+word+word+word+ET+word
26
27     # 1 and 2 3 and 4 5 and 6 7 and 8   RRLL RRLL
28     pattern_a3 = word+ET+word+word+ET+word+word+ET+word+word+ET+word
29
30     # 1 2 and 3 4 5 and 6 7 8   RLLR LLRL
31     pattern_a4 = word+word+ET+word+word+word+ET+word+word+word
32
33     # 1 and 2 and 3 4 and 5 and 6 and 7 8   RRRL LLLR
34     pattern_a5 = word+ET+word+ET+word+word+ET+word+ET+word+ET+word+word
35
36     # and 1 2 3 and 4 and 5 6 and 7 and 8   RLRR RLL
37     pattern_a6 = ET+word+word+word+ET+word+ET+word+word+ET+word+ET+word
38
39     # 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 5 and 6 and 7 and 8   RRRR LLLL
40     pattern_a7 = word+ET+word+ET+word+ET+word+word+ET+word+ET+word+ET+word
41
42     # and 1 2 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 7 8   LRL
43 ▼ pattern_a8 = ET+word+word+word+ET+word+ET+word+ET+word+word+word

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of fifty thousand books, written in English, available in the Gutenberg Project<sup>1</sup>, a platform of digitized and copyright free written works. Among these works, there are, for example, the complete works of Shakespeare, cookbooks, the Koran, Arabian Nights, etc.

Once these samples were harvested – some of which are found with hundreds of thousands of examples, while others occur only a handful of times in this huge mass of text – a second program randomly, and in real-time, generates a sequence of these patterns from either *set A* or *set B* (according to the activity of the dancers at that moment).

This text is therefore very constrained in its composition, but also equally open to the unpredictable – infused in real time at a very fast pace, that must be maintained by the speaker. Like the dancers, the speaker is absorbed in the effort his nervous system invests in processing complex information and permanent evolution. This effort, starts at the beginning of the performance as he follows the same pattern as the dancers while reading silently and then vocalizes only halfway through the

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.gutenberg.org>

piece. Here, and in contrast to the sliding from *set A* to *set B* mentioned early, a rupture is seen but it is one that is only experienced marginally by the speaker. The chemical activity of silent rhythmic reading of a text composed of fragments with familiar sections (very rare patterns) and completely unknown sections (patterns found in large numbers from the crop of texts), assembled randomly and in real time, experiencing inside an activity very close to vocalized reading.

Although text is treated in *Relative Collider* as movement (the latter itself conversely being treated as text from a certain point of view), its sound and rhythmic material prevails over its semantic content—this is why this text is written in a language which is not the native language of the speaker—the meaning of the words floats, bounces, and sometimes hangs on the stage.

## 4 Sound

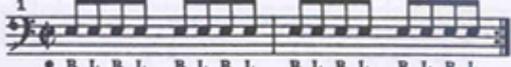
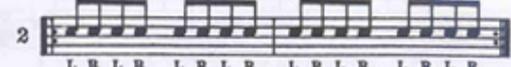
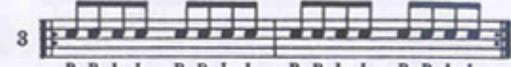
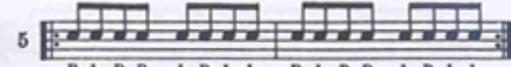
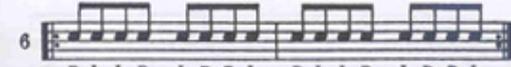
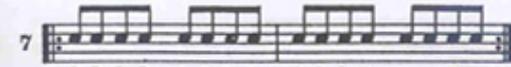
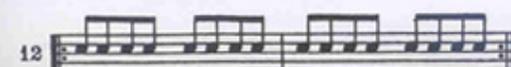
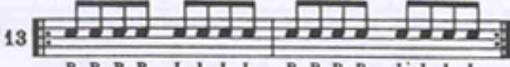
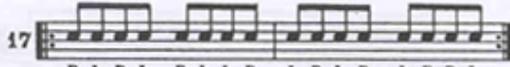
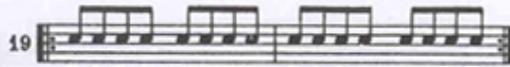
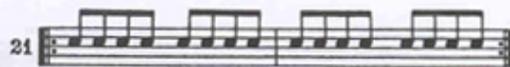
*Structure without life is dead. But Life without structure is un-seen.*  
(John Cage, *Lecture on Nothing*)

A metronomic beat begins and installs the performance in a sonorous space successively, and according to the individual, annoying, mesmerizing, rocking, oppressive. This metronome undergoes progressive deterioration to the limit of the maintained threshold of perception and, more rarely, a sudden breakdown or some ambiguous additions (buzz, white noise, sub-bass). More than a policeman, the metronome is a reference, a clock, which allows the exchange of information in performance on stage, to communicate synchronously (this does not exclude other methods of asynchronous communication). It acts as a protocol, not a law.

