

**Shannon Bott, Natalie Cursio, Simon Ellis,
Shona Erskine & Gerard Van Dyck**

In discussion with Elizabeth Boyce, March 2006

EB = Elizabeth Boyce

NC = Natalie Cursio

SE = Shona Erskine

SB = Shannon Bott

SKE = Simon Ellis

GVD = Gerard Van Dyck

EB: Album pinpoints a time which might or might not be part of your professional practice - a juvenile or amateur choreographic experience. If you were horribly famous some aunt would be interviewed by your biographer and would talk about that moment.

That makes me think about that really conventional idea of the artist whose personal biography is inseparable from their art practice. For some people those things do follow the same arc.

I'm interested in that trajectory from that point to now. Natalie Cursio's described you as mid-career artists. How did you get from there to here and what's happened in between? How has what happened in between made you think about that time and that way of performing? How is Album different?

GVD: Looking at the first time we did it as kids, whatever that age was. I would consider myself somewhat of an artist, if not an artist, now. Then, I was just a boy doing some dance steps. I wasn't intending to make a piece of art.

NC: It's different for Simon because he was eighteen and Phillip was nineteen or something. When you're eight and you're making up dance you don't think, "I'm being an artist." You just think, "I'm doing my thing. I'm being a dancer." Or, "I'm dancing".

GVD: I made mine as part of a choreographic competition. So I was making choreography, I think. I was about twelve or thirteen. I was one of two guys in the local dancing school.

SB: When I think of where I was in Grade 4 making this piece to a really bad song to where I am now, I think I could just [join up the dots] to the point in my practice where I considered it a practice.

I studied contemporary from a really young age. So I always had that going on but there was a really strong jazz influence. In the school where I trained they had a lot of commercial stuff.

But when I was in Grade 4 my teacher's brother was this Perth rocker. Somehow I got his LP. So I was already starting to listen to rock and roll, or alternative rock, then.

I really wanted to have an element of my roots in the way I constructed the piece now even though the music is swing. I was trying to look at how I could really incorporate my history in it even though now I really shun that I had such a commercial upbringing or that there are such jazz undertones as well as contemporary undertones. Yet, it's so clearly in the choice of song. I wanted that to be part of it.

NC: I find it hard to see a clear line or a get a sense of development from way back then until now.

It sounds like Shannon has been focused on dance for a whole chunk of her life, whereas my head space has come in and out of it. Being undecided not so much about what my practice is but more about whether I actually want to do it. So I often actually went in and out of it. I did jazz and tap and then I stopped at fourteen and I didn't start again until I was eighteen for a little while. I started contemporary when I went uni and I thought, "What am I doing here? I should be doing science?" That pattern's never been clear to me.

I can connect things back to that time such as the jazz overtones and the ideas for the content of my piece, like the best friends. It was my best friend that I made [my first] work with. It was probably more the real things that were going on in my life that connect to this piece than the dance things that were going on in my life.

EB: You've given me a sense of returning to a point and reinvestigating that, whether it's a part of your dance history or your biography. In thinking about biography and practice I was thinking about that idea of someone's practice being always on the up and up, or being a progression.

GVD: Talking about, "Where am I right now?" I feel like I'm constantly changing that. Even if I don't think about it for twenty-four hours or six months I feel like, between the last time I did and the next time I do, something will have changed. My perspective on what it was then is going to be different because the lens I'm looking at it through is bigger or different, broader or more refined or whatever. I find it really hard to go pinpointing ideas about where I was mentally or spiritually or emotionally...

SB: Can you know because hindsight offers you that?

GVD: Hindsight offers you that but I feel like there's still question marks. I feel like I'm still learning about my own history all the time. I don't think you ever stop learning.

SE: In many ways, you could consider that to be the role of the artist: not only to be aware of what they're defining and why but *how* they're defining it.

Epistemology is about a knowledge or concept behind how you frame something. You understand that the way you frame it determines how you will actually be able to understand it and deal with it.

As an artist, you come in with your own paradigm and understanding of it. That's how you frame it and that's how you make sense of it. Our awareness of how we come in with our frame is actually what makes us wiser.

EB: When we look at our past, whether it's about understanding our practice or understanding our history, we're often doing it for a reason. We're trying to understand how we're feeling now or what we're making now. I think, for that reason, sometimes what we see in the past is more or less an invention.

