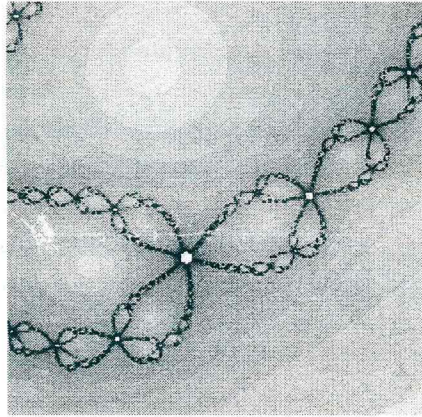


bennington college dance program presents

The Emergent Improvisation Project



March 17 & 18, 2006
Friday & Saturday 8 PM
Martha Hill Dance Theater



Artists

Direction	Susan Sgorbati
Special Assistance and Tour Coordination	Katie Martin
Musical Direction	Jake Meginsky
Lighting Design	Michael Giannitti
Costume Design	Amelia Powell
Visual Design	Jon Isherwood
Dancers	Carson Efird, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Katie Martin, Nicole Pope, Susan Sgorbati, Zornitsa Stoyanova, and Keith Thompson
Musicians	Sean Mattio, Jake Meginsky, and John Truscinski
Interactive Designer, Photography	Paul Kyle
Graphic Design	Charlotte Sullivan

The Emergent Improvisation Project

The Emergent Improvisation Project is a research project into the nature of improvisation in dance and music. In this context improvisation is understood to mean the spontaneous creation of integrated sound and movement by performers who are adapting to internal and external stimuli, impulses and interactions. Ordinarily, we think of order and form as externally imposed, composed or directed. In this case, however, new kinds of order emerge, not because they are preconceived or designed, but because they are the products of dynamic, self-organizing systems operating in open-ended environments.

This phenomenon - the creation of order from a rich array of self-organizing interactions - is found not only in dance and music, but also, as it turns out, in a wide variety of natural settings when a range of initial conditions gives rise to collective behavior that is both different from and more than the sum of its parts. Like certain art forms, evolution, for example, is decidedly improvisational and emergent, as is the brain function that lies at the heart of what it is to be human.

Emergent forms appear in complex, interconnected systems, where there is enough order and interaction to create recognizable pattern but where the form is open-ended enough to continuously bring in new differentiations and integrations that influence and modify the form. It is by way of these interactions that particular pathways for the development of new material are selected.

In linking the creative work of art-making to the emergent processes evident in nature, there is basis for a rich and textured inquiry into how systems come together, transform and reassemble to create powerful instruments of communication, meaning and exchange. This project explores the ways in which natural processes underlie artistic expression along with the possibility that art can help illuminate natural processes.

1 The Complex Unison Form

The Complex Unison form is based on the observation of natural systems, which exhibit self-organizing structuring principles. In this form, open-ended processes are constantly adapting to new information, integrating new structures that emerge and dissolve over time. Complex Unison reveals the progression of closely following groups of individuals in space, to the unified sharing of similar material, and finally to the interplay of that material, which has both a degree of integration and variation, often displaying endlessly adaptive and complex behavior.

Dancers	Carson Efird, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Katie Martin, Nicole Pope, Zornitsa Stoyanova, Keith Thompson
Musicians	Sean Mattio, Jake Meginsky, John Truscinski

pause

2 The Emergent Duet Form

The Emergent Duet is a performance form for a dancer and musician that reveals the dynamic and open-ended expression of sound and form in flux. Each performer has identified a particular kinetic and sonic vocabulary that exhibits unique qualities of the individuals, such as intrinsic vibrations and tonality of the body or a gestural, rhythmic and spatial language. A developmental structure comes out of working with this material and in collaboration, results in the discovery and investigation of an emergent form.

Emergent Duet 1

Dancer	Keith Thompson
Musician	Sean Mattio

Emergent Duet 2

Dancer	Katie Martin
Musician	Jake Meginsky

pause

3 The Memory Form

In this form, the dancers and musicians create an event that is remembered by the ensemble, and then reconstructed over time, revealing memory as a complex structuring process. This process by the dancers and musicians investigates multiple interpretations that draw on signals that organize and carry meaning. In this way, memory of the initial event is a fluid, open-ended process in which the performers are continuously relating past information to present thinking and action. This reintegration of past into present draws on repetition, nonlinear sequencing, and emergence to construct new adaptations. The Memory Form was inspired by the concept, - the remembered present - of Dr. Gerald Edelman.

