

CHAPTER IV

WHAT HAPPENED: GOINGS ON AT THE *LUNA* EVENT

Is this the idea: that it has to be a clean slate, and you are a creative individual and you are inventing? [...] At a certain point this mythical person wants to make a work. That's probably day one [of the dance event]. (I-JK)

When discussing this project of contemporary dance ethnography in our interview, Kealiinohomoku mused that it might be the genesis of the choreographer's inspiration to create a new dance that sets this kind of event into motion (I-JK). In the case of *Luna*, this moment proved difficult to pinpoint, because Laurin was continuously generating ideas for her future work, if dancer Rodrigue is to be believed (I-MR). And although there was an official last performance of *Luna* one night in Prague, an aftermath prolonged the effects of the dance performances for a period, impossible to yet determine, in the memories and writings of some dance participants.

What kinds of activities took place as the *Luna* dance event unfolded? In what manner and order did they occur? How was each episode related to the others and to the whole event? How did people behave and interact? In this chapter I will tell one of many possible stories of the goings on at the *Luna* event, based strongly on evidence from field observations but also on the ways in which participants behaved and how they spoke about them in interviews, supplemented by certain documents and images. This story is

also firmly grounded in my own experiences of having participated in countless dance events in my role as a presenter over several decades.

The time frame for the event itself extended beyond the time of actual fieldwork that took place from spring 2000 through winter 2003, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter VI. The dance event, for purposes of this study, began then at the moment of Laurin's initial idea for *Luna*, included a pilot project in summer 2000, and continued through the project's imagined aftermath, with no final end in sight. As fieldwork began, Laurin's initial choreographic ideas had already been written up in the form of a project proposal for a grant (Appendix I). I finally left the field officially after the second return performance of *Luna* in Montréal, but before the last "touring block." But I continued to seek out news about the touring, and collected the press clippings from those performances, until Rodrigue's email to me about the last performance of *Luna*.

The story of *Luna* below followed actions and interactions among the many kinds of event participants, who will be formally introduced in the next chapter. It included both ideological and physical activities recorded in field notes and interviews. It also takes into account information from reports of things that happened which I didn't witness in person, but were described to me by participants who were there. This is a tale not only of the public performance of the *Luna* choreography, but also of how it came to be imagined, funded, created, publicized and marketed, performed and toured, taught, evaluated, documented, remembered, written up and theorized.

The phases of the *Luna* dance event and genres of activities will be examined as separately and chronologically as possible. But in actuality they formed a web of interrelated, overlapping and often simultaneous episodes. The complexity of their interrelatedness, and the difficulty of pinpointing their beginnings and endings from various perspectives, made it difficult to construct a schematic timeline. In order to provide a succinct summary of

activities, this chapter begins with a chronological calendar which points to the order of goings on and the approximate periods in which they occurred.

Some of the activities described here lay at the core of the *Luna* dance event's undertaking, others were on-going aspects of the dance company's operations, and still others were peripheral to the choreographic performance but part of the functioning of *O Vertigo*'s company structure. There were goings on that were of limited duration and scope, and those that continued throughout and were of resounding importance to the outcome.

Essential to any dance ethnography, and placed here just after the section on *Luna*'s creative process, is a descriptive analysis of the choreographic composition itself with its visual and aural *mise en scène*. The choreographic description begins necessarily with the problem of documentation and the immateriality of the dance performance, because *Luna* was an ephemeral event rather than a material object. Some of the themes and elements (time, space and movement qualities) of the choreographic composition are elucidated, as well as significant features of the dancers' stage personas.

The first section of this chapter proposes an orderly calendar, mapping out the time and place in which various activities occurred. What are descriptions of what people said and did during each of the phases of the *Luna* dance event.

4.1 Activity calendar

As a point of reference for readers, here is a chronological activity calendar of the significant dates referred to in this chapter. Activities that were supplementary but not directly related to *Luna* are put in brackets. It provides a synthesis of the progression and relationship of *Luna*-centered activities, and other company activities that were not directly related to *Luna*, in the period of February 2000 through November 2003. It is important to

note that certain kinds of dance company activities remained ongoing: board and staff meetings, the updating of press materials and contacts, the marketing efforts to sell *Luna* to presenters. Choreographer Laurin confirmed that “[...] generally our pieces have a cycle of three years duration. One year to create it – I am speaking here of the period with the dancers -- and two other years of presentation [of the work to audiences].”ⁱ (I-GL1).

4.1.1 2000: First inspiration, creative process and planning period

Indeterminate date for original inspiration for the creation of *Luna*, but sometime during the creative process of previous work

[February-May: touring earlier works *En Dedans*, *Chagall* and the *Duos*]

April: three days of new media experiments for *Luna* with two dancers, technical director, choreographer and visual designer

March – June: period of initial planning for *Luna* by the directors and staff but without dancers; fundraising, communications planning, production of first promotional materials (press kit, website update)

[June 25-30: summer project to remount *En Dedans* on a Brazilian dance company]

[August 1-15: period of rehearsals for Jacob's Pillow performances]

August 16-19: residency and performances at Jacob's Pillow; included initial work on *Luna* with composer Darden Smith

End of August-December 20: the creation of *Luna*'s choreography, set, lights, sound, costumes, and visuals; technical planning for tour

November 28-December 2: CINARS international arts marketplace in Montréal and studio showing for potential presenters of *Luna*

4.1.2 2001: Further residencies, world premiere and first touring block

January 3-10: residency on the stage of the *Maison de la Culture Mercier*

January 13-30: residency on the stage of the *Luzern Theater*, Switzerland

February 2-17: residency and first performances of *Luna*, in Switzerland and Germany (*Luna*'s premiere was at *luzernertheater* on February 2)

March 1-3: filming of *Luna* in residency at the *Maison de la Culture Mercier*

[July: two summer commissions for Laurin with several dancers for a large pageant in Lac St-Jean and the opening of the *Jeux de la Francophonie*]

August 2-25: *O Vertigo* Summer Workshop in Montréal with international students, use of the *Luna* choreography in the pedagogy

4.1.3 2001: Montréal premiere and second touring block

September 22, 23: 2 performances of *Luna* at the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*

October 2-7: performances of *Luna* in New York City at *The Joyce Theater*

October 23 and 24: performances of *Luna* in London, England

November 3 and 4: one performance in Chicoutimi, Québec at the *Théâtre du Saguenay*

4.1.4 2001: Montréal premiere and second touring block

October 9-12: 2 reprise performances of *Luna* at the *Monument-National* in Montréal

February 19-March 5: Provincial tour to four cities in Québec with *La Danse Sur les Routes* project

March 15-April 8: Second European tour to six venues in Scotland,

France, Switzerland and Hungary

4.1.5 2003: "Last leg" of the *Luna* tour : second provincial tour in Québec, Western Canadian tour, tour to Mexico and South America, and third European tour

January and February: performances in six cities in Québec and three Western Canadian cities

March: three-week residency to remount segments of work in Mazatlan, Mexico as part of a long-term cultural exchange with the Delfos dance company; four performances of work in Mexico

April 5-May 4: performances in five cities in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina

June 2003: invitation for Laurin to create a new piece for a Mexican dance company

October 9-November 9: performances of *Luna* in five European cities in France, Italy and the Czech Republic

Nov. 9: last performance of *Luna* in Prague, Czech Republic

4.2 Envisioning a new choreography

I wasn't witness to the seminal moment when choreographer Ginette Laurin first imagined the dance that was later to be called *Luna*. One day she intimated to me that a new choreographic project really began "as soon as the other [previous] one [was] mounted onstage"ⁱⁱ (FN: 3-23-00). In our first interview, she gave this thought more precision when she said, "In fact, I don't know how it happens, but it's like I'm sitting there the evening of the premiere, I watch the performance and I say to myself 'my next piece is going to be like this' "ⁱⁱⁱ (I-GL). It was clear to me in context that she was referring to the freedom she felt at that moment to leave behind thoughts of the completed piece in order to concentrate on her next choreographic project.

But several weeks later, long-time company dancer Rodrigue provided a further insight about even earlier possible points of origin, gleaned from her many years of close work with Laurin. She told me “ideas for a new piece also emerge in short moments of inspiration during the creation of the previous piece [...]” (FN: 06-06-00). In Rodrigue’s account (I-MR), Laurin assembled an inventory of ideas in her mind during her working processes and over time, for use in *Luna*.

In the case of a dance event like *Luna*, the entire project stems from the choreographer’s envisioning of a dance, as *O Vertigo*’s executive director confirmed when he said: “[...] it all starts with Ginette, even her ideas about using technology [...] I think it’s Ginette’s vision that we are trying to incarnate” (I-BL). The realization of Laurin’s artistic vision for a dance is in fact one of the legal and artistic mandates of the not-for-profit *O Vertigo* dance company. The tradition of making “new choreographic creations” is a defining characteristic of dance events like *Luna*, and places at the center of attention a unique dance presentation that is freshly conceived, inventive and innovative. And so in order for the dance event preparation to begin, the choreographer needed to find inspirational ideas for the concept on which to base a future dance project that would one day become *Luna*¹.

4.3 Initial planning for *Luna*

This section will describe four kinds of activities, which in chronological terms, overlapped and impacted each one on the other. These activities were (a) the articulation of a initial project proposal for fund-raising purposes (along with a projected budget), (b) the identification of what kind of

¹ It may also be possible to argue that in the case of *Luna*, as for many large-scale dance projects of its kind, that it was the coalition of dance programmers who commissioned (helped to finance) the new work who were responsible for instigating the dance event in the first place. But my argument would be that there remains the necessary existence of a choreographer who can be trusted by these programmers to find inspiration for a new work and so to produce a choreography that meets their standards, before they will make the initial investment.

resources would be needed for this particular choreography, (c) meetings of the administrative staff and company directors to plan out the logistics and time line of the *Luna* project, and (d) conversations that choreographer Laurin had begun with an astrophysicist concerning the content of *Luna*. These descriptions of activities, like the others in Chapters IV through VI, are accounts that have been constructed from the data.

4.3.1 The project proposal

A two-page proposal (Appendix I) conceived by choreographer Laurin and visual designer Morgenthaler was written, to the best of Laurin's recollection, at least one and a half years before the opening night performance. The literary style of the text itself was poetic, philosophic and descriptive. It contained a set of initial ideas for the choreography, along with a short statement about the use of technical media along with a few illustrations of the technical paraphernalia. And according to the custom in Canada, the text along with its budget was read and assessed for eligibility and soundness by dance agent Line Lanthier from the provincial funding agency, the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, and by Monique Léger at the Dance Office of the federal funding agency, the Canada Council for the Arts. It was then reviewed and evaluated by juries of Laurin's artistic peers as part of the company's grant application, which they were obliged to prepare for the various government cultural departments at federal, provincial and municipal levels.