GVD: But the framework that you base your view on can be so incredibly more progressive than what it was last time.

SB: I don't think, because it *is* ever changing, that you would ever stop trying to understand it or question it or consider it. Even if it changes it's always going to inform.

EB: In relation to that idea of looking at your practice in the past, I've been interested in the music. It is quite arbitrary and some people were a little bit embarrassed with what they were stuck with, or appalled. I have heard people say, isn't it funny what that person's song is but it's it kind of suits them doesn't it?

GVD: There's a certain aptness for some of them, isn't there?

EB: How do you feel those pieces of music characterise you?

GVD: I'm glad I had mine. I was so relieved. Because I relate to the style of music now.

SE: When I heard Gerard's music, I thought. "Wow. That's a match". The way that he worked with it, you could so easily place what he's doing now into that particular music. I felt they were quite close.

GVD: Same for me with Philip Gleeson. Not that I think that would be the kind of music that he would choose now. But knowing him and his character and the kind of experiences he's had in life it just seems so right that was his music.

NC: When I first started to remember what it was it didn't really connect with me at all. But after quite a few listens and after working with it, I think it's very me. The disco thing. Also, it's kind of Euro disco. I think that's got a good connection to my Italian background. It really reminds me of when you walk past a disco in Rome and it's that terrible techno-y stuff. It's a '70s disco version of that.

And also, Leif Garrett. He's one of those long haired pretty boys and, you know, they're the kind of boys that I like. He's not like that any more, by the way. He was arrested the other day. He's always in trouble. He's always in rehab and he's just looking absolutely shocking.

I haven't really used that kind of music before in my work but I've used a lot of popular music. I'm going through the Cold Chisel, oz-rock thing at the moment. When I made *Corkscrew*, it was full of Fugazi, John Spencer Blues Explosion, Sonic Youth. Then it was The Dirty Three and Hello. Throughout my practice I have been quite into popular music.

So when I got this song I thought, "This is taking it right to the limit". But after a few listens I thought, "Ok, I know what I want to do." I could listen to the music and understand what the sensibility is.

GVD: I don't think Jo's music is really where she's at now. I don't think you could properly match that song up to her if there were a list of songs and a list of choreographers.

NC: But now she's obsessed with Yes and she listens to the whole album all the time.

GVD: The way she approached it was really interesting. She really approached it in the Jo kind of way.

NC: It's 5, 6, 7, 8 without looking 5, 6, 7, 8. It's very to the music and to the sounds.

GVD: It's very phrased, the choreography, but it's sort of across the phrases as well.

SB: So, if you had a list of choreographers, would you draw me up with my song?

NC: It's too hard to tell now, because now we're so used to connecting it to you.

GVD: Before we actually knew I was so excited and amped up about who had what song. That was the moment - discovering what everyone had. I just wonder if that's an example of the in-house appreciation of each other's history.

Do you feel, Simon, that you can look back on that song and say, "There's something almost apt about the fact that I'm having to revisit it".

SKE: No, not at all.

GVD: What I was saying was that I was glad that I was the song that I had.

SKE: Oh, so was I. I knew that it was utterly different than the kinds of things that were engaging me. I thought it was likely that it was going to put me in a place that I was not so familiar with recently.

GVD: And also how much fun it would be to work with.

SKE: Yeah. And because it's sort of clear. You've got this song, you've got this time.

NC: Most of the people [at the showing] knew one of us or they knew a few of us. A few people said to me, "I just can't believe Gerard would chose that when he was that young". Those were the kind of ways that people were connecting to it and making sense of it. I wonder whether that's because they know Gerard's personality. If some one comes to the show and they don't know us at all, will they still have that thing? Will they have that because they'd also made up a dance or their sister did?

SE: Do you think at that age you sought out those songs in the same way you would now. If someone said, "Choose a pop song from any time in your life?" Would it be the same thing now?

GVD: Would it have similarities even?

SE: I wonder if it was, at the time, that you got to the stage when you wanted to dance and there was that great song you liked. And so they married. There wasn't a concept of, "Is this the right sound for my intention?" It is almost a coincidence.