Dancers	Carson Efird, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Katie Martin, Nicole Pope, Zornitsa Stoyanova, Keith Thompson
Musicians	Sean Mattio, Jake Meginsky, John Truscinski

pause

4 Coda

An Emergent Duet

Dancer	Susan Sgorbati
Musician	John Truscinski



A Note from Susan Sgorbati

This work is in the early stages of research and is leading me to new ways of teaching, composing and performing. Over the past three years, my conversations with scientists, particularly Dr. Gerald Edelman, Dr. Anil Seth, and Dr. John Iverson of The Neurosciences Institute, and Dr. Stuart Kauffman of The University of Calgary, have introduced me to the idea that, in living systems, self-organization produces complex structures that emerge dynamically. This idea has resonated with my own work in improvisation and has led me to speculate that there are deep, structuring principles that underlie a vast range of phenomena, producing similar evolving patterns in different environments: dancers collecting, birds flocking, visual representations of neuronal networks. Movement appears to be a fundamental component of all living processes and we, as dancers, are moving and experiencing our own emergent sense of organization in this process.

Susan Sgorbati

Susan Sgorbati has been seriously investigating improvisation as a method for teaching and performance for twenty years. For the last five years in collaboration with scientists, she has been exploring the relationship between dance and music improvisation and complex systems. Her work has led her to three residencies at The Neurosciences Institute in La Jolla, California under the tutelage of Dr. Gerald Edelman and a dialogue with Dr. Stuart Kauffman, who was in residence at Bennington College in the fall of 2004. Susan Sgorbati is on the Dance Faculty at Bennington College, where she was the former Dean of Faculty, and has been teaching since 1983. She created the improvisational ensemble "Materia Prima", which has performed at The Improvisation Festival in New York City, Improvised and Otherwise in Brooklyn, New York, and other venues nationally. She has done a series of residency workshops with the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts for the last several years, and she is indebted to them for their support of her new work. She is also a professional mediator, who mediates cases for the Vermont Attorney General's Office and the Vermont Human Rights Commission. She holds The Barbara and Lewis Jones Chair for Social Activism at Bennington College. In 1999, she created Quantum Leap, a program that reconnects at-risk youth to their education. She was recently awarded The 1st Annual David G. Rahr Community Service Award from The Vermont Community Foundation.

About the Artists

Carson Efrid

Carson was born and raised in the Carolinas. After graduating from Bennington College in June 2005, she moved to Raleigh, NC. Carson currently teaches Yoga and works as a collaborative artist in the realms of dance, theater and design. Her choreography has been presented at the D.U.M.B.O Festival (Brooklyn), Danspace's Afterschool Series (NYC), and ACDDA's 2004 Gala (Smith College, MA). Carson has had the pleasure of working with Susan Sgorbati, Dana Reitz, Keith Thompson, Ann Carlson, and Jean Randich.

Michael Giannitti

Michael Giannitti designed lighting for August Wilson's play Joe Turner's Come and Gone on Broadway, as well as the pre-Broadway resident theatre tour. He has designed extensively at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Trinity Rep, Capital Rep, Shakespeare and Company, Weston Playhouse, and The Studio Theatre in Washington, where he was recently named resident lighting designer. He's also designed for Indiana Rep, George Street Playhouse, Jomandi, Yale Rep, Olney and other theatres. New York dance lighting credits include Dance Theatre Workshop, Danspace, The Joyce, The Kitchen, and P.S. 122 for works by Susan Rethorst, Everett Dance Theatre, Marta Renzi, and Cathy Weiss; additional regional venues include the Spoleto Festival, Walker Art Center, Hopkins Center, Flynn Theatre, and Bates Dance Festival. Mr. Giannitti has been on the faculty at Bennington College since 1992, where he also is the production manager. As a Fulbright Senior Specialist Grant recipient, he taught at the National University of Art, Theatre and Cinema in Bucharest, Romania, and will be teaching at the New Zealand Drama School in summer 2006.

Jon Isherwood

Jon Isherwood's work is widely exhibited in public museums and private galleries around the U.S., Europe, and Canada. He is the recipient of a Jerome Foundation Fellowship, a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of New York at Plattsburgh. Recent solo exhibitions include: the John Davis Gallery, New York; the Maiden Lane Exhibition Space, New York; the C. Grimaldis Gallery, Baltimore; the Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum, Ohio; and the Sculpture Court in Southampton, New York.

In 2002, he was featured in an exhibition of 21st Century British Sculpture at the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice. Group shows include: Art Omni Sculpture Park, Ghent, New York; the Derby City Museum, Derby, England; the Kunsthalle, Manheim, Germany; and Usdan Gallery at Bennington College. Reviews and articles include: The New York Times, The Washington Post, ArtNews, Sculpture Magazine, Partisan Reviews, The Philadelphia Enquirer, The Baltimore Sun, and The Guardian, in England.

Jon received a B.A. from Canterbury College of Art, an M.F.A. from Syracuse University, and other studies at Leeds College of Art. Since 1999, he's been a Core faculty member of Bennington College.