The project proposal elaborated a conceptual text on which much of the subsequent writing about *Luna* was based, as will be further discussed later in this document. It also provided executive director Lagacé and touring agent Plukker with concepts and phrases about the nature of the work which Ménard finally inscribed into the press materials (Appendix I; Appendix R;

CD ROM in Appendix S). The staff employed these materials in their initial touring prospections and negotiations with dance programmers. Based on the text of this proposal, a press kit on paper and CD ROM were conceived and distributed to dance journalists and critics.

In this project proposal Laurin affirmed her intention to undertake contemporary dance “research” in the academic sense of seeking to create new dance knowledge. She wrote that she would do this through a close study of “the moving body”(of the dancers), choreographic uses of new technologies, and by dialoguing with an interdisciplinary team of scientists and theoreticians. She also specified her aesthetic interest in creating dance that evoked the poetry and sensuality of bodies in motion. An important thread throughout her text was a juxtaposition of scientific and humanistic perspectives. While Laurin proposed to render the body literally “larger than life[size]” by approaching it closely (in “close-ups”) and isolating its parts like a camera might do, at the same time she would view “the human being [as] a landscape in which one proceeds to better distinguish fine details.” And so paradoxically, while in her text the dancers are objectified as “moving bodies” whose parts were to be examined through optical lenses and cameras, these same entities were also “subjectified” as poetic and sensual beings whose physical contours were to be scrutinized as if a landscape.

4.3.2 Identifying necessary resources

Luna’s choreographic concept required more than the availability of the *O Vertigo* company dancers and studio space. New executive director Lagacé for the dance company was hired a year earlier in spring 2000 just at the moment when “Ginette was entering into this new creation [...and] it was already all planned and everything was set so that the creation could go.” (I-BL). He explained that his tasks were to create the (business) plan for the

project, find the necessary resources (for the creation and marketing of the work), balance an optimal budget (and its consequent revisions) and then seek the right financial partners in order to carry it out (I-BL).

It was evident from reading the proposal and budget summary (Appendix I) that the need for choreographic resources had already been identified in detail for *Luna*. For instance sound and visual media collaborators would need be hired, technological equipment and technical studios rented for their use, video projection surfaces and outsized optical lenses needed to be conceived and/or constructed. The cost of renting stage sound and lighting equipment for rehearsals and performances had to be anticipated. The dancers would be wearing special kinds of costumes to be designed and sewn, including those that would serve as video projection surfaces. And, of course, travel boxes had to be built specifically to transport all of these materials for touring that were sturdy and compact enough to travel on planes, boats and trucks to Europe and the U.S. (there were 20 travel boxes in the end). Just as I entered the field, grant applications for the *Luna* project had already been prepared and submitted for March and April 2000 deadlines of various national, provincial and municipal cultural funding agencies, to which responses would be given in June and July. Although not given full access to these applications, I know from my own experience of them that these forms required detailed preliminary estimates for all of the above salaries, fees, rentals and materials.

4.3.3 Planning meetings

At the same time, before choreographic exploration with the dancers had even begun for *Luna*, various planning meetings were being held among *Luna*'s future artistic collaborators, the rehearsal and technical directors, the *O Vertigo* dancers, executive director and staff, and board of directors. These meetings were repeated periodically as needed throughout the dance event.

Discussed at the particular encounters I observed² were aspects of past, ongoing and up-coming company projects.

The two office meetings I observed on March 23 and March 29, 2000 were facilitated by the company's executive director and included staff members (receptionist, publicist, administrator and technical director). Discussions at these two meetings covered the subjects of grant applications and press kits for *Luna*, contracts and negotiations with producers for performances of past company work, hiring of new staff, preparation for a board of directors' meeting, equipment rentals and returns, and the overall budget. It was here I learned that the impending board of director's meeting was expected to be a difficult one because of the demanding nature of its members, and so decided not to ask for access. I noted for instance that "Evelyn [Follian] is nervous, being told by Ginette that they [the board members] are very picky ("pointilleux"), but Bernard reassures her saying 'We'll hold up our end!' ("On va tenir notre bout!")" (FN: 3-29-00). A later interview with the board's founder Gosselin yielded more insight into the inner workings and demands of this group, and his function among them as the artists' advocate:

[...] the board is made up of people some of whom are more artistic, others from business, communications, and my function is to assure that Ginette is artistically defended. Because in a board there can be a tendency sometimes to move to the side of business to make the company profitable – they cut three weeks of salary and put the dancers on unemployment, or cut the creation of choreography. ^{iv} (I-CG)

² I sat in on three group meetings at the *O Vertigo* studios, but not the one-on-one discussions taking place in closed offices (and visible through large windows) because of their apparently private nature.

Yet another type of meeting was convened on August 1, 2000. This time dancers were called together by the rehearsal director in order to talk about rehearsals in August. This time Lagacé acted more as a mediator, giving information about schedules and the content of rehearsal sessions with dancers who made their thoughts and needs known. He reassured them that although the structure was already set up, revisions were always possible.

4.3.4 Conversations with artistic collaborators and an astrophysicist

Laurin confirmed that during this early stage of preparation, before beginning rehearsals with the dancers, there were preliminary explorations of ideas and strategies for the new work taking place with her artistic collaborators for costumes, lights and visual media. Conversations with visual designer Axel Morganthelar had already yielded a conceptual text about the use of large lenses and miniature video cameras, which he had written and was included in the project proposal (Appendix I). During the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow, composer Darden Smith who was initially engaged for the project by *O Vertigo* (later fired by Laurin) showed me textual and symbolic descriptions of musical ideas for *Luna* from his notebook.

Because themes that arose in early rehearsals seemed to point towards aspects of the planets, Laurin sought out and began conversations with astrophysicist Claude Théoret to familiarize herself with recent research in the field. She recalled why and how it was actually ideas arising from *Luna's* scenic elements that led her to this encounter with Théoret:

[...] there came a moment in the studio with the dancers when a discovery occurred that there was a dimension coming close to the infinitely large, along with the idea of the creation of the universe. The planets were present probably because of the

roundness of the stage elements and the optical techniques we were using, which were an ancient procedure that was used to discover how the planets functioned and how the universe was created. And so that brought us to consider that phenomenon, and so I decided to meet with an astrophysicist.^v (I-GL2)

In the end, she was struck by the sense that she and Théoret were linked by their use of intuition and certain common interests. She told me that in consequence, they had resolved to continue their informal conversations into the next choreographic process.

4.4 Giving form to the *Luna* choreography

The *Luna* choreography took shape during four tightly scheduled months, from the end of August to late in December 2000. But according to Laurin, her creative processes as a whole, including research on form and content, can last up to a full year:

[....] the creation period is long, and in itself a period that can take a year. Just to think [about the work], find sources of inspiration and become permeated with the subject. After that, there is the production work, the search for collaborators, the creation of the scenic environment, the composer.^{vi} (I-GL1)

The dancers prepared for their afternoon work sessions with the choreographer by attending various training classes and workshops of their own choice in the mornings, occasionally offered by and at the *O Vertigo* studios. Daily periods from noon to five, Monday through Friday, were scheduled for the creative process activities of movement invention and

composition. These periods also included technical work on the new skills required by the specific choreographic movements, the gradual integration of other artistic media along with stage scenery and props, opportunities for recuperation from the intensity of the physical and mental work, and note-giving sessions to correct errors in the choreography.

4.4.1 Creative processes

Creative sessions for *Luna* began with the generation and development of dance movement “material” under the choreographer’s strong direction. Within Laurin’s way of working, important contributions were also made by the dancers themselves, a dynamic which veteran *O Vertigo* dancer Rose described as “[...] trying to express yourself through this movement that’s given to you, [and] that concentration on opening up the world of that dance” (I-DR). He teasingly called Laurin ‘Miss Gesture’ and spoke of her dance-making method as “tacking gesture onto gesture.” Like Brisson, he spoke about the fast pace of the composition process: “At first she wants it fast, then add this, add that to a base.” (I-DR)

Dancer Barry specified that the process for *Luna* was in fact an atypical one, because of a relatively new emphasis on creating “a presence,” as she puts it, rather than developing a psychologically motivated “theatrical” character as in past works she had danced with the company. She further described the creative work for *Luna* as cultivating “a state of being” that is all “part of one universe” (I-AB). Laurin herself explained to me the aesthetic philosophy and logistics of her way of working:

[...] I think that there are things that happen to us and we aren’t conscious of the possibilities they offer us. [...] I am pretty precise about the theme I want to explore, but the way of

doing it is quite open and leaves much room for the dancers. I am quite direct with the movement, but my way of integrating it into the situation is very Automatist... a little in the vein of the Automatist painters.^{vii} (I-GL1)

And so although there is a traditionally authoritarian phase in the process in which she asks dancers to “do as I do,” she afterwards conscientiously gives them freedom to adapt and play with the movement, as will be seen in more detail below.

Her creative process periods ranged in duration from four months (as with *Luna*) to one year “according to the possibilities and what things are to be explored” as she explained (I-GL1). There were days when the choreographer’s ideas and inspirations flowed easily and, as I noted, “there [was] hardly enough time to finish what they [were] after” (FN: 12-18-00). On other occasions, the process became more belabored for Laurin when fatigue set in or she experienced a lack of ideas. But the choreographer confided to me one day that the *Luna* creative sessions had been among the “most harmonious” to date. And technical director Jocelyn Proulx, a six-year veteran of the company concurred: “For me, this [*Luna*] creation, in the rehearsal studio, was done with an ease and gentleness that I had never before encountered [with *O Vertigo*]”^{viii} (I-JP). Music or environmental sound was usually playing in the background as they worked, providing aural stimulation for the creative processes. And in order to remember choreography as it was proposed and altered, movements sequences and sections were given little code names by the dancers like “*gestuelle secrete*” and “*sol des amoureux*” and recorded in personal dance notations by each artist (Appendices L and K). Described below, I have grouped the various creative strategies observed in the studio into three genres: (a) spontaneous movement generation, (b) game structures, and (c) movement construction.