GVD: Partly coincidental but also this was the first time I wanted to choreograph. I was serious about wanting to put together steps. It was also a point in my life, as a thirteen year old boy who had done three years of ballet, jazz and tap, to say, "I want to choreograph." That was a decision and it happened to be that this was a song that was familiar with me just recently. So it's got to do with the choice to choreograph or be creative, I think. A bit of both, what you're exposed to, what's around you.

EB: Everyone I've spoken to has had a sense of what his or her practice is and has clearly recognised that Album is very task-oriented; it has limitations that are given. Is it shorter than most work you would usually make?

GVD: It's too short.

NC: It's the sort of length that you would make when you were that age.

GVD: That was even long then. Now, it feels like you're only just getting started.

SB: I also thought about it a bit like short film. When I've seen short films, I've thought, "That film is trying to do way too much". How do you get a really good kernel of an idea? What is that really specific thing? One thing or two things.

About two years ago I made a full length work that threw up so many things for me and in doing it I felt really schizophrenic in my practice. "Do I make dance theatre? Do I make dance? Is it physical theatre? Is it installation work?" I was trying to define it and I got really confused.

I spent the last two years doing really short works to get back to practicing how to make work again and being really clear on particular things. I didn't want to make a full length work again. I needed to pull it apart. I would set myself a particular kind of thing that I needed to investigate to see if I could kind of get it. It was like I was trying to re-train myself or get a bit more confident again after doing something that threw me into a space of confusion. All these little pieces that I've done along the way have helped rebuild and regain creatively how to make and craft.

Album falls into that because of its brief and because of its theatricality. I really wanted to be particular about it and not try and do too much.

SE: I've been thinking about what you were all saying about differences between the early days of your practice and now. At the moment, I feel like my connection and love of dance hasn't changed since I was really young. Dancing to any one of your pieces, to the music, is still just as much an experience as when I was dancing around the glass table to ABBA's *Supertrooper* at ten years old. There are still those amazing emotional and physiological connections to moving to a beat and dancing. Whether I'm more technically proficient now than when I was eight doesn't actually matter. The feeling is the same, that thing that is dance. That really intrinsic, integral part of it actually has been a constant.

SB: Which is interesting because, choreographically, there's so much more that's being considered than the instinct of an eight year old in a school class room. And so the thrill – which *was* a thrill – of having a parameter ("Use this song, this timeframe.") was something really liberating.

When you're young you're not really considering the sorts of things you're considering now. I was naïve. As I got older, that creative critic has got louder. So this has been refreshing. I don't have to consider so many things. "Ok. They're the knowns. Let's go!"

SE: As a child, when a song came to an end, I just put it back on again. It didn't matter. I'd just play the same thing for an hour if I wanted to listen to music for an hour.

At the moment, for some reason, if I turn on the greatest hits of Prince, I can write lots. I just keep pressing play again and again.

GVD: That's an interesting connection of history - the connection of how a certain album helps you do things. My song reminds me of elements of when I first made that dance to that song.

NC: Or the location that you made it in because you've got all these visuals of what was going on at the time.

GVD: Absolutely. And I think I've got an even more vivid memory of what I did when I was thirteen right now than I did when we were working on it six months ago.

SE: Why's that? Because you went through the process of thinking about it?

GVD: Yes, and I am still. And now, also I think because of the loud critic in my mind, I decide I don't like what I did six months ago. I want to make it better. I want to work on it. I've been thinking I actually do want to change it radically.

There's one element in particular that I'm thinking about. When I did it when I was thirteen I did a couple of magic tricks. I was right into magic; that was my other thing. Dance and magic.

Then the magic just dwindled away in my life. I wasn't given the forum to practice it, like with dance. You go to classes how many times a week? You're given a platform and teachers and facilities. But with magic you have to do it by yourself, because it's a secret, and you've got to do it in front of a mirror. That was really, really hard and so I couldn't keep it up.

This time around, I have ideas of illusions that I want to put in the piece that have only come up because the memory of what it was to begin with.

SB: And maybe the time you've had to think about it.

EB: Has time acted as a medium in that process?

GVD: It always does. It gives you time to reflect.

SE: History is a very important part of a short process. For example, Gerard and I met each other when we were eighteen and we went to the VCA together, we've done a Kage show together...

GVD: Well, we've performed together in *Amplification* a trillion times.

