

# MN Dance & the Ecstasies of Influences: Mapping Minnesota Dance Influences One Connecting Line at a Time

MICHÈLE STEINWALD

Independent curator and dance producer Michèle Steinwald shares a photo essay and retrospective on her lecture/discussion series, MN Dance & the Ecstasies of Influences, featuring maps by guest editor Kristin Van Loon that illuminate the grassroots web of connections that make up parts of the Twin Cities dance communities.

- Archive
- Documentation
- History
- Mapping
- Network



Half of my family is from Québec, where license plates read, “Je me souviens.” Commonly translated as *I remember*, it literally means *I remind myself*.

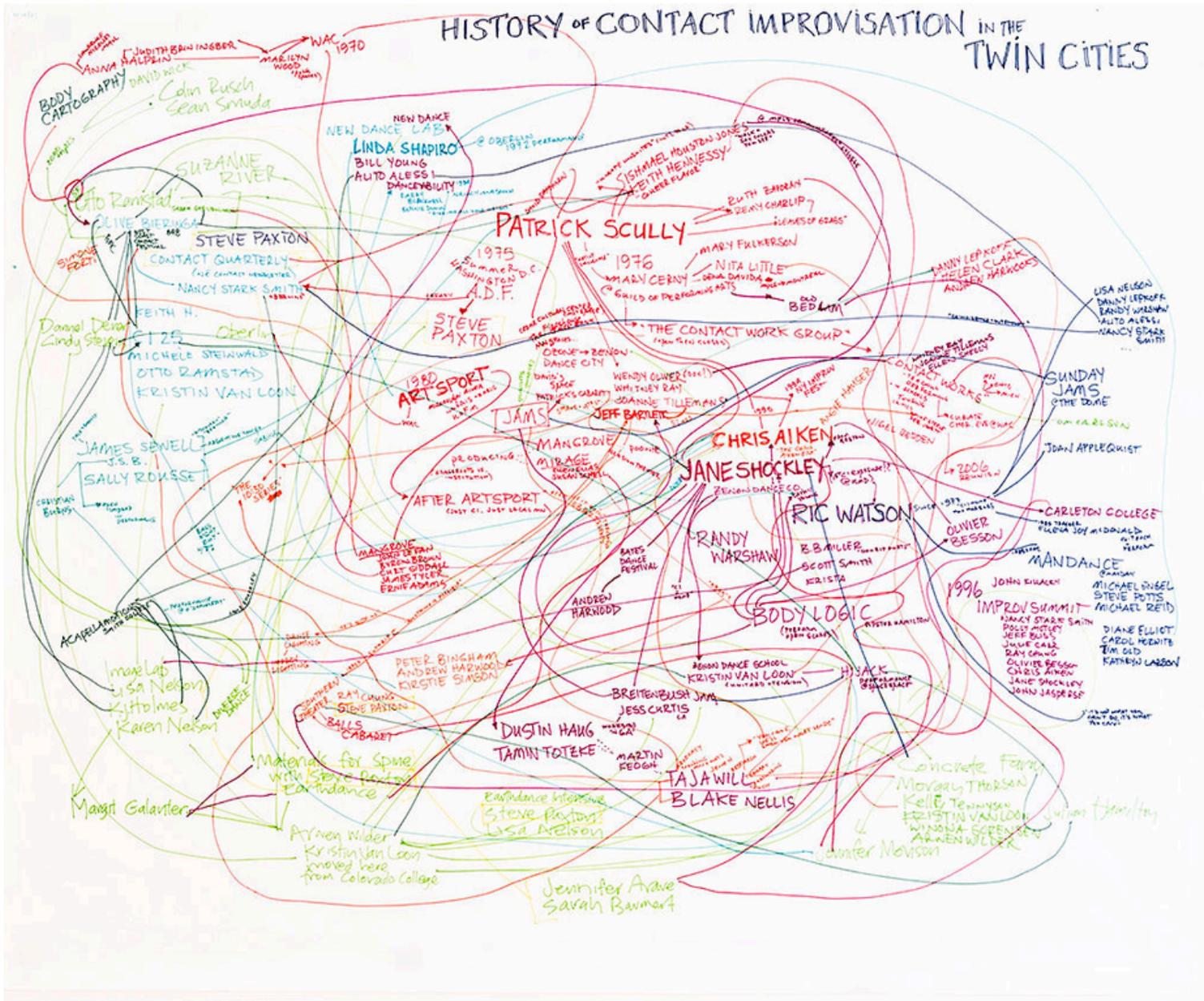
The impetus to start creating visual maps in response to stories from Twin Cities’ dance communities was to “do something about the big white wall” – which was what Sage Cowles determined should be my first point of business when I mentioned to her in 2013 that I would be consulting for The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts in the new year. From her prompt, I dreamed of gathering enough data to commission the famous artist Julie Mehretu and have her design an all-encompassing depiction of the graphic information into an enormously colorful, multi-directionally dynamic mural covering the entire blank wall in the lobby of The Cowles Center. For myself, I felt the urgency to *remind ourselves* of the personal contributions that individual dance makers had made to establish the need for the dance center, bearing her family name, in the first place.

I was inspired by Mathew Janczewski’s public talk, “A Surprisingly Big Dance Town,” in 2011, the title of which referenced Caroline Palmer’s *Star Tribune* article, “Minneapolis: Big Dance Town,” from earlier that year, and by Linda Shapiro and Nancy Mason Hauser’s long-form interview documentation videos, the Minnesota Dance Pioneers Oral History Project, housed at the Performing Arts Archives (PAA) at the University of Minnesota Libraries. With those initiatives in mind, I decided to combine my interests with Sage’s. I invited Linda and Nancy to meet with me, as well as choreographer/writer Judith Brin Ingber and PAA curator Cecily Marcus, to develop the structure and purpose of the yet-to-be named discussion series.