(a) At certain times, Laurin stood beside one of the dancers and began to move spontaneously and intuitively in true Automatist fashion. In one of these moments I witnessed, I noted that it happened this way:

She concentrates quite simply and then makes a gesture, repeating it several times for the dancers to learn and follow. Rarely, but once in awhile, she discards a movement that she has made or alters it somewhat after making it. She does one movement, and then "allows" another one to happen. The dancers concentrate hard to grasp the movements on the spot [...]. (FN: 10-23-)

The rehearsal director later confirmed to me her commitment to the kind of intuitive spontaneity that was characteristic of "Automatist composition." He further explained that she begins this process with only general ideas about the space and dynamics of the movements she will be making, although she did tell me that she occasionally worked on some technicalities of the movements after they were created outside of rehearsal time (FN: 9-27-00). Every time Laurin created these spontaneous phrases, Brisson videotaped the sequence as she was doing it. It was then taken into the small studio where the dancer worked until it was memorized. Once the phrase was learned by heart, the dancer returned to the larger studio where Laurin submitted the spontaneously made dance sequence to modifications of its shape, space, timing and energy. This Automatist process also intervened in creating some of the duet work. The way it functioned as Laurin created the duets, a visibly predominant feature of her choreography, was described in a detailed example by dancer Rodrigue:

[...] she tells us as if from a dream 'I'd like you to take the girl and have her fly behind your back.' And we have to find a

way. She does give us the hold more or less, the way of taking the partner, and how she sees the person in the air [...] (and) we try to be Automatist, we try to find the most spontaneous way.^{ix} (I-MR).

(b) Laurin also proposed game-like structures to her dancers in the form of problem-solving tasks. Here are several samples: a movement sequence was given to the taller dancers who were asked modify it by making it larger, and to the shorter ones to make smaller (FN: 9-06-00); dancers were given a short verbal text and given the task of fitting the words into an 8-count “pulse beat” (FN: 9-08-00); dancers improvised while guided by the image of “getting older as one progresses through space” (FN: 11-22-00). At one point Laurin gave movement phrases a call-and-response form, along with four variations of different dynamics that were to be invented by the dancers. Each variation was assigned an image such as “disco” or “slow motion” (FN: 9-22-00). Throughout these creative processes, dancers were sporadically asked to come forward with their own ideas and suggestions that Laurin consequently decided to integrate or leave aside.

(c) I also observed Laurin as she created sequences of movement by fitting them together tightly one after another with the attitude of a bricklayer, using previous and new material (FN: 10-02-00).

In our last interview, Laurin confirmed that the creative process I had observed for the creation of *Luna* was a typical one in terms of the kinds of things that happened, much like all the others she had done. Even if she brought different aesthetic concepts and working processes to each choreographic project, the sequence remains largely the same: first she worked with her artistic collaborators to decide on the atmosphere and ambiance of the dance, then she began the work with the dancers and the stage elements chosen, each sequence leading her in chronological fashion to the next. There always came a time when the dancers were asked to

implicate themselves creatively and to finally “take possession” of the dancing and conceive of how they would interpret it for themselves. (I-GL2)

4.4.2 Technical work

The dancers also worked intently on the technical physical challenges inherent in the unfamiliar new movements they were learning, often in the smaller studio in isolation from the choreographer. They observed, coached and encouraged each other in collegial fashion, like a community of teammates. The choreographer and rehearsal director looked in to make suggestions from time to time, but much of this responsibility was given over to the dancers. The ways in which they managed technical challenges and suggested solutions to the choreographer gave them the chance to make subtle but actual contributions to the aesthetic of the dance. As Barry specified: “The more that you can build [the movement] into the body, that interesting neurological process in which you can learn a movement and can tone and shade and color it at the same time, [the more that] the body absorbs those things” (I-AB). In other words, it is only when the body finally memorizes and naturalizes the movement configurations that she can begin to express its nuances.

Generally speaking, these types of technical activities required skills like the mastering of the mechanics of lifts and catches, adjusting the movement to accommodate the cordless microphones and emitters attached to dancers’ bodies, coordination of breath with movement, coordination of the spacing and timing, and the creation of transitions between movements. Rapid memorization of movements until they were mastered, and the patience to drill sequences over and over, were also essential abilities required for *Luna’s* dancers. And yet another kind of technical work was the achievement of

particular expressive qualities requested by Laurin, which she called “the inner smile” and “cultivating one’s inner garden.”

As the choreography became set, rehearsals of the finished sequences became routine but were carried out at varying energy levels. For instance, “working rehearsals” were those that allowed for stopping and starting the dance when needed in which the dancers moved at a relatively low energy level called “marking the dance”. The “full out run-throughs” were rehearsals in which the dancers were asked to move with a performance level energy in mind.

4.4.3 Integration of other artistic media

Lights, sound, spoken and sung texts, costumes, props and visual imagery were gradually added into the mix of the choreographic composition as the creative process progressed. The technology used in *Luna* was introduced relatively late in the creative process. Technical director Jocelyn Proulx questioned the lack of time made available for experimentation with the new media:

[...] the high technology of this show was very demanding as compared with past shows. [...] we didn’t know what to do with this, there was no precise idea at the beginning. The most interesting things were found towards the end. There was really no technical creative process parallel to the dance [creation].^x
(I-JP)

There were two sets of costumes: a theatrical adaptation of everyday clothing (worn in two layers and so allowing for a change of costumes) during the first part and the emblematic moon-like dresses that the women

donned in the second half (photo 8). It was in February 2002 that finishing touches were finally made on the “everyday” costumes and stage make-up, during a two-week residency in Lucerne, Switzerland. Because the Swiss costumers at *Lucern Theater* were not used to the requirements of dance to allow for freedom of movement, the dancers complained that the resulting cuts and fits were stiff, and completely wrong. *Luna*’s own costumers, one of whom flew overseas to join them, had to remake many of the pants, skirts and tank tops (FN: 3-1-00).

During the first few weeks of the creative sessions the transparent “scrim curtain” was hung in the large dance studio and the outsized optical lenses on stands were brought in to work with. Laurin knew from the outset that she would be using a scrim as both a barrier to divide the stage space into two choreographic zones, and as a screen for video projections. The optical lenses were used in three sequences in particular, in which choreography was conceived that would be magnified but distorted as it was viewed through their frames (Appendix S and photo 7).

The other element that was present from the beginning and throughout this period was a sound score. Composed of “found” and collated sound, the ambient soundtrack created especially for *Luna* was introduced into the rehearsal process only after the movement was created (FN: 10-26-00). Since the sound element of *Luna* also included the dancers’ voices, they were wired for amplified sound and danced with microphones and batteries attached to their bodies. The sound score also include spoken texts, both live and pre-recorded. From the outset Laurin looked for phrases in books on astrology, photography and architecture. Dancer Weikart explained that these texts needed to be “not too narrative or evocative, more discrete, [and shouldn’t] impose too much [but have] a musical sense” (FN: 9-15-00). Even as they danced, the dancers were also asked to make audible their breath sounds, recite texts and to count out loud in several languages. Sounds and movements were matched in specific but random configurations. And a

complex process of recording sessions with Laurin and the dancers began in a sound studio, to be realized in several stages: Hubert Reeves' scientific text about moonlight was recorded in English and in French, a session of trials was made with the words inserted in the "les 21" (the 29 sections of *Luna* are listed on the cue sheet in Appendix K), and the women's singing was pre-recorded to support their live singing of the "*Luna*" song in Spanish (I-GL2).

In November, after three months of creative process, experiments finally began with video projections with various images brought in by the visual designer, and on different surfaces, the latter including the dancers' bare bodies. The scrim curtain and Barry's silky skirt, the latter expanded to its full volume as she was poised up on a pedestal, were eventually selected as projection surfaces. Small video cameras were also positioned underneath the half moon-like skirt of Barry to capture an otherwise hidden inside view of a duet being danced, and an image of Barry's moving legs.

The white dresses were built to be longer than life-size in order to "ground" the image of the dancers in one section in which they would be carried aloft. These were reminiscent of Victorian style bell-shaped hoop skirts (and which also looked like a half moon), the kind without heavy crinolines because supported by a lightweight framework (photo 8). The designer settled on using the high-tech materials used by champion kite-flyers, because it was at once very light and thin (I-DL). When viewed onstage and from the audience, this fabric appeared to be like some kind of delicate silk billowing at the slightest touch or movement but was actually more resistant than silk, which would have been damaged in the wear-and-tear of theatrical performances. A few props were also integrated for the dancers to sit on or manipulate: little milking stools, a wide bench, some fire-producing material, and balls.

4.4.4 Recuperation

The physical and mental intensity of these creative activities was balanced by allowing for recuperative activities to relieve the fatigue produced for the dancers (and other dance company members). Although these were informal or peripheral kinds of behaviors, they were regular and crucial occurrences throughout not only the creative process sessions but during all other phases of professional work time. These were evident in small micro-behaviors that were part of the everyday routines of dancers, and recuperative time periods that were officially incorporated into the company schedules and even into the choreography itself. Laurin was attentive to her dancers' capacities to produce work, and would regularly pause to ask them if they were able to keep on moving or if they needed a break.

Recuperative activities took various forms. At regular intervals, for instance, one group of dancers was given off-time while another group worked: "While Ginette works with a small group, the others are left free to chat or practice or even relax on the balls and mats" (FN: 10-2-00). Sometimes, for even if only for the briefest time, dancers would take advantage of little moments in which they could release tension: "[...] as soon as the dancers are not needed they move off to the side and do their own body work or practicing, even chatting with other dancers" (FN: 10-10-00). I also noted that the urgency and muscularity of the solos is tiring, tough and intense work and so each dancer finds small ways to release: a loud sound, a turn, shaking body parts (FN: 10-4-00). And yet another recuperative activity I observed was simple sitting quietly in stillness during creative sessions (FN: 10-16-00).

Whether engaged in creative process, rehearsing or performing, these contemporary dancers were called on to push the boundaries of their mental and physical stamina to the limit. Laurin, as many of them reiterated in interviews, was a very physical choreographer. And so it was that many

forms of recuperative activities were built into the work process and performance to allow them to continue, to avoid injury and to gradually build up the necessary strength and concentration required by the choreography.

4.4.5 Giving notes

Towards the end of nearly every creative work session and rehearsal in which there was a run-through of choreographic material, time was always allotted to the activity of “giving notes.” This was the time when *O Vertigo* dancers sat down together with Laurin and Brisson to review details of the dancing with the aim of correcting perceived errors, technical problems and nuances of interpretation and motivation (see photos 12, 13, and 14). As an example of this note-giving kind of exchange with the dancers, here is the moment when Laurin began to clarify the visual focus, movement qualities and motivation (the rare moment when specific motivation was given) of five overlapping solos:

Ginette: “It’s the same discourse you will [all] be making from the beginning to the ending, even when the dancer changes. You all have the same rhythm. There is something muscular. More accommodating. Feel the urgency. Tense and fast.” Anne: “Do we all have the same idea? What is the focus [of the eyes]?”

Ginette: “For some of you, the sideways glance is not yet in the right place. Look without turning your head. You are witnessing something. The same story, the same urgency.” Mélanie: “We have all lived the same experience ...” ^{xi} (FN: 10-4-00)

As Laurin gave notes, she brought back to mind what she had seen during the previous 3 or 4 hours of work, with the help of a few brief jottings

she had made. As she and Brisson spoke, the dancers sat spread out in a circle close by. The atmosphere was quiet and relaxed with daylight streaming in. Dancers responded to the notes usually by re-enacting the choreography in question in a new, corrected version. But they were otherwise stretching, lying down on the foam mats and balls, sitting in yoga postures, doing leg stretches and massaging each other (FN: 11-10-00).