SE: And also, in the works I haven't performed with you, I nonetheless know where you're heading and I know when you've got a show coming up.

GVD: And vice versa.

SE: Whereas I had never seen Shannon perform and I knew nothing about her process. So that was a very different experience of meeting a process to then, say, going in and working with Natalie, who I worked with first in 1995 and have worked with many years in that interim. But with Simon and Shannon I hadn't worked at all.

NC: Say in my work: there's a connection between Shona and Natalie, there's a connection between Natalie and Simon, there's a connection between Simon and Shannon. There's a thread that holds it together anyway. I hadn't even worked with Shannon before I decided for her to be in this process but there was just a knowledge that this was going to work.

GVD: What's interesting is working with someone whom you've befriended or worked beside but not actually with. I've known Shannon for way longer than I've ever worked with her. I was totally frustrated because Shannon's process was so quick and I kind of wanted to dwell and hang out and sort of work on things and take my time learning it.

And, of course, the time doesn't allow for that. Shannon's refining was about changing and moulding and re-sculpting the whole way through it. My internal head fuck was getting a grasp on actually what the hell it was because it kept changing. Not that that's a bad thing.

EB: A couple of people said how nice it was to be part of a shared process that lots of people had a responsibility for. They said when they'd previously presented work, even in a programme of other work, that "You're on your own". It was partly to do with Natalie being there to do all of that practical stuff that took a lot of the burden off people but also something to do with the task being something that you were all doing or working out together.

NC: I remember in the first few days thinking, "This is exactly what I want to be doing. Exactly! This is the best thing I could possibly be doing." We were in charge of our own thing. It wasn't like we were working for someone who was more established. I felt that the whole project was, in that way, really empowering for the dancers and the choreographers overall. It was just a really great thing to be in. I couldn't think of anything better than working with these people and making our own work in this way and trying to establish an environment which is supportive, and exciting, challenging.

GVD: It was such a short amount of time but all of that, I reckon, the dial turned up on as we got closer to the showing. Those last few days, we were walking into rehearsals and saying giddy. Everyone's massaging and everyone's working and "How's it going?", showing each other the work.

NC: It was kind of a community feeling.

GVD: Yeah. It was so exciting.

SB: As a performer you got a flavour of each of the choreographers, what was interesting them, different ways they might have worked. Even within this framework. And that was great.

NC: You'd walk into somebody else's rehearsal that you weren't involved in and see what was going on.

SB: I really like the first days of rehearsals. "I wonder how they're going to work? I wonder how they're going to work with *this*? With what they're given. This is great!" Whereas when you're working with one choreographer for six weeks or seven weeks, you've got one particular process you're embarking on. That's a very different journey.

SE: As a dancer, 'though, that was quite challenging because you had to be just on *all* the time. Shannon's got three and a half hours; you've got to give her the full three and a half hours. It's not like when you know you've got all day and someone's going to wander off there with one idea and you have a chill out or a stretch. There's no rest time. And then, after a full morning of being just totally there for three and a half hours, you've got to do it for someone else again. It was actually not an easy process, as a dancer. It was actually quite demanding on your attention.

NC: I actually really love that because so often my head's in other places. I'm in the producer mode. I could just come in and have these hours. I just loved it. "Next. Come on. Let's go." I was loving it because I didn't have to do anything else but this project.

I kind of looked at it as a whole. And flipping from one choreographer's work to another is, I guess, challenging in a few different ways but I think the excitement probably overrode that.

SB: I really loved the test of a short space of time. I've done so many developments that take six weeks. How can I take a particular task or a particular way of working and really put it into a short space of time along side the fact that it's a swing rhythm, not having worked with a swing rhythm since I was eight? Trying to put all that in the mix rather than forgetting or trying to put aside my history. Actually saying, "Let's sit with it here, in a short space of time."

The time constraints really showed how quickly I could make a choreographic piece with all the techniques and skills that I'd gathered all the way down the line. Unless I really felt like I understood what my practice was or I had some methodology or some way of going in and working really fast with these guys I think I would have fuffed.

NC: The amount of time that you have to make something effects what you would make in the end. In some ways, in this project, the short amount of time has been really beneficial even though ideally we would have really loved to have much more time than we do have. It forces you to make work in a different way than you might have done in another circumstance because you have to make really fast decisions.