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko is a Philadelphia-based movement and literary artist currently creating interdisciplinary work that merges language, movement and video. He holds a BA from Bennington College with a concentration in dance, literature, and visual art. There, he studied under the prominent instruction of Terry Creach, Pooh Kaye, Dana Reitz, Keith Thompson, and Susan Sgorbati. He has performed in the choreographic works of various artists including Ann Carlson, Yoshiko Chuma, Lisa Kraus, and Richard Seigal. Kosoko has shown his own dances and

dance-films at Bennington College, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Danspace at St. Mark's Church. Currently, he creates programming for inner-city youth as the North South Area Teen Outreach Specialist for the Free Library of Philadelphia. He spends his summers at the American Dance Festival working as an arts administrator.

Paul Kyle

Paul is an interactive designer and video artist living in North Bennington, VT. Paul has shown in New York City, NY and Los Angeles and Santa Cruz, CA, including shows at Jonathon Schorr Gallery and CBGB's 313 Gallery in NYC. Before his current role as Audio/Video Technician at Bennington College, Paul was Technical Director for Crush Digital Video and V.P. of Production for Zuma Digital, both in NYC. Paul contributed to the books Apple Pro Training Series: DVD Studio Pro 2 & 3 as Lesson Designer and DVD Architect. Paul was the designer and production lead for over 300 DVD Titles and documentaries, including Scream Box set, Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within, and Jackass: The Box set. Paul is currently working on a long form video project using the Icelandic Eldar Edda poems as a source text.

Katie Martin

Katie Martin is a movement artist based in Vermont, working within the spheres of choreography, performance, and education. She's had the pleasure of being a guest artist-in-residence at Bennington College, teaching dance and yoga, and continues to teach widely throughout New England and New York City.

Katie received her B.A. from Bennington College with a concentration in dance and complexity studies, studying under the auspices of Terry Creach, Dana Reitz, Susan Sgorbati, Peggy Florin, Keith Thompson, Eva Karczag, Pooh Kaye, and Felice Wolfzahn. She has danced in the works of such artists as Mark Dendy, Ann Carlson, Keith Thompson, Dana Reitz, Susan Rethorst, and Meg Wolfe. Her own work has been presented at various venues, including the 2003 d.u.m.b.o. Dance Festival (Brooklyn), as a finalist in the 2004 American College Dance Festival Gala Concert (Smith College, MA), Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church (NYC), the 2005 Improvised and Otherwise Festival (Brooklyn) with percussionist, Jake Meginsky, and at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts (Burlington, VT).

Alongside Sgorbati, Katie is currently engaged in research that investigates time-based art within the framework of natural, complex systems, out of which surfaced The Emergent Improvisation Project, a platform for research, teaching, and performance. Most recently, Katie performed at The Neurosciences Institute (La Jolla, CA), where she has been in residence the past two winters.

Sean Mattio

Sean Mattio is a Philadelphia-based drummer and bassist. His most recent projects included playing drums with The Sun Ra Arkestra and providing live beats for Rrandom, a Philadelphia-based hip-hop artist. In October, Sean began working with opera composer, Troy Herion, creating sounds both improvised and composed for video.

Jake Meginsky

Jake Meginsky's work encompasses percussion, composition, dance accompaniment, and videography. Originally from Springfield, MA, he currently lives in Bennington, VT, where he is engaged in explorations involving compositional structures, music for movement, the representation of dance on video, and the performance of improvisation. His work in sound design and music for dance is fueled by the notion that music lives in the body.

For the past ten years, Jake has received training in various musical modalities under the auspices of Archie Shepp, Joe Platz, and Milford Graves. He has performed in a wide variety of venues all over the northeast, including Free 103 (Brooklyn), The Hook (Brooklyn), The Flywheel (Easthampton, MA), Mystery Train Records (Amherst, MA), Qville (Queens), Work in the Performance of Improvisation (Bennington College, VT), The Bread and Puppet Theatre (Boxer, VT), the 2005 Improvised and Otherwise Festival (Brooklyn), the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts (Burlington, VT), and The Neurosciences Institute (La Jolla, CA).

Currently, Jake teaches percussion at Bennington College, where he is pursuing an MFA. He frequently collaborates with Brooklyn-based percussionist John Truscinski in the Slaughterhouse Percussion Duo. Their recordings can be found on Open Mouth Records (Northampton, MA), Hells Half Halo (Seattle, WA), and Wooden Finger Records (Belgium).

Nicole Pope

Nicole received her B.A. from Bennington College in 2003. She now lives in New York City, where she is working on her own choreography and writing dance reviews for the Brooklyn Rail.