I soon realized that these conversations were fertile opportunities to observe the dancers and artistic director at ease and conversing together as they clarified various aspects of the *Luna* choreography. It was there that the artists' aesthetic judgment came into play and the choreographic style of the dance was articulated with precision.

What the note-giving processes revealed specifically were the dynamics of Laurin's choreographic choices, her aesthetic preferences, the roles of each dancer in the group and in the dance. Choices were made during the note-giving sessions about what was "working or not working" in the movement, sequencing, timing, spatial orientation, and so on. The finest physical details and expressive qualities were reviewed and "corrected" to meet Laurin's satisfaction, even small things like the tilt of a head or height of a leg, or the "naturalness" in the flow of a certain motion or warmth expressed in a dancer's facial expression.

Dancers sometimes made suggestions or asked questions, but by-and-large it was Laurin who took the lead in decision-making. As will be frequently cited in the course of this study, Laurin infrequently went beyond technical instructions to the dancers to venture into matters of the meaning and motivation of the choreographic movements. As she was an Automatist dance-maker dedicated to intuition, she preferred to allow the dancers as well to exercise their intuitive selves rather than pinning them down to a single interpretation. As she stated it, "There is always work in which the dancers must implicate themselves in a particular way. [...] Take possession, in the

end, of their choreographic sections, see how they will interpret it. There is much place left to autonomy, in a certain way (I-GL2).^{xii} “

4.5 Dancing *Luna*

The dance movement, its staging and interpretation were at the epicenter of the *Luna* dance event. The following description of the dancing³ is not an attempt to seize a single authoritative account of *Luna* nor to undertake a comprehensive choreographic analysis, but to capture in words some of its salient features. And because some aspects of the dance are already discussed in other parts of this document, this section is intended to focus on the dancing and as a complement to the other writings. To enliven the reading of the following, there are videographed excerpts of several sections of *Luna* on the CD ROM included with this document (Appendix S).

The descriptions and interpretations in this section were culled from my own and other's observations of how the dancers danced at various times. Five key aspects of the choreography will be discussed below: (a) general themes and structure of the dance, (b) dancers' physical attributes and stage persona as evidenced in performance, (c) quantity and quality of the choreographic movements, (d) structural characteristics of the composition, (e) the mise en scène of the elements of video imagery, lighting, sound and costume design.

4.5.1 Themes and structure

Artistic collaborator Morgenthaler discussed the way in which he understood how themes function in the medium of dance:

³ Descriptive passages about the choreography in my field notes were written in three literary genres: my own everyday jargon, the terminology of Laban Movement Analysis and metaphoric imagery.

Well...I think in dance in general, I have to go a bit farther, because we are not talking about having a script [where] everybody reads the same text, we can talk about it. I'm in a physical space, it's all very abstract, and I think that's something that goes much larger than just one company. Then it becomes more of a balance of how people express their ideas within that field. Because, it's so large, you can have a theme, but you can have it from so many different angles. There's very little boundaries that you have. (I-AM)

In reference to the thematic content of *Luna*, the initial project proposal Laurin and Morgenthaler (Appendix I) wrote generally that they intended *Luna* be a kind of poetic meeting between a scientific study of the human body/mind and an artistic use of scientific lore about the moon and new video technologies. But, as Morgenthaler explained in the above excerpt, and in the abstract manner of contemporary artists, the themes proposed for *Luna* became a site for the expression of the ideas of the choreographer and her artistic collaborators. And in the framework of this study, I would include as well that ideas were projected into and onto the work by the other kinds of event participants as well.

During a studio rehearsal one day, I noted the way in which Laurin's choreography functioned this way, that is on multiple levels of meaning, when observing Riede and Lamothe working on a floor bound, rolling duet. The duo was intimate in the sense of being sensual, even reminiscent of lovemaking. But the movement was abstracted enough to suggest other interpretations as well, for instance vigorous play, a formal study of momentum, an intricate interweaving design of bodies, or even fighting (FN: 11-15-00).

The title *Luna*, chosen in the latter half of the creative process, emerged as a predominant theme and metaphor in the mind of choreographer, spectators and dance writers. To this purpose, scientific and poetic images about lunar phenomena were evoked through the choreography, costumes, sound, images and scenic elements. It was also evident (to my mind and that of spectators and dance writers in this study) that *Luna*'s inhabitants were not merely generic "dancing bodies" whose physiology was scrutinized as if a microscopic sample. They also interacted passionately and tenderly, emitted expressive vocal sounds, whispered secrets to each other and spoke to spectators with urgency. Although this was an abstract work that held no single authoritative, linear or literal narratives, the dancers were clearly engaged in fleeting moments of emotionally charged relationships of some kind. In other words, with the creation of *Luna*, Laurin had envisioned for her audiences an imaginary community of dancers that was at once playful, mysterious, humanistic, at times spiritual, and apparently "magically" transformed (by technological means).

As Sklar (2001) proposed, from her perspective as a dance anthropologist, "Sensory perceptions are molded by cultural epistemologies; abstract conceptualizations refer to culturally specific sensory orderings. All our actions in the world are at the same time interpretations of the world" (p. 4). Embedded in the themes and style of *Luna* was a contemporary discourse on the interface between science, art and humanity. Much more will be said about themes and their interpretation in the next two chapters on meaning.

4.5.2 Dancers' physical attributes and stage persona

The nine dancers who performed in *Luna* were chosen by Laurin (as are all her dancers) in view of creating a heterogeneous mix of physical attributes, movement trainings and qualities. Among the *Luna* dancers there were people of both sexes (a nearly equal number of men and women), several

visible nationalities and ethnicities, varied backgrounds in movement training and so movement qualities, and different body types. Touring agent Plukker (FN: 12-1-00), biographer Barras (1995) and Laurin herself (I-GL2) confirmed the importance of this company ethos that promoted a varied representation of the human form and personality. In his biography of Laurin (1995), Barras used the metaphor of a paint box with a wide range of colors to explain her inclination towards human pluralism, while Plukker admired what he felt was Laurin's political commitment to multiculturalism.

The *O Vertigo* dancers cultivated a trademark performance attitude, a particular facial expression that was taught to them by the choreographer during the creative process. Laurin called this "the inner smile" and described it as "[...] a warm grin that seems to emanate from a feeling of pleasure in the dancing" (FN: 8-9-00). This kind of upwards turn to the corners of the mouth caused *Luna* inhabitants to appear as emotional people who were warm, playful and seekers of sensual pleasures. The dancers were directed by Laurin to mask the effort of their dancing, to appear as if floating as they moved or were lifted upwards. In *Luna*'s dance world of effortlessness, pleasure and sensuality, pain and violence were nearly absent.

4.5.3 Quantity and quality of movements

[Laurin] moulds sensual landscapes from the human body. In a dynamic succession of choreographic sequences, the nine dancers are, in turn, matter and substratum, swept up in the flow of movements through a refined and complex gestural vocabulary. (Excerpt from www.overtigo.com, April 8, 2002)

As the company publicist confirmed on *Luna*'s website and in the press release, Laurin was a prolific movement inventor with an affection for

complexity, sensuality and a driving fluidity. *Luna* was a world in nearly continuous motion with sparse moments of stillness, suspended action or even the slow motion of sustainment (see video excerpts in Appendix R).

Luna in fact contained a large quantity of diverse actions that were so prolific that movements seldom seemed to be repeated twice. As mentioned in footnote 3, descriptive passages about the choreography in my field notes were written in three literary genres: my own everyday jargon, the terminology of Laban Movement Analysis and metaphoric imagery. To give but a small descriptive sampling from field notes of the variety and type of movements: "Movements are leaning, catching, jumping, shaking" (FN: 10-11-00); "Actions are rolling, twisting, balancing, flailing and flopping, pulling down, agitated rocking" (FN: 10-16-00); "Actions are lifting, jumps, tremors, leaps and more [...] Bodies floating and suspended in the air, getting thrown, shaken, caressed" (FN: 11-1-00). Each of the above action series describes a single movement phrase!

As well as full-bodied movements, I noted (particularly in solos) a proliferation of small hand and head gestures close to the body (Appendix S, video sequence of Rodrigue, Demers and Long). They suggested a kind of impressionistic story telling or animated sign language. Dancer's eye focus was usually directed outwards towards the audience, but occasionally toward fellow dancers.

As the choreography progressed on a daily basis, Laurin gave detailed notes to the dancers that specified very particular ways of doing the movement and occasionally advanced images that served to clarify the motivation and so the quality of certain movement phrases. It was during these note-giving sessions that I heard her voice with certainty her aesthetic preferences. Culled from a sampling of notes given to the dancers (FN: 20, 22, 25, 27-10-00 and 8,10-11-00) these are some of Laurin's recurrent aesthetic preferences, expressed in her own words: clarity, "clean" and precise timings and gestures, sharp (timing), fluidity and smoothness, seamless

linking together of movements, syncronicity of timing and body shapes (unison), getting the movement integrated deeply into the dancers' bodies, emotionally moving, more delicate than "raw", and moving with "controlled risk." It is no wonder that the dance specialists tended to speak of Laurin's work as tightly structured and precise.

Within each section of the choreography, fleeting dance phrases moved by quickly, often lasting only a few seconds (as if a metaphor for urban life). The quality of quickness was in fact prominent, and there was also a propensity for the airborne. But the actual technical difficulty of *Luna's* relentless movement and the considerable physical efforts of the performers were masked by the quality of lightness (and the gentle "inner smile" on the face of the dancers), giving much of the dance a floating quality as if in a dreamscape.

4.5.4 Structure of the composition

Luna was danced in a continuous stream of motion without pause that lasted for over 75 minutes. The structure of the dancing itself was a dense collage of distinct although seamless sections with overlapping transitions. The performance area was divided into a narrow upstage background area and downstage foreground area by the scrim curtain, defining two separate sites for stage action. Complex, ever-shifting spatial configurations of shapings, pathways and zones brought to mind the dynamics of kaleidoscopic images. Distinct sections of various lengths, listed on the cue sheet (Appendix K), along with number of dancers, were framed by dancers' exits and entrances into the side wings. The intimate one-on-one partnering of duets was clearly a predominant form for Laurin's explorations of human relationships. But there were also sections devoted to solos, trios, full company dancing and all other possible combinations of the nine dancers.

4.5.5 Mise en scène: video imagery, lighting, sound and costume design

Each kind of media introduced into the choreographic composition of *Luna* accentuated and heightened certain effects and themes of the dancing, increasing the density of choreographic content by adding more and more sensorial stimulation and conceptual propositions.