I think that relates back to the first song that I ever made a dance to. It was all about, "Yeah, let's just do it now and do it quickly." You do it in one day, or you do it over a couple of days.

GVD: You don't really make choreographic decisions, you just put steps together.

NC: You have to be really intuitive, I guess. But I think you can be really intuitive if you're making dance to a song because it just works. That's why music and dance always go together and why it's such a classic thing and why it's such a clichéd thing: because it actually works.

EB: There was a quite genuine sense of excitement at the showing.

GVD: If you could bottle that! It was wild.

NC: It was quite crazy, really.

EB: I want to ask about the way your audience has changed. If it's for your class, they're probably pretty impressed because you're at the same level and your teacher is thinking of you as an eight year old. Your family always puts on a serious face and tries very hard not to laugh. They make themselves open to what you are doing. Audiences don't always do that when you're a practitioner. Given what we were saying before about how the audience reacted at that opening, maybe this type of approach actually creates this kind of audience. Maybe it doesn't. Maybe it's about your audience itself.

NC: Once I choreographed a routine with my sister to *Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves*, that song by Aretha Franklin and the Eurythmics. I worked really hard on it. I really wanted to make the choreography really inventive. I remember actually thinking that, "I'm going to make moves that no one's ever seen before." I don't know what they were. I was probably twelve or thirteen.

I was thinking about that whole dancing school thing. Your dad would come once or twice when you first started but, after that, he'd just get really bored out of his brains and hate it, think it was absolute crap. But now, if Dad saw the routine I made up to this song, he would probably actually really enjoy it. It seemed that the audience [at the showing] really engaged in it. It's because it's got that really basic side of it. The dance and the song, you know, basic stuff that works. But then it's got our experience and our skills and the things we've brought to it over that period of that time. It kind of brings it up to a level that may be more interesting for some one who was really bored with going to his daughter's dancing concerts.

GVD: I was trying to work out what the difference was between who I was more nervous about being in the audience now as opposed to then. When I was young it was everyone else. Now, it's my family. I'm more concerned about what they're going to say about what I'm doing on stage. Enough to give me the nerves.

EB: I guess you know what your peers are going to say, in a sense, because you know the terrain.

GVD: Not only that. I kind of don't care what my peers are going to say. I very much appreciate the perspective and the encouragement. I take all of that on but at the same time I'm my driver of this journey so I'm going to do my own thing regardless of what any one else says. It's not that I don't care but if I don't agree I won't let it effect me.

SB: I don't really remember audience then. I remember mainly being concerned about my audience thinking I was a show off. I just couldn't help it but that's what I had to do. It got to the point where every time there was an assembly they would look to me to do something, if it wasn't instigated by me. There was a sense of, "Oh, no. I'm getting a bit of a name." Now it's ok because I get paid to do it!

EB: What about your audience, Simon? They were a group of PE students and you were in drag.

SKE: They were just drunk. Everyone was drunk.

NC: Why? Wasn't it an assessment? Was it the last day of term or something?

SKE: Yeah. It was a tradition. It was sort of a rite of passage. There was a long history in PhysEd school for the first year dance concert where all the audience were smashed and all the people performing would just get completely drunk. My year was one of the very last times that that sort of thing occurred. I think some performers were still drinking but the audience was full on.

GVD: Sort of a raucous footy crowd?

SKE: Yeah. It was exactly like a coliseum.

SB: You'd be slightly disappointed, then, with the audience now.

SKE: It's a big come down! I don't know because I have a love-hate relationship with that kind of yobbo-ish behaviour. I wasn't really a participant in that kind of thing because it wasn't my scene and yet I was a PhysEd student and identified with that group of people.

But, yeah, me and Andy were dressed in drag and came out sweeping and started doing some break dancing. It was tragic. But, of course, everyone loved it because we were busting all of these moves. And then my wig fell off. It was terrible. It's kind of embarrassing. In fact, it's really embarrassing.

SB: When people are drunk they can be quite forgiving.

SKE: Extremely! It was just being a boy dancing. I was still a tennis player, in my head, so it was just a bit of a laugh.

NC: Was [Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*] a song that you liked?

SKE: No, I don't think so. I think it was Andy's idea. We did a lot of dancing together. We used to make up moves. He was a really good dancer and I wanted to be. So he used to teach me these moves.