Amelia Powell

Amelia Powell is a garment designer from San Juan Island off the coast of Washington state. Her parents, both artists, instilled in her the desire to find beauty in all things. During her childhood, she was active in local community theater, acting in and designing costumes. Ms. Powell combined her last two years of high school into one, after which, she traveled to Europe to broaden her perspective of the visual world and begin learning French. In 2001, she enrolled at Bennington College, where she received a B.A. in Design and French in 2005. Recently Ms. Powell spent a month in Kenya living in a Maasai village, teaching at a school for homeless girls and studying the mixture of traditional dress and modern ready-to-wear apparel.

Ms. Powell has created solo collections of tutu designs, presented in a theatrical runway setting, but has found her interest to be in collaboration. She has designed for dance, theater and film with this in mind. She has recently completed her senior show, an evening-length collaboration with five other artists. Currently she resides in Raleigh, NC, where she works as a freelance designer.

Zornitsa Stoyanova

Zornitsa Stoyanova was born and raised in Bulgaria. She started dancing at the age of fifteen and soon decided to pursue a degree in dance. This led her to Bennington College, where she discovered movement improvisation, among other styles of dance. Zornitsa has performed improvisation work in Hungary, Bulgaria, and the United States. In April 2005, her choreographic work was shown at Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church (NYC). She is currently a senior, expecting to graduate with a concentration in dance and sound design.

Charlotte Sullivan

Charlotte Sullivan is a junior at Bennington College in Vermont. She loves graphic design because it requires the following: looking, letters, problem solving, paying attention, collaboration, imagination, and mass production.

Keith Thompson

Keith Thompson, born in Mississippi, began his performing arts training at the late age of 19 at Ohio State University. Mr. Thompson was a founding member of the modern and jazz repertory company Zenon Dance Company in Minneapolis. During his 8 years with Zenon, he created original roles with Bebe Miller, Doug Varone, Danny Buraczeski, Mark Dendy, Lynn Simonson, Victoria Marks, and Stephanie Skura, to name a few. Also during this time, Mr. Thompson served as both Scholarship Director and Rehearsal Director for Zenon, teaching all levels of modern and jazz classes within the Zenon School. Thompson was also a member of JAZZDANCE by Danny Buraczeski the last three years in Minneapolis before moving to New York City. In 1991, Mr. Thompson moved to New York where he branched out by working with Dan Wagoner & Dancers, Jacob's Pillow Men Dancers, and Creach/Koester Company. He danced internationally for Trisha Brown Company from 1992-2001, served as Trisha's Rehearsal Assistant from 1998-2001, and continues to represent TBC in the sharing of Technique and Repertory both at the Trisha Brown Studio in New York City, as well as festivals, schools, and workshops around the world. In early 2005, Mr. Thompson served as choreographic assistant to Dianne McIntyre on the choreodrama, 'Open the Door, Virginia', a Theater of the First Amendment production in Virginia.

Keith has continued to perform nationally and internationally as a dancer for Creach/Company; directed and choreographed Heiner Muller's Hamletmachine; teaches beginning through professional master classes in Contemporary Technique for the International Dance Festival in Kyoto, Japan; was on faculty at the 2003 Florida Dance Festival; held workshops of technique and repertory at the Tanzwerkstatt Europa Festival in Munich; is on the summer faculty for the American Dance Festival; and is immersing himself in the creation of his own work globally. Mr. Thompson completed his MFA Research Fellowship in Dance from Bennington College in 2003. Keith has served on faculty at the Conservatory of Shenandoah University in Virginia and George Mason University in Virginia. Keith latest work was presented and selected for the 2005 American College Dance Festival Mid Atlantic Regions Gala performance. He currently serves as MFA faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia.

John Truscinski

John Truscinski is a Brooklyn, NYC based percussionist and sound engineer. A 1998 graduate of Emerson College in Media Arts, John has spent much of his time working as a sound engineer at Slaughterhouse Recording Studios in Hadley, MA. In recent years he has recorded and performed extensively with Slaughterhouse Percussion Duo and x04, an improvised trio using prepared guitar and percussion instruments.

Bennington College Dance Faculty & Staff

Terry Creach
Peggy Florin
Michael Giannitti
Linda Hurley
Frank LaFrazia
Danny Michaelson
Mike Rancourt
Dana Reitz
Susan Rethorst
Susan Sgorbati
Terry Teitelbaum
Felice Wolfzahn

The Emergent Improvisation Project, directed by Susan Sgorbati, is a co-commissioning project by the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in partnership with Bennington College, The Neurosciences Institute, New England Complex Systems Institute, and the National Performance Network Creation Fund. The Creation Fund is sponsored by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, Altria, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). This work has received additional support from the Jerome Robbins Foundation, the Bumper Foundation, and Bennington College.

Many Thanks to my collaborators, my colleagues, the dancers, the musicians, my students, my friends, my family, the funders and the scientists with whom I have interacted for their support in this research.