There were several kinds of scenic devices and visual media layered into the work, described in more detail in other parts of this document. For instance, during the second half of the dance, miniature video cameras and large optical lenses on stands (Photo 7, Appendix S video sequences and photos) were integrated, serving to frame, amplify and otherwise distort parts of the dancers' bodies and movements in close-up detail and "real time" (i.e. live). Video images were projected onto and from underneath Barry's skirt as well at various points, and others were created for a sequence close to the end and projected high up on the scrim: those of the dancers' faces moving expressively, looking as if free-floating in space and strangely distorted by the optical lenses.

The sound environment was composed of alternating classical and contemporary musical genres, drawing its sounds from several different historical periods⁴ (Appendix S video sequences). The human voice was also featured both prerecorded, and live. "Spoken word" media included counting, phrases invented by the dancers, excerpts from science journals, song lyrics, but also monologues that were mouthed but not sounded (speech with no sound). Dancers sang, used several Euro-American languages and Latin, whispered and marked time with a breathy sound poetry, at times appearing like some dancing chamber choir with a repertoire of nonsensical sounds and words.

⁴ The music sources were the works of composers Peter Scherer, Karl Friedrich Abel, Johannes Schenck, Main Marais, Tobias Hume, Vladislav Delay, Terre Thaelitz, Lithops, SND, t. Brinkmann, Noto, David Cunningham, Neina, and the Anonymous ensemble.

The first set of costumes was composed of two layers: everyday tops, pants and skirts with sculptural cuts. The first outerwear outfits were colored in taupes and beiges, and later removed revealing under layers (but not underwear!) of closer-cut garments in shades of red, green and blue. And finally, *Luna* will be long remembered for the huge white silky dresses billowing on their outsized Victorian crinoline frames like liquid half-moons (Photo 8, Appendix S video sequences and photos): “The effect is particularly fantastic, I found, when the women are lifted into the air and their lower body seems to get longer and the skirts larger as they fly aloft” (FN: 12-15-00).

The dance floor prepared for *Luna* was black with a marbled pattern of white, blue and purple splotches and streaks painted on and, as did the other stage elements, enhanced the thematic effect of the stage space as outer space – the sense that *Luna* took place somewhere out among the planets and stars. This colorful texturing of the standard back dance flooring was the lighting designer’s response to the challenge of a black light-absorbing surface, as he put it, “[...] in dance, the dance floor, it’s always black, it’s always ugly, a black dance floor with tape. So it’s a bad canvas for light” (I-AM].

4.6 Managing *Luna*

The initial planning activities described above moved into full-time project management for the *O Vertigo* staff as the time came when the creative work for *Luna* began with the dancers. These activities continued throughout the entire creative and touring periods. The general director along with his staff began to supervise the numerous tasks involved in the conception and realization of marketing and promotional plans and administrative system in support of the *Luna* project. Of the 1.3\$ million operating budget, about 70, 000\$ was set aside in a project budget specifically

for the needs of creating and presenting *Luna* (see budget in Appendix M). On a continuous basis, the general director needed to complete grant applications and negotiate contracts with dancers, collaborators, landlord, filmmaker, programmers and producers. Statistics on audience attendance had to be compiled for funders, press articles were translated, private showings of the work for interested programmers were organized, the press kit up-dated, and so on. During the two-year period I spent with *O Vertigo* in the field, most of the office staff and several of the dancers were hired by him to replace outgoing company employees.

At the same time, supplementary company projects were being managed at the same time as the *Luna* project: an annual summer dance workshop, other creation commissions, tours of past work, remounting of older work on other dance companies and plans to move the company to a new space. Generating and maintaining diverse company activities was part of Laurin's fundamental plan to assure the viability and continuity of her company and dancers:

The more activities that the company has, the bigger the annual budget and the more we can allocate money to creation and keep the dancers working longer. This generates profits, and for me the continuity is very important. I can't work project to project, that is to hire dancers for 20 weeks, do the creation, and then say 'see you in 30 or 20 weeks.' I have a lot of difficulty in working that way. It's certainly more difficult to maintain a team during 40 weeks, financially it's very demanding. But for me to maintain the aspect of continuity, the aspect of having a group that is very solid and that works together for a long period, is very important. ^{xiii} (I-GL1)

Publicity and promotional materials for *Luna* were conceived even while the dance was being created: posters (photo 10), flyers (photos 10 and 11), paper and electronic press kit (Appendix S), an announcement in the company newsletter, a new section on the *O Vertigo* website. The photograph of dancer Anne Barry, in which she stood poised upon a pedestal that was hidden by her silk hoop dress, became one of *Luna*'s emblematic poster images, “[...] the magic effect of seeing Anne's body as if it is floating in space, suspended and unsupported” (FN: 10-26-00). It reappeared on press releases, website and frequently also in the newspapers (photo 10), as did later a photograph of Antje Riede moving behind one of the optical lenses. The “hard copy” press kit folder was a deep green with copper colored lettering: testimony to a substantial budget allotted to creating high quality promotional materials that reflected the aesthetic beauty of *Luna* and prestige of *O Vertigo*. *Luna*'s CD ROM dossier (Appendix S) included the usual texts about the company, the work, and press excerpts, but added embedded video clips of the artists talking and the choreography in motion.

In the middle of the creative process, *O Vertigo* 's touring agent Menno Plukker set up a promotional booth for the company at the CINARS international arts marketplace event. This biannual trade fair of buyers and sellers of live performances was held in the elegant Queen Elizabeth Hotel ballroom in downtown Montréal from November 28- December 2, 2000 (photo 17). From their vantage point at the booth, *O Vertigo*'s agent and general manager were able to attract 60 contemporary dance presenters to the *O Vertigo* studios one afternoon, to meet Laurin and watch excerpts from the new work-in progress (photo 18 and FN: 12-1-00). Building relationships with potential and past dance presenters are an on-going activity for the general director and touring agent. Once an offer is made, the work of budgeting, fundraising, and tour planning has just begun.

4.7 Documenting *Luna*

More than either theater or music, choreographies are ephemeral phenomena, because in practice they are rarely captured on paper, and never in the comprehensive manner of a dramaturgical script or musical score. And so it was a challenge to create a concrete record of *Luna* that might be filed in an archive for dance historians or passed on to be reinterpreted by other dance companies⁵. The dance was conceived and “set” by the choreographer on the bodies and in the minds of her dancers. With her Automatist ethos that values spontaneous intuition, choreographer Laurin didn’t in fact compose on paper at all. Although over thirty dance notation genres exist as well as a common practice of inventing personal “short hand” recording systems for movement, no attempt was made by the *O Vertigo* dance company to create some kind of notated score as *Luna*’s permanent record.

So what kinds of material records of *Luna* do remain, however partial? During the period of creative process, several kinds of written traces and visual images of the dancing were made by various artistic participants. There were fragmented choreographic notes taken during the creative process period, written in various manners by the dancers, the choreographer and rehearsal director, and their artistic collaborators. And dance writers and presenters took notes about the dance even as they sat in the dark. Associate director of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*, Diane Boucher offered an explicit description and sample of her documentation techniques (Appendix J):

I drew the stage setting with little stick figures and a little stage plan, and what was on the stage. I have many of these

⁵ The possibility of creating a written score by an expert dance notator does exist for these kinds of dances. But it is a rare occurrence, and in the end only a partial (and somewhat subjective) record of the finished choreography. In practice, remounting a dance from such a score usually requires the direction of a dancer who has had a personal experience of the choreography.

little notebooks at my house. I make a drawing [...] and afterwards I always write about the same things: number of dancers, structure, decors, costumes. [These are] little points which allow me, as years go by, to remember what the piece was like. [...] The last few years, [...] I wrote little notes in the programs, things that occurred to me (as I watched)^{xiv} (I-DB)

As Boucher explained, these kinds of notes were intended to supplement her memory of the choreography.

Other kinds of written records included descriptive accounts of the *Luna* choreography that were permanently recorded and published by way of the texts written by critics and journalists who attended a performance. The choreographer, rehearsal and technical directors conceived an outline of the piece, a 'cue sheet', for practical purposes. This choreographic grid recorded the code names of each section of *Luna* (named by dancers and rehearsal director to give them a common language) in chronological order along with their respective durations (Appendix K). Along with this cue sheet, the publicity materials with information about the artists and choreography, described in the previous section – posters, press kits, etc. – were also among the permanently archived artifacts of the performance.

There was also a film made of the *Luna* choreography, conceived by dance filmmaker Lisa Cochrane and financed by the dance company for promotional purposes in March 2001, soon after opening night. From the dancers' point of view this filming was the permanent record that would remain long after *Luna*'s performances were over, as dancer Gould remarked when I asked him 'if it felt like a show', "Worse! It's for the cameras. For posterity's sake!" (FN: 3-3-01). In making this film, *Luna* was danced twice in front of three cameras positioned at different angles. It was later edited to appear as if a single on-going performance in continuous real time. Even

though the film provides a true-to-life visual and aural reproduction of the entire work from beginning to end, it does so necessarily from selective and partial angles of view. It provided a record of only one day's performance of *Luna*, early in its development and in a theater that was cramped in terms of the stage space necessary to accommodate its set and costumes. And as filmmaker Cochrane confessed to me that day, with two chances to shoot the piece, "It's the most stressful thing I've ever done. Three cameras! You miss it and it's gone." (FN: 3-3-01). Cochrane was confirming that the eye of even three cameras at once could not "see" and record everything.

4.8 Teaching *Luna*

The dancers taught sequences from the *Luna* choreography to dance students in workshops as the company toured (in Chicoutimi for example), to incoming company members as older company members left or took temporary leave of absence (I watched Rose coaching Nguyen), and to hopeful candidates at the company auditions (on September 16, 2000). And most significantly, in summer 2001 *Luna* "repertory" was taught to a large international gathering of professional dancers and dance students in the fourth annual *O Vertigo* Summer Workshop.

Students came from around the world to this annual summer workshop that took place over three weeks in the studios of the Dance Department of the *Université du Québec à Montréal* from August 5-25, 2001 (Appendix P). After speaking with a dozen or more students informally and in a focus group one day, it became clear that many had come because they had attended a performance of *O Vertigo* as they toured to their home city, and loved the company's work.

The workshop was at once a way of helping to finance the company, to offer *O Vertigo* dancers three extra weeks of employment, and to scout for

potential new dancers. Dancer Riede from the cast of *Luna* is herself a past workshop student who was invited to join the dance from her exposure to Laurin during a previous workshop like this one, and not during an audition.