When it becomes vocalized, the integration of text in the acoustic space leads to the dissolution of this metronomic clock, with the rhythmic structure of the text replacing it. Then there is a beat that is superimposed on the text and injects a new form of traction, a new chemistry, to the movement, which ultimately also dissolves, followed by the text and the movement whose last echoes are deployed in the sonorous silence of their own noise.

## Single Beat Combinations

(Read downward)

<p>1  • R L R L R L R L R L R L R L</p> <p>2  L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R</p> <p>3  R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L</p> <p>4  L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R</p> <p>5  R L R R L L L L R L R R L L L L</p> <p>6  R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L</p> <p>7  R R L R L L R L R R L L R L L L</p> <p>8  R L R L L R L R R R L L R L R R</p> <p>9  R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R L</p> <p>10  L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L R</p> <p>11  R L L L R L L L R L L L R L L L</p> <p>12  L R R R L R R R L R R R L R R R</p>	<p>13  R R R R L L L L R R R R L L L L</p> <p>14  R L R L R R L L R L R L R R L L</p> <p>15  L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R</p> <p>16  R L R L R L R R L L R L R R L L L L</p> <p>17  R L R L R L L R L L R L R R L R R L</p> <p>18  R L R L R R L R L L R L L R L L L L</p> <p>19  R L R L R R R L R L R L R R R L</p> <p>20  L L R R L L L R L L R R L L L R</p> <p>21  R L R L R L L L R L R L R L L L</p> <p>22  L L R R L R R R L L R L R L R R R</p> <p>23  R L R L R R R R L L R L R L L L L</p> <p>24  R R L L R L R R L L R R L R L L</p>
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• R = right stick  
S L = left stick

Repeat each exercise 20 times

## 5 Bios

### Liz Santoro (USA/FR)

Liz Santoro is choreographer and performer based in New York and Paris. She began her dance training at Boston Ballet School. She then went on to study neuroscience at Harvard University where she received a Bachelor's degree. She has worked with choreographers such as Alexandra Bachzetsis, Jack Ferver, Philipp Gehmacher, Trajal Harrell, Heather Kravas, Jillian Peña, Eszter Salamon & Christine de Smedt, David Wampach and Ann Liv Young. She has also performed in the theater work of John Jahnke/Hotel Savant, Charles Chemin, and Pierre Godard and collaborated with visual artist Ryan McNamara. In 2009 she began creating her own choreography. Her work, which investigates the performative role of attention and challenges the diametric relationship between watching and being watched, has been presented by venues such as Danspace Project at St Marks Church, Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Movement Research, Dance Theater Workshop, Théâtre de Vanves, L'Atelier de Paris – Carolyn Carlson, The Museum of Arts and Design, Point Ephémère, Centre Pompidou-Metz, and ImPulsTanz in Vienna. She recently received a New York Dance and Performance, or “Bessie”, Award in the category of Outstanding Production for her latest work with Pierre Godard, *Watch It*.

### Pierre Godard (FR)

After completing a Master's degree in applied mathematics at Ensimag in Grenoble and beginning a career in finance as a quantitative analyst, he resigned in 2005 to begin working in theater. Initially as a technical intern to investigate light, sound and stage, he has subsequently been exploring the field successively as a technician, an assistant lighting designer, a props manager, a stage manager, an assistant director, an assistant choreographer and a director. He has worked in particular with Jean-Michel Rabeux, Sylvie Reteuna, Sophie Lagier, Valère Novarina, and has been in close collaboration with Liz Santoro over the past five years. His work now focuses on reconsidering many of the assumptions made about theater, and starting to work with text material in a manner informed by contemporary dance, neuroscience, computer science and linguistics. He is currently completing a second year of a Masters at the Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 in Natural Language Processing with the intention of consolidating the design of new tools for the performance of language-based materials. This spring he is working at LIMSI (CNRS Laboratory) on topics related to Statistical Machine Translation.