SB: Back to the audience. I think the audience really enjoyed that the programme was quite irreverent and light. So much of dance can be other than that, quite a serious thing, and I think that was really rejoiced. It was really simple for them. Experiencing something that was really joyful to the point of laughter moving to tears. You don't see that very often.

SKE: It's not just what was being seen. It's also the device that is [this project]. If I tried to make a serious work with you guys... it kind of is serious, actually.

NC: It is a serious work and people recognise that it is.

SB: I suppose I'm talking whole programme. There's degrees but I don't think the audience were coming at it like they would when they go and see Tony Yap's work, for example, because of the premise and the context and the way it's been framed. You're sitting there with a different way of receiving it.

EB: Shannon was talking about short films earlier. Successful short films tend to be comedic because it's difficult to present a complex, serious idea in such a short time.

GVD: But also, in a short amount of time, you can set up basically for a one liner. And if you're good at delivering a gag then you can do that really, really well in a short film. I often like the comparison between film as a medium and dance theatre as a medium. The attention span of an audience for each is vastly different. With film you can jump from looking at a thunderstorm to looking at a frog whereas in theatre you can't actually do that.

NC: You can't direct the focus so clearly.

EB: The film clip relates strongly to this project because of the format. The expectations of a film clip audience are so different to even the expectations of a film audience. They don't expect a clear, linear narrative. They don't expect to 'get' what's going on. They don't expect what they're seeing and what they're hearing to coincide at all.

SE: But I would say they would also expect their one understanding of it to be enough to fulfil an understanding of the piece.

EB: And that understanding might be, "It's cool" or "They look hot" and that will be enough.

SE: They're not looking for more. They just accept their own reactions at face value.

NC: My work was pretty much based on the idea of a film clip. It was supposed to be a story. It was supposed to have drama and a bit of a journey, but then in the chorus it breaks into unison and they're all standing in a triangle. It's kind of like the classic film clip. Ultimately it would be great to have Gerard and Jacob jump in because there are always the extra dancers who come in and do the chorus work.

I tried to add another level to that by having Gerard be the props guy coming in with the frame at the end. I was very influenced by film clip structure and trying to make a work that was able to cut from one thing to another. That's why I used the frames because I wanted to be able to isolate moments.

SE: The title, *Album*, speaks very strongly to the music. We don't have a whole album of Natalie Cursio's choreography. It's like a compilation. In that way I can see why people are talking about it as film clips but I must admit to having a bit of trouble conceptualising the audience looking at them as if they are film clips.

NC: That was just the way I made it. It was to do with aiming for a filmic structure or sensibility.

GVD: I really like how abstract a video clip can be, potentially, but have an overall beauty in its vision. There are some amazing video clips made that are that arty. Even though the attention span of the audience travels vastly differently for a theatre piece than it does for a video clip, you can still have that element of obscurity and cutting.

SE: They can at the same time be really pushing into new ways in which things are cut and edited, which you can see repercussions of that in films that are made now too.

SKE: I think there's a really long history, certainly in dance, of people using film or thinking about presenting material filmically. Meredith Monk is probably the classic example. And I don't mean presenting film on stage but in terms of the way she thinks about framing and cutting with live presence. The other thing is that the notion of an album of greatest hits is rapidly becoming, if it hasn't already become, a nostalgic thing or a thing of the past.

GVD: It's your mixed tape.

SKE: Yeah, because it doesn't happen any more. It's humungous, the phenomenon of people buying individual songs so that even the concept of an album is rapidly shifting. People don't do that, they just say, "I want that song."

GVD: I get it but I don't accept that mentality. I make mixed CDs now and give the CD a title. I don't think that's slipping away from us.

NC: But you're doing your own thing. You're totally taking control of it. That's making your album. What about the album that is made by the artist?

GVD: But we're making our own album with *The Album Project*. This is a compilation of songs put together.

SKE: Various artists.

SB: I'm curious to know if there's anything you would like to add, Shona.

SKE: I was thinking about it for Shona in relation to being involved in something in which the outcome is so specified (in a curatorial sense) which is very different from the kind of processes we're involved in [normally] as performers. I just wondered what that experience was. Whether it was satisfying or...