The schedule was dense with classes, “an intensive,” with several different activity blocks each day. The students were divided into groups of 10 to 12, and assigned one or two teachers per block: (a) technique classes; (b) “body work” (e.g. Contact Improvisation, Aikido, Body Mind Centering©, and others); (c) a repertory class integrating *Luna* choreography and leading to a public performance; and (d) a video showing and lecture-demonstrations of company work. And so it was that once created, the *Luna* choreography became part of the *O Vertigo* “repertory” and was used as a pedagogical tool, among other things.

On August 8 and 10, 2000 during the summer workshop, I observed dancers Anne Barry and Chi Long teaching dance material from *Luna* to twelve students. They “taught the moves”, as they put it, by pulling apart movements and phrases into discrete components, and reconstructing them again bit by bit for the students to learn. They explained and analyzed the movement in many ways, among others by naming things and proposing qualitative images to provide motivation, for instance: Anne asked them to move “from tender to wild”; Chi coaxed them with “lighter, more like a game, think of the wonderment of the other person!” They discussed specific details with students, explained Laurin’s integration of audible breath sounds and “the inner smile,” and corrected the students’ right and wrong interpretations. The aim seemed to be get the students’ dancing to look as much as possible like the original, that is like “the Chi person and the Anne person.” (FN: 8-8-01 and 8-10-01)

In this way, the summer workshops were occasions for professional dancers from around the world to have closer contact with the *O Vertigo* aesthetic, and for company dancers and the choreographer to re-examine the choreography minutely. Laurin remarked, “[...] even the summer workshop

is a way of creating “^{xv} (I-GL1). I also realized that as the dancer-teachers searched to articulate and explain *Luna*’s aesthetic for others to learn, they revealed glimmers of their own understanding of the movement.

4.9 Presenting the performances

All of the creative processes, planning meetings, grant applications and other preparatory and auxiliary activities described above anticipated the dance event’s core moment. This is, of course, when an audience would be brought in to experience a performance of the finished choreography. During these public presentations all of the hard work came to fruition and the entire enterprise came to have meaning as a performing art and social occasion. And this is the moment when the dance reaches its potential as a theatrical experience, as dancer Chi Long exclaimed, “[...] you do it over and over again in the studio. But to do it in a theatre with strangers out there, and...just the adrenaline rush! So [the performance] goes to a ‘new place’ after the first show ‘cause you realize where it can go when it’s pushed. It can only be pushed this way when you’re doing a show” (I-CL).

During my fieldwork I observed four performances of *Luna*, three in Montreal and one in Chicoutimi theatres, from both backstage and audience vantage points. I also interviewed the dancers, dance presenters and reviewed media reports from performances that occurred during the first European tour and the New York City showing, gleaning more information about other presentations that had taken place. The following description portrays the activities common to all these *Luna* performances but also includes some of their unique characteristics and variants as well as and examples of specific occurrences that happened on particular nights.

4.9.1 Preparing for the performance and closing up afterwards

Preceding each of the public performances, the presenting organizations⁶ had already spent several months in preparation. In parallel with *O Vertigo*'s staff, the local host theater staff (along with the presenter in case they were not the same organization) negotiated contracts, secured housing, organized auxiliary activities (workshops, receptions, interviews, etc.), undertook a publicity campaign, and pre-sold some of the tickets for the upcoming performances of *Luna*.

Just prior to the arrival of the dance company at the theater space, the technical crew of the host theater, in cooperation with the technical director and technical staff of *O Vertigo*, had already finished the basic technical set-up for the *Luna* performance. Because of the high cost in mounting large-scale performances like *Luna*, this was often done quickly in a single day or less. The stage crew began by unloading the 20 travel boxes full of props, costumes and technical equipment. Among the tasks they accomplished were: hanging and focusing the lights according to the plot for the lighting design, wiring up the sound and video systems, hanging the scrim curtain, laying down the special dance floor, and getting the moon dress costumes ready backstage for a quick change.

As for the dancers, the afternoon before the evening performances were reserved for the dancers to adapt their movements to each new stage in a “spacing” rehearsal. They also engaged in a personal “warming up” routine for mind and body. For instance at the *Auditorium Dufour*: Riede massages her feet, Rodrigue sits and makes circles with her body in the air, Patrick lies on his back fully resting, Anne does sitting stretches (FN: 11-3-01). They later took time to dance the choreography full out in a “dress” rehearsal

⁶ *Luzerntanz* at *luzernertheater* in Lucerne, Switzerland on February 2 & 3, and 9 & 10, 2001; *Tanzhaus Die Werkstatt* in Düsseldorf, Germany on February 16 & 17, 2001; the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* at the *Monument-National* in Montréal, Québec on September 22 and 23, 2001; the *Joyce Theater* in New York City, USA from October 2-7, 2001; and a reprise Montréal performance produced by the festival again at the *Monument-National* from October 9-12, 2002.

before the audience arrived (on the first night only when there were two). There was often light banter and laughter throughout this process. Later in the dressing rooms around dinnertime one night at the *Salle Duvernay* for example, there was relaxed camaraderie, for example as I noted, "the dancers are comfortable being naked, dressing and undressing, together. They share their make-up with each other. Each has more than a dozen bottles of hair and skin stuff. The women are dressed in towels" (FN: 9-22-01).

Technicians continued to work alongside the dancers all afternoon to adjust and correct the technical systems and clean the stage once more before the performance. The schedule of activities for these afternoon periods at the *Salle Duvernay* is exemplary of these different kinds of preparatory tasks and their timing during the *Luna* tour:

Schedule for setting up and use of human resources

Saturday, September 22

1-2 PM	check sound levels with the dancers
2-4 PM	spacing rehearsal
4-4:30 PM	technical adjustments
4-6 PM	dress rehearsal
6-7 PM	dancers' dinner and make-up
7-8:30 PM	technician's adjustments, dancers' warm-up
8:30 PM	clean the stage
8:40 PM	close the curtain, open the doors to audience
9 PM	premiere of <i>Luna</i>
10:15 PM	end of the performance

Sunday, September 23

3-6 PM	possibility of working on the stage for dancers
6-7 PM	notes, technical checking
7-8:30 PM	call for everyone, verify lights and sound, dancers' warm-up onstage
8:30 PM	wash the stage
9 PM	<i>Luna</i>
10:15 PM- 12:30 AM	strike the show [take down and pack away] ^{xvi}

Towards the end of the afternoon, lobby staff began preparations to receive spectators in the waiting area at the building's entrance. The box office personnel got ready for the pre-show "rush" of audience members who hadn't previously purchased tickets, although they had been on sale for months. A house manager gave last-minute instructions to ushers and ticket takers. And at some of the venues like the *Salle Duvernay* and The Joyce Theater, but not the *Auditorium Dufour*, a café in the lobby area opened its doors, turned on the ambient music and opened the bar to serve the beverages to spectators before and after the performances (there was no intermission for *Luna*). A press table was set up in the lobby by a publicist, near the entrance to the theater space itself, in order to manage complimentary tickets, offer copies of the *Luna* press kits to dance specialists programmers and critics, and greet other specially invited guests. The doors to the venue were opened about one hour (or one half hour in some cases) before the performance was to begin, giving spectators time to buy last minute tickets, read programs, take a drink, go to the bathroom and to socialize a little.

Each evening the crowd of waiting spectators displayed a particular mood in response to various factors. For instance at the reprise performances in Montréal I noted that there was a large group of people entering and talking as I arrive, a steady stream of movement. The line-up at the door gave the festive feeling that a popular, important event was occurring. Some people were smiling or laughing, some quiet with seeming anticipation. I wondered what they had heard, read, or seen before about *O Vertigo*. There seemed to be a relatively big crowd, and I found out later that in fact the performance that night was almost sold out. (FN: 10-12-02)

And so it was that three layers of preparatory activities in three areas went on simultaneously: dancers warmed up and practiced choreographic sequences on the stage behind a closed curtain, technicians went about setting up their systems in the backstage and technical areas, and "house

management" staff sold tickets, served coffee and completed other tasks to serve the incoming audience that was entering the building's lobby.

At the end of the performance each night, I know from experience that the technical and house crews worked on closing up and putting away the performance materials, and the dancers removed their make-up and washed up. Performance equipment, stage set and props were either prepared once again for the next night's performance or packed away to be shipped out, as necessary.

4.9.2 The moment of performance

These three arenas of simultaneous activity -- onstage, backstage (and technical booth) and in the lobby ("the front of house") -- moved into an increasingly alert phase of readiness as the beginning of the performance ("curtain time") loomed near.

Technical directors and house managers finished their last minute checks of equipment and personnel and made the last minute call to audience and performers. The large stage curtains were still closed, ushers took their places, and a publicist gave a last glance at her press table and ticket list. The signal to open the doors to the inner sanctum of the house, for waiting spectators to enter, was given by the house manager. At the very same moment backstage, the dancers were finalizing details of their costumes and make-up.

Several minutes before the beginning of the performance, audience members left the lobby. They filed into the seating area of the theater, displaying their tickets to the usher surveying the entrance door as proof they had paid the price of entry or been officially invited. Then they searched for and found their pre-appointed places, and settled down in their seats where they would remain for the next hour and a half or so. In the last few minutes

before the curtain would be raised, the spectators began to read the programs given to them as they entered (Appendix F), and / or talk to their nearby companions, or again, some of them sat lost in thought in quiet anticipation. The programs offered a wealth of information to those who desired to read them: artists' biographies, profile of *O Vertigo*, duration of the choreography, a poetic text about *Luna* by Rober Racine, a statement about her work by choreographer Laurin names and functions of all dance company and venue employees, names of sponsors, and a photo from *Luna*. And for some of the venues, like at The Joyce, these programs were embedded in a small magazine produced by the venue and with advertising and short articles about other performances in the same season.