## **Cynthia Koppe (USA)**

Born in Singapore, Cynthia Koppe is a New York-based dancer and performer. She holds a degree from Cornell University in Dance and Sociology. Cynthia has collaborated closely with Liz Santoro since 2010 in addition to working with Shen Wei Dance Arts, Yve Laris Cohen, Ellis Wood, Will Rawls, and Bill Young, amongst others.

## **Stephen Thompson (CA/FR)**

Stephen Thompson is a performance artist, dancer, choreographer, researcher and pedagogue originally from Calgary, Alberta. His introduction to movement and performing was through competitive figure skater where he competed at the 1998 Canadian Olympic Trials. He received a Bachelor of Kinesiology (art and science of movement) minor in Contemporary Dance from the University of Calgary. Stephen has worked as an interpreter, collaborator and co-choreographer with numerous companies and artists including Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, Nicole Mion, Foundation Jean- Pierre Perrault, Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Production LAPS (Martin Bélanger), Par B.L.eux (Benoit Lachambre), Lee Su-Feh, DANS.KIAS (Austria), Fabrice Lambert (France), Fabrice Ramalingom (France), Dick Wong (Hong Kong) and Antonija Livingstone and Jennifer Lacey. Recent collaborations include participating in *Un Gout Exquis*, an inquiry into queer esthetics for the 2014 Montpellier Festival Danse with Fabrice Ramalingom, performing in Trajal Harrell's (USA) 2012 Bessie award winning - Large version of *Twenty Looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church*, dancing with Fabrice Lambert in *Solaire* presented by Theatre De la Ville, Paris in 2012 as well as *Faux Mouvement*, and constructing an art project with Public Recordings with Ame Hendersen. He also collaborates with various visual artists including Xavier Veilhan, Kendell Geers and Laurent Goldring. Stephen received a Paula Citron award for the "best of 2011" for his *Etude: Arms (gauche/droit)*.

## **Brendan Dougherty (USA/DE)**

Brendan Dougherty was born and studied in Philadelphia and has lived in Berlin since 2002 working as composer and performer of improvised, electronic and pop music. His work with theater and dance has led to collaborations with Jeremy Wade, An Kaler and Meg Stuart. As a composer and sound designer he has created music for multimedia installations, games and television. Dougherty is a founding member of *Idiot Switch* and *Charrd*. Other musical collaborators include his Kim

Cascene (KGB trio), Tony Buck (Project Transmit), Lukas Ligeti, Jochen Arbeit and Billy Bang. He has released albums on Utech Records, Scrapple Records, Aural Terrains and Shoebill music.

## **Reid Bartelme (USA)**

Reid Bartelme began his professional life as a dancer. He worked for Ballet companies throughout North America and Canada, and later in his career worked for modern dance companies in New York including Shen Wei Dance Arts and the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company. He has also performed in works by Jack Ferver, Liz Santoro, Burr Johnson, Douglas Dunn, Christopher Williams, Kyle Abraham and Ryan McNamara. He went on to graduate from the fashion design program at the Fashion Institute of Technology and began working as a freelance costume designer. Reid has designed costumes most notably for Christopher Wheeldon, Lar Lubovitch, Gwen Welliver, Pontus Lidberg, Jack Ferver, Pam Tanowitz, Burr Johnson, Jillian Peña, Juliana May, Michelle Boulé, Joanna Kotze, and Liz Santoro. In collaboration with designer Harriet Jung, Reid has designed costumes for the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Justin Peck, Marcelo Gomes, Andrea Miller, Emery Lecrone and Mauro Bigonzetti.

## **6 Video links**

Entire piece : <https://vimeo.com/98144532>

Excerpts : <https://vimeo.com/106336471>

Context video : <https://vimeo.com/96273703>

*Filmed on May 16, 2014 at The Chocolate Factory Theater, NYC.*

Note: all dossiers and videos can be found at [www.lpdi.org/projects](http://www.lpdi.org/projects)

Photo credit first page : Yasmina Haddad.

*Relative Collider* premiered on March 11, 2014 at **Théâtre de Vanves** at Festival Artdanthé, after an avant-premier on March 8, 2014 at **Atelier de Paris – Carolyn Carlson** after a month-long residency. The creation of this work also benefitted from residencies at **ImpulsTanz Festival** in Vienna in August 2013, at Théâtre de Vanves in November 2013 and at **Abrons Art Center** in December 2013. The American premier will take place at **The Chocolate Factory** in May 2014.