SE: I did find it very satisfying and I really enjoyed having that curatorial kind of box. It's like it's Christmas and you know that present's for you but you don't know what it is. You're excited about the song, you're excited about the ideas. You know everything about it but you don't actually know what it is until you open it.

SKE: You can shake it.

SE: Yeah, you can shake it. You can put your own idea in. And because the processes are so quick that was revealed really quickly; it was unwrapped really fast. You just had to commit to the idea that you were going to love your Christmas present, that you weren't going to open it and say, "Oh, but you got me this last year." You knew that you were excited and you knew that you were going to like it.

And what I enjoyed too was the challenge of having to bring all my skills into the project because of working with a number of people, working in the short time frame, having to be really open to ideas. You just had to go with it. You couldn't have any resistance at all.

SKE: It's interesting that notion of resistance in a longer process. I think about it a lot when I'm in those processes, about how much I'm resisting to particular things. It's really not a useful thing to be doing.

SE: But sometimes resistance can also just be about a commitment to your own ideas. So when you're invited and asked to contribute and someone's contributing an idea that's not working for you, there's a point where you can resist for so long as a way of communicating that, as a way of saying "I'm having trouble with that" or "I think this is a better way of doing it"

But you're right. It can move into a destructive place. But you've got a couple of days to work into an idea and find out if the idea works for you or if it's really someone else's. But in *Album* you don't. You don't have time to work into an idea to discard it. What comes out has to work.

I think at this point in my life I was actually in a really great position to do a project like *Album* because I was just prepared to let it happen and go with the flow. I just accepted what it was and the idea.

SKE: In the early days it would have been harder.

SE: Well, I wasn't caught up in my own ego in it.

GVD: I'd say it was the same for me. Not that I had to force myself or anything but I did say, "This is going to be a fun process". I liked the idea too much to not just go with it.

SE: I think that is also to do with our age and our maturity.

GVD: And probably to do with the group knowing each other.

NC: As we were saying before, the threads were there. There was this web of sort of sticky stuff that was connecting us in different ways and kind of held it together a little bit.

SB: When I came to work with Shona and Gerard, I had not choreographed on or worked with either. It was really interesting saying, "Wow. I usually take a lot longer and I'm just going to go, 'Blah.'"

SE: That was interesting as a dancer working with the different choreographers. They constantly made apologies for the process they adopted. They said, "This isn't how I usually work but there's this really short time frame."

NC: Really? Did I say that? I wouldn't have thought that because I kind of always have to work fast.

SE: Yeah, you did. But you had different ways of doing it. Once it was wrapped up for you it was wrapped up. There were other suggestions about how you could do this and this. But you were like, "Yep, yep, yep, yep. No. I see what you mean but no. I'm not doing it. That's it. Packaged. Done."

But I found it quite interesting that before the choreographers were even in the process there was this kind of apology for it when there was no need for that apology.

NC: It was like you were covering yourself.

SB: I hadn't worked with Shona and Gerard but I knew my own way of working and what was interesting to me. This particular parameter wasn't going to allow that and in another circumstance, should I work with those guys, I'd probably work in that particular way. A lot of that apologising was a way of informing them about who they were working with. Trying to instil some kind of relationship within a two second framework to then go and make a work. The way that that happened was obviously through an apology, because I know that they both work in many processes. So there was this sense of trying to give information and then get working.

SKE: Like speed dating.

SE: It makes me think about what kind of apologies Natalie got from people at the end of the process about the works. “I apologise, I haven’t finished the work.” Or, “I apologise, I’d really like to go back and re-work the whole thing or start all over again.”

NC: No one apologised to me!

GVD: I feel like I may not have actually said it but what I felt like wanting to say is, “I haven’t completed it. I know I need another stage.” Not, “I’m sorry for what it is”.

NC: You must have known that I was aware of that.

SKE: I didn’t really take that risk in terms of the people I worked with as a choreographer. So in a way I didn’t need to apologise because both Shannon and Natalie I’d worked with over elongated periods. So they knew the kind of processes I have been involved with. So it wasn’t a situation where I’ve had to say, “I don’t really work like this.”

SB: But you did say when we did that first phrase, “I don’t usually do this but I’m going to get you to make some moves.”

SKE: Yeah, true. The generation of relationships in this kind of process is fundamental for me. So this once I didn’t have to worry about that because it’s done. I’ve already covered that one.