At the same moment, dancers, technical directors, stage crew and costume mistress were asked to take their starting positions for *Luna*. During the pilot study I noted the dancers' typically qualitative shift from relaxed pre-show behavior to alert, energized and concentrated states which, in terms of Laban Movement Analysis could be called bound flow, direct space and intensely activated stillness. (FN: 8-18-00)

The anticipated moment was about to begin. At three minutes until curtain time, the *O Vertigo* dancers were already onstage in a generally quiet and meditative mood. They made little last minute rehearsals of specific sections. Technical assistant Ouellette, from *O Vertigo*'s stage crew, gave a "one minute to curtain" call. I was sitting just behind him and heard him make the announcement on the microphone, and the technicians talking energetically to each other from Alain's headphones. *O Vertigo*'s costume mistress Danièle Lecourtois, stood poised in the wings in case of emergency, and to help with costume changes. (FN: 9-23-01)

All at once, the house lights dimmed over the house, plunging the audience into the darkness where they would remain until the end. The curtain opened to reveal the stage space, and the first image of the dance with dancers onstage (*Luna* didn't begin with an empty space). On one evening in

particular, I noticed an audible sound like a collective intake of breath coming from the audience at this moment. And because the curtains in these large theaters were massive, the curtain's motion – whether it was being pulled apart, lifted upwards, or a more elaborate draping – was in itself a dramatic phenomenon. It was then that participants' attitudes towards time, space, and effort (in the Laban sense of qualitative attention and emotion) shifted in seconds from the everyday to the extra-ordinary. At the *Salle Duvernay* one night, I noted my own experience of the performance's beginning from my backstage corner: "[...] gentle and soft [...] a low light blinds me [...] the dancing begins and it is suddenly mesmerizing." (FN: 9-23-01)

During the next hour and fifteen minutes of the *Luna* performance, the attention of all participants in the theater space was drawn towards the illuminated three-sided performance space where the dancers were on display: the stage. This performance area quickly became hotter and brighter, from the heat and intensity of lighting instruments, than the surrounding house and backstage. When watching from backstage, I found the brilliance of the stage lights almost painful and the heat they gave off caused me to sweat. (FN: 9-6-00)

The audience's attention fixated on the stage. In all venues, they invariably fell into a collective stillness and silence, as demanded by the decorum of these kinds of performances. During the show the audiences made only the slightest of sounds and motions (FN: 8-18-00). Thus communing with fellow spectators in the dark, they witnessed the expressive goings on in *Luna*'s choreographic universe. (In a later chapter they will reveal some of what they were thinking and experiencing as they watched.) I looked around me at in the *Salle Duvernay* in Montréal one night to catch a glimpse of how that particular public was watching. I observed their physical positions and intuited their psychological states:

Each one had assumed a watching posture, some with head cocked sideways, others with a hand supporting their head. A child talks out loud and we all struggled not to draw our attention away from the dancing. Someone makes a loud coughing sound. We all kept trying to stay fully 'inside' the stage action. (FN: 10-12-02)

As the audience watched, technicians worked vigorously backstage and invisible to the audience as they attended to the mechanics of stagecraft. As previously mentioned, the entire stage and backstage area was kept separate from the part of the building reserved for spectators, to the point where artists and technicians even entered from a different set of doors than the audience – the “artists’ entrance.” From my vantage point in the offstage wings one night I described the backstage activity at the *Salle Duvernay* as an “inner frame” with ladders, hidden mechanisms and activities, filled with costumes discarded and changed and dancers at attentive rest in the wings (FN: 9-23-01). Laurin described *Luna*’s backstage activities from her point of view:

For the dancers [...] this is a piece that is very complex in the wings. [...] There is a lot of movement. Move the microphone. Carry the microphone, rapid change, take off the dresses, put the dresses aside because the wings are small...There is all of this aspect that is also part of the choreography, and you mustn’t lose your concentration. When you go out onto the stage [it’s important to know] how to keep the thread intact.^{xvii} (I-GL2).

All of this technical activity was minutely controlled by the technical director through headphones communicating to the technical crew who were

in various positions around the stage. He “called the cues” with a ready-and-go from a cue sheet in coordination with key moments in the stage action.

I also focused my attention on the dancers as they exited offstage, ever so close to me at the times when I stood in the wings. They each had a personal way of using the momentary offstage time for recuperation as they waited to move on again: some were relaxed and casual, at attention with a wide stance, practicing a form of meditation, racing for time during a costume change, drinking water, alert, sitting, rocking and swaying, or doing little exercises (FN: 9-23-01).

All the while, the dancers transmitted from the stage and through their bodies and minds, the complex, poetic choreography of *Luna* that the choreographer had confided in them. Their attention was directed out towards the audience, which was completely invisible to them in the darkness (as I confirmed from backstage). If the *Luna* audience wasn’t visible, the dancers did indeed perceive their presence, as dancer Riede mused for instance:

It’s a very special place, the performance. Just the fact that so many people are watching us brings us into a completely different state of mind that’s very special and very rare. You know? It’s almost like a gift that I’m getting from the audience. And then it makes me available to them and to myself in a very intense way. (I-AR)

At the same time, the dancers were necessarily giving some of their attention as well to the synchronization and interaction of their movements with that of their fellow dancers onstage and with the technical effects going on around them as they danced. What I found most fascinating was the transformation of the dancers’ state-of-being as they passed through the barrier between being on and offstage. During the pilot project I observed one of these

moments: “Mélanie walks slowly towards the stage from the wing, transforming her energy from that of waiting to entering. It’s an intensifying, sharpening, thickening of psychic and physical energy” (FN: 8-18-00).

The dance came to an end as the onstage lights faded out to black and the curtain closed. With these technical cues, the ending to *Luna* was made clear. All audiences I observed reacted with little hesitation as they began to applaud⁷. It was at this moment that each spectator emerged suddenly from their state of meditative stillness and silence to express with their bodies and voices their degree of satisfaction with the performance. In his poetic essay “Understanding Ovation” poet Gilbert (2001) proposed that “applause is a public ritual, governed by elaborate codes and conventions [...] an intricate mesh of sonic filaments (that) connects every person in the hall to one another” (p. 15). From hundreds of personal experiences with applauding, I can state with confidence that the custom at contemporary dance performances in North America usually allows for several types of expression with varying degrees of intensity: clapping, standing (the ovation), and vocal sounds that vary from culture to culture (whistling and calling out “Bravo!” for instance is common in Québec). Presenters and dance critics assessed the relative enthusiasm or coolness of the audience in terms of the qualities of their applause for *Luna*.

As the applause began, the curtains reopened and dancers and choreographer came forward from backstage to bow to spectators in appreciation and thanks. It was here, as I noted, that they shifted their performance personas from those of *Luna* dancers to revealing their “real” selves as performers (FN: 8-18-00). At the *Auditorium Dufour* in Chicoutimi, for instance, I watched the performance from the middle of the auditorium. I noted that the audience seemed particularly still and silent during the performance, but that there was a strong wave of applause at the end with a

⁷ The case of the New York audience’s exceptionally quiet reaction, according to presenter Wexler (I-MW) was due to the proximity of their performance to the September 11 World Trade Center tragedy.

spontaneous standing ovation and whistling. Almost every single person rose on their feet yelling and yelping (FN: 11-3-01). And from dancer Long's point of view, the applause in Lucerne and in Düsseldorf were the crucial moments when she could finally try to discern each audience's particular reactions to the dance and her dancing:

The audience [in Lucern] was actually very generous, they seemed to really like the show because they clapped a lot, you know. Sometimes it's really hard when you don't actually speak to them afterwards but you just have the applause to go by and you're trying to judge, 'OK, is this polite applause or is this really...' [...] I'd heard that the Swiss are a difficult audience, a little cold. [The Düsseldorf audience] was very appreciative too. It was very interesting to see how people reacted. They would sort of clap a lot and get excited [...] it was like, okay, this is how people react to the piece. (I-MD)

On this first European tour of *Luna*, the audience reaction was also described as positive and enthusiastic by Lucern dance producer Walter Heun. He had long been a supporter and commissioner of *O Vertigo*'s work. In his written reply to my emailed interview questions he described and contextualized the enthusiasm of his local audiences' reactions:

The audience [of Lucern Theater] absolutely loved the piece. We had all kinds of reactions, from stomping feet to standing ovations. We presented the piece to an audience of approximately 2,000 people (in a city of 55,000 inhabitants). [...] *Luna* is one of the best-received performances we did in Lucerne. (I-WH)

In Chicoutimi, rather than leaving the theater directly after the performance or sitting down in a café with dance-going companions to talk about their experiences, the audience was given the option to join programmer Beaulieu in a post-performance talk with the artists. At the last minute she decided to hold it in a small room set up as a café, just off the lobby. All of the dancers, the rehearsal and executive directors were in attendance, but Laurin was immersed in a personal crisis at that time and didn't travel to Chicoutimi at all. Beaulieu began by introducing the dance company members to about 25 audience members, and proceeded to inject terse comments about the dancers' training and how hard they had to work at their métier of dancing. Her own interests in dance, from evidence of this conversation with the audience, seemed to lie mainly in the technical quality of the dancing and choreography rather than choreographic form and content. Spectators asked the dancers if the music was recorded, commented on effects of the choreographic elements and themes, asked about the challenges of dancing and the processes of creating *Luna*, reminisced about past performances. *O Vertigo* dancers gave details about their training, expressed their views on the questions. (FN: 11-3-01 and 11-4-01)

4.9.3 Touring and continued performing

The company toured *Luna* for over two years to cities near Montréal for only a few days, and also in blocks of time as long as one month for the residency and premiere in Lucerne. During these periods, they lived with fellow company members day and night while traveling, setting up, performing, and rehearsing together away from home.

Dancer Chi Long characterized the dynamics of touring as "we go on tour and we just do our show [...] having to look for restaurants every night." The relatively longer duration of their residency in Lucerne had finally allowed her to be "in an apartment [...] you know, like making your little life

in a different city" (I-D). The necessity to travel for extended periods and on a regular basis is part of the demands of being a member of *O Vertigo* dance. In the case of *Luna* they gave over 80 performances in all in their home city and on tour. As Laurin told me, the company survives economically, in part, through commissions granted to them by non-Montréal dance presenters, and there is not enough potential audience in Montréal to keep them performing the work at home for more than a few performances, as was the case with *Luna* (I-GL1).

Several kinds of "polishing" and "refreshing" rehearsals continued throughout the touring period of *Luna*. During the two years that *Luna* was on tour, other company activities (the summer workshop and commissions for other creations) and time-off periods intervened, requiring work sessions in which details of the choreography were reviewed, and the dance refreshed in the dancers' memories after a hiatus. My most prolific informant, dancer Rodrigue exclaimed one day to me that the "real work for the dancers" on the dance material really only begins after opening night when they "discover the small things that expand and enrich the work." She continued that "work on the choreography that begins after opening night is much the dancers' responsibility, with Laurin supervising and the rehearsal director always present" (FN: 6-6-00). And so these rehearsals, along with continuing performances, became further sites for the dancers' contribution to *Luna*'s aesthetic.