With the goal of accumulating visual data from each event, I asked dancer/choreographer/co-founder of HIJACK (and hobby archivist/cataloger), Kristin Van Loon, if she would consider mapping the connections between the individual stories through live drawing during the soon-to-be programmed public talks. It is thanks to her willingness and commitment that we have this energetic imagery to reflect back on.

Any attempt to present a comprehensive history of Twin Cities dance lineages will take years to compile. As a way of intervening sooner, the series is intentionally flawed, privileging the anecdotal and highly personal to place individuals at the fore and leave room for additional stories to intertwine together as the process progresses.

# HISTORY OF CONTACT IMPROVISATION IN THE TWIN CITIES



MAP PART 1 (approx. 48" x 38")

Drawn October 19, 2014 by Kristin Van Loon (with support from Olive Bieringa while Van Loon spoke)

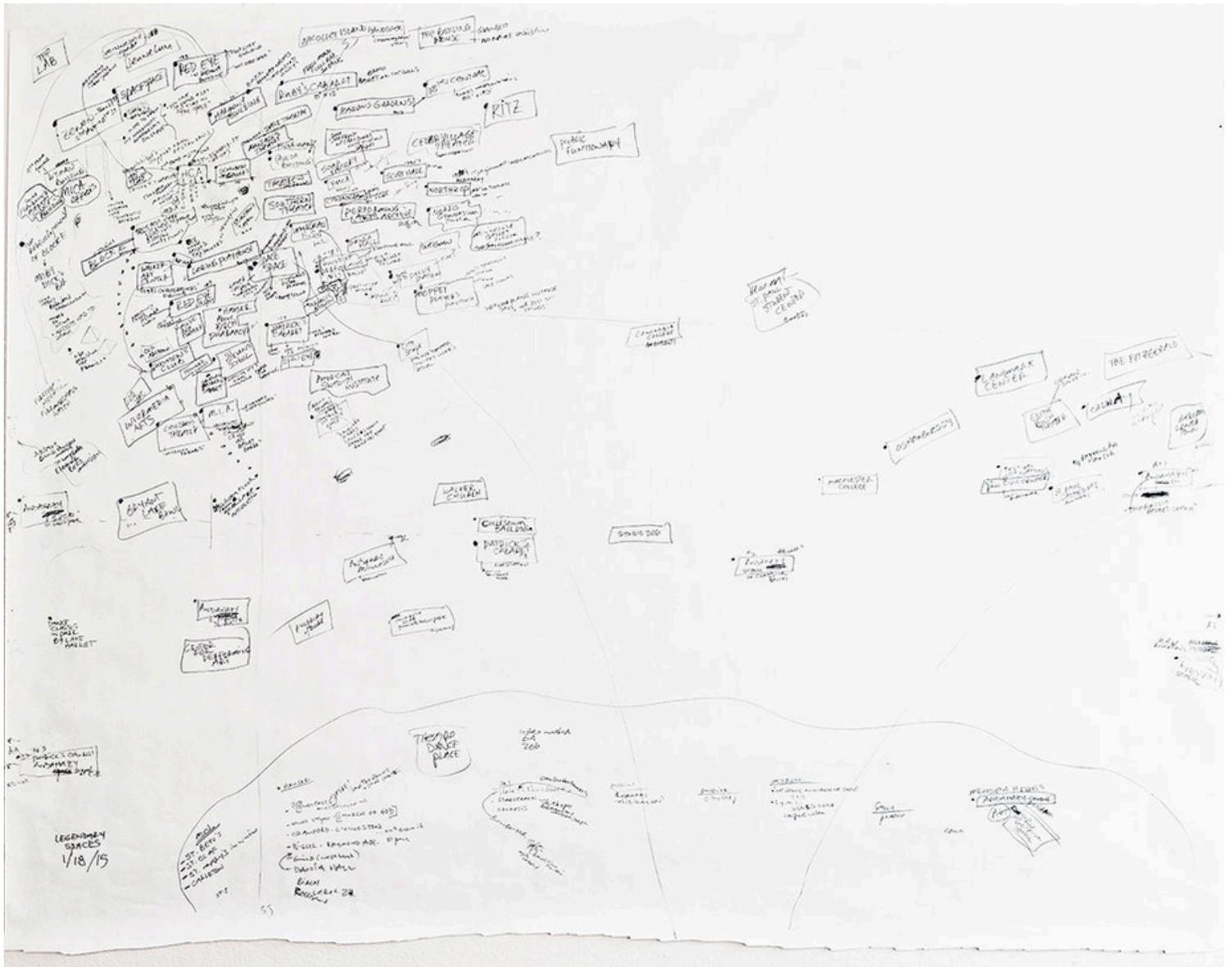
Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

The case study, the proof of concept. The entangled lives of contact dance improvisers and their networks. Influencers from the outside. A national hub with several coordinated gatherings.

## From History of Contact Improvisation in the Twin Cities

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

With speakers Patrick Scully, Jane Shockley, Ric Watson, Kristin Van Loon, Linda Shapiro, Jeff Bartlett, Olive Bieringa, and Otto Ramstad



MAP PART 2 (approx. 48" x 38")

Drawn January 18, 2015 by Kristin Van Loon

Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and more. A pencil drawing, geographically inclined, uncommitted to permanent marker.

**From Legendary Spaces**

*At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts*

*With Marius Andaházy, Judith Brin Ingber, Steve Busa, Myron Johnson, John Linnerