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From the first moment that the two of us worked together, we have been interested in exploring the nexus between the body and technology. Our first work together was an evening length performance called "The Need" created in 1989 while we were students at California Institute of the Arts. In this work we addressed what we saw as a crisis of the human spirit in a world of accelerating technological change. We did so by creating ritualistic dances that emphasized the power of the body itself, and by contrasting them with dances that presented a technologically empowered cyber-body. The latter was represented by four dancers, each wearing a sensory system created by Mark (called MidiDancer) that measures the flexion of joints on the body and transmits that information wirelessly to a computer. The movement data was then used to control the timing, dynamics, and pitch material of the musical score. Little did we know then that this piece would set the tone for all of our future works.

The word that the two of us return to again and again in our work is body. There is nothing more essentially human than the body. It is sensual, tactile, warm to the touch, physically powerful, and chaotic. It faces eventual decay and death. All of these qualities are in opposition to the coldness, order and longevity we associate with technology. Most of us live in a world in which the technological influences around us can scarcely be avoided. (How much of a machine are you once your pacemaker is installed?) And so, the question for us becomes, what exactly is it that constitutes being human? As all of our bodies are distanced from each other by communications technology and physically invaded by medical technology, do we lose something important? This is the central issue in all of our media intensive works, and it is because the two of us ask these particular questions that we feel drawn to use sensory systems to link the body and technology in our works. The connection between the body of the performer and the media under her control becomes a metaphor for the relationship between the body we each possess and the technology that surrounds it.

The technology that the two of us use follows a clear pattern. All of it is designed, like MidiDancer, to allow the movements or vocalizations of a performer to directly control some media component, whether that is sound, image or light. There are several reasons for this, and the first is simple: as a performer, it's wonderful to feel that the capabilities of your body have been expanded. When a tiny wrist gesture results in the sound of a gigantic crash, or the projected video imagery moves in direct response to your every movement, there is a feeling of being bigger than yourself. This is the gift that such technology brings to the body of the performer. But, more importantly, when we impose organic control over computer media, we are bringing the chaos that is a living organism to a world that we typically consider one of complete order. The gift that the performer's body gives to technology is the one thing that it absolutely lacks: unpredictability. Let me give a short example.

In the piece we are working on now, there is a section where Mark's character reads a monologue. At specific moments, words or phrases from the monologue are projected behind him. Instead of displaying static text, Mark used the sound of his voice to modulate the position, size, and shape of the words. As he speaks, the words vibrate and swim around the screen behind him. When he is silent, they are still. The motion of the words is organic because it originates in a living being. Because of the link to his body, the text becomes a living creature on stage with Mark as he performs.

The chaos that we are mapping to media exists in the body possesses at the atomic level. We impose this chaos upon the order of technology when sensors transform the performer's movement or vocalizations into real-time, qualitative changes to the media. In short, the performer's body brings the technology to life. Simultaneously, however, the body has also become reliant on the technology that empowers it. This dialectic between empowerment and reliance is a metaphor for uneasy relationship that many have to the technology that surrounds them, a relationship that the two of us feel will become more uneasy as we move into the future.

In Ray Kurzweil's "The Age of Spiritual Machines," he compellingly predicts that humans are inexorably evolving into machines. In the book Kurzweill argues that the process of evolution has sped up at an exponential rate since the beginning of time. Technological innovation is simply another form of evolution. At this pace, he tells us, humans will have the ability to copy, neuron for neuron, a human brain and transfer it to silicon within fifty years. Since the innovations leading up to this will occur incrementally, the idea of a more reliable silicon replacement for your brain then will seem no more shocking than a hip replacement does now. But, the two of us wonder if, once we'd received our new silicon gray matter, we would be missing something fundamental without that deep chaotic imperfection that makes us who we are.

For the two of us, a search for the qualities that most deeply define us as human beings must absolutely parallel Kurzweill's predicted course of evolution. The two of us want to use dance to continue our investigation of how human beings, as sensual, tactile, physically powerful creatures that are evolving in response to a technologically pervasive world. We want to consider, along with our audiences, what it is that we want to keep hold of during that process. As far as we're concerned, this is not just an issue, but will be the issue in the coming few decades. We put technology and the body in conflict and in harmony within our performances now, because we want to see what it might mean in the future. We suspect that if we can find a way to teach our silicon descendants to dance, they'll be on the right track.