Laurin described the transformation of *Luna* during repeated performances in different theatres as a cultivation of the dancers' "interior garden" (or *jardin intérieur* in the original French), a concept discussed earlier. She admits that there is a continual transformation of the work, but that this evolution must keep alive the memory of the essence that was found by each dancer at the beginning. And there was also the necessity to integrate new dancers (Nguyen replaced Rose during the first *Luna* tour for instance), and

adaptation of the dancing to the unfamiliar environment of each new theater space and stage. (I-GL1)

4.10 The last dance and the after-life of *Luna*

It was not possible to locate a final, absolute ending for the *Luna* project and dance event. But a reasonable and dramatic ending point with which to finally frame this study of the *Luna* event emerged unexpectedly one day in a wonderful email. It was from my ever so generous informant Rodrigue, writing to me about her next artistic project only a few days after the last performance of *Luna*. On the same correspondence, she wrote about the wonderful way in which the *Luna* project came to a close one night:

You know that last Saturday we gave the very last performance of *Luna* in Prague and something marvelous happened. There was an eclipse of the moon that evening. I won't tell you how we all felt! We said goodbye to *Luna*, and for many of us, to *O Vertigo*. A new stage begins [...]. (Marie-Claude Rodrigue, email correspondence, November 10, 2003)

This last performance marked the official administrative end of a two-year cycle in the *O Vertigo* calendar of the *Luna* project and its performances. A new creative session for Laurin's next piece (announced simply at this point as *Création 2004*) was about to begin. And for Rodrigue it was a real ending in another way as well, for she was among the five dancers who were leaving the company after the last performance of *Luna*.

There was always a possibility that, like previous choreographies of *O Vertigo*, *Luna* might be revived by invitation or set onto another other dancers, as was the case when I first entered the field. Rodrigue explained to

me that the summer of 2000 had marked a new stage for the company in rebuilding past repertory (FN: 8-2-00). Laurin explained that she conceived of the company as one that primarily does research and creation, rather than revivals. But she added that on an occasional basis certain choreographies had been recreated at a later time and for dancers other than her company members (I-GL1).

What actually were the remains of the *Luna* event, if the performance was nothing but an ephemeral phenomenon that existed in and for the moment? In the sections of this chapter on documentation and management activities, I described various kinds of material traces of *Luna* that were brought into existence by participants: artists' and presenters' notes, a film, a CD ROM and press kit, posters and programs, budgets, grant applications and reports. Some of these were published and remain as a permanent public record, others filed away in the dance company archives. And it is feasible, because the practice is common and Laurin a major artistic figure in Québec, to presume that at a later time dance students might undertake research about *Luna* and dance researchers inscribe *Luna* into dance history books.

But immaterial images and ideas concerning *Luna* also continued to exist in the consciousness of participants after this last presentation was over and its materials packed away. Traces of this dance performance will likely remain and continue to live on in the consciousness of spectators and the bodies (literally their "muscle memory") and minds of the dancers who danced it. One thing is certain and even customary in the framework of the dance research community for which this dissertation has been written. This ethnographic study of *Luna* will inevitably become a permanent part of the dance research community through the availability (on microfilm) of this doctoral dissertation that I also have the intention to disseminate through consequent publications, conference papers and further research projects. This doctoral dissertation is, after all, an artifact of the *Luna* dance event.

4.11 Conclusion

How is it possible to pull together all the threads of these activities into a coherent scheme? Ronström (1989) put forward the idea that all dance event activities are organized around the “participants’ common perceptual focus” of the dancing, in this case the performances of the *Luna* choreography. And so perhaps it is useful to think of the complex web of activities described above as those that were necessary to bring the performance of *Luna* into being and to maintain it. In other words, at the onset Laurin needed to imagine the dance, then have the means to employ a company of dancers and the personnel to create and perform it, presenters had to provide a theater space with all of its amenities and attract spectators to the performances, and so on.

Another way to think about the wealth of goings on at the *Luna* dance event is as a chronological progression from preparation, to enactment, followed by the aftermath of its effects. In this temporal organization of the activities the event might be seen to begin with the first inspiration in the mind of Laurin. It would then be a matter of following its development, at many simultaneous strata, until the dance is performed for the last time and resonates in its aftermath. This calls attention, for instance, to the parallel work of the *O Vertigo* company artists and personnel in the creation of *Luna* and its promotional materials. And the moment of performance calls for the labor of dancers, technicians and the venue staff at the same time as the audience does its own work of perceiving and interpreting *Luna* while sitting quietly in the dark.

Both of these perspectives contributed to the structure of this chapter. But no matter how the various activities of the *Luna* event are ordered and organized into schematic relationships, what strikes me is the sheer

interdependence – despite the crucial role of Laurin -- of these various actions and interactions, which together form the whole.

Original French texts

ⁱ “[...] généralement, nos pièces ont un cycle de trois ans. Un an pour la créer – je parle ici de la période avec les danseurs – et deux autres années de diffusion.” Ginette Laurin

ⁱⁱ “[...] aussitôt que l'autre est mise sur scène.” Ginette Laurin

ⁱⁱⁱ “En fait, je ne sais pas comment ça se fait, mais c'est vraiment ça. Je suis assise le soir de la première, je regarde le spectacle et je me dis ‘ma prochaine pièce, ça va être ça.’” Ginette Laurin

^{iv} “[...] le C.A. est constitué des personnes qui sont plus au niveau artistique, d'autres affaires, communications, et moi ma fonction c'est de m'assurer que Ginette soit défendue artistiquement. Parce que dans un C.A., on peut avoir tendance, des fois, à aller du côté des affaires pour rentabiliser la compagnie – on coupe trois semaines de salaire et on envoie les danseurs au chômage, ou on ne fait pas de chorégraphie.” Claude Gosselin

^v “[...] un moment donné, en studio avec les danseurs, on a découvert qu'il y avait une dimension où on s'approchait de l'infiniment grand, avec l'idée de la création de l'univers. Les planètes étaient présentes probablement à cause de la rondeur des éléments scéniques et de la technique d'optique qu'on utilisait, qui est un procédé très ancien qui a servi à découvrir justement le fonctionnement des planètes et la création de l'univers. Alors, ça nous a ramené à ce phénomène. J'ai décidé de rencontrer un astrophysicien.”

Ginette Laurin

^{vi} “[...] la période de création est longue, toute seule il y a une période qui peut prendre un an. Juste à penser, trouver des inspirations et se laisser pénétrer du sujet. Après, il y a un travail de production, la recherche des collaborateurs, la création de l'environnement scénique, le compositeur.”

Ginette Laurin

^{vii} “[...] je crois que plein de choses nous arrivent et que nous ne sommes pas conscients des possibilités qui s'offrent à nous. [...] je suis assez précise avec la thématique que je veux explorer, la façon de le faire est assez ouverte et laisse quand même de la place aux interprètes. Je suis aussi très directive avec le mouvement, mais ma façon d'intégrer le mouvement à la situation est très automatiste. Un peu dans la veine des peintres automatistes.” Ginette Laurin

^{viii} “Pour moi, cette création-là, dans la salle de répétition, s'est faite avec une facilité et une douceur que je n'avais pas rencontrées avant.” Jocelyn Proulx

^{ix} “[...] elle nous dit comme dans un rêve ‘J'aimerais que tu prennes la fille et qu'elle vole derrière ton dos. ’ Puis nous, on doit trouver une façon. [...] Elle donne quand même la prise plus ou moins, la façon de prendre la partenaire, comment elle voit la personne en l'air [...] (et) on essaie ‘d'être automatiste’, on essaie de trouver la façon la plus spontanée.” Marie-Claude Rodrigue

^x “[...] la haute technologie de ce spectacle a été très demandant par rapport à d'autres spectacles [...] on ne savait pas quoi faire avec ça, on n'avait pas

d'idée précise au départ. Les choses les plus intéressantes de ce spectacle ont été trouvées vers la fin. Il n'y a pas eu vraiment de processus de création technique parallèle à la [création de la] danse." Jocelyn Proulx

^{xii} Ginette: "C'est le même discours que vous faites du début jusqu'à la fin, même si vous avez changé de danseur. Vous avez tous le même rythme. Il y a quelque chose de musculaire. Plus intransigeante. Ressentir l'urgence.

Tense and fast." Anne: "Est-ce qu'on a tous la même idée? Quel est le focus [des yeux]?" Ginette: "Pour certaines, le regard d'à côté n'est pas encore placé. Regarder sans tourner la tête. Vous témoigner de quelque chose.

Même histoire, même urgence." Mélanie: "On a vécu la même expérience..."

^{xiii} "Il y a toujours un travail où les danseurs doivent s'impliquer d'une façon particulière. Prendre possession, finalement, de leur partie chorégraphique, voir comment ils vont l'interpréter. On laisse beaucoup de place à l'autonomie, d'une certaine façon." Ginette Laurin

^{xiv} "Plus la compagnie a des activités, plus le budget annuel est grand et plus on peut allouer d'argent à la création et plus de semaines où on peut maintenir les danseurs. Ça génère des profits et pour moi, la continuité est très importante. Je ne pourrais pas travailler à projet, c'est-à-dire engager des danseurs aux 20 semaines, faire la création et leur dire qu'on se revoit dans 30 semaines ou dans 20 semaines.' J'ai beaucoup de difficulté à travailler de cette façon-là. C'est certain que c'est très difficile aussi de maintenir une équipe pendant 40 semaines, financièrement c'est très demandant. Mais pour moi, de maintenir l'aspect de continuité, l'aspect de groupe qui est vraiment très solide, et qui travaille longtemps ensemble est très important." Ginette Laurin

^{xv} "Je dessinais la mise en scène, avec des petits bonhommes et un petit plan de scène et qu'est-ce qui avait sur la scène. J'ai plein de petits cahiers chez moi. Je fais un dessin [...] et après j'écris toujours les mêmes choses: le nombre de danseurs, structure, décors, costumes. Des petits points qui me permettent, au fil des années, de me souvenir de quoi à l'air la pièce. [...] Les dernières années, [...] j'écris sur les programmes, des petites notes. Des choses qui me viennent à l'esprit..." Diane Boucher

^{xvi} " [...] même le stage d'été est une façon de créer." Ginette Laurin

^{xvii} "Horaire de montage et des ressources humaines

samedi, 22 septembre

12h30 arrivée des danseurs

13h à 14h niveau son avec danseurs

14h à 16h *spacing*

16h à 16h30 raccords techniques

16h à 18h général

18h à 19h souper et maquillage

19h à 20h30 raccords techniques et réchauffement

20h30 nettoyage du plateau

20h40	fermeture du rideau, ouverture des portes
21h	première <i>Luna</i>
22h15	fin du spectacle

dimanche, 23 septembre

15h à 18h	possibilité de travail sur scène
18h à 19h	notes, raccords, répétition (danseurs)
19h à 20h30	appel pour tous, vérification (éclairages, son) réchauffement sur scène
20h30	lavage du plancher
21h	<i>Luna</i>
22h15 à 00h30	démontage"

horaire rédiger par Jocelyn Proulx

^{xvii} "Pour les danseurs [...] C'est une pièce très complexe en coulisses. [...] il y a beaucoup de déplacements : déplacer le micro, apporter le micro, changement rapide, enlever les robes, tasser les robes parce que les coulisses sont petites... Il y a tout cet aspect qui fait aussi partie de la chorégraphie, il ne faut pas perdre sa concentration. Quand on revient sur scène, comment garder le fil." Ginette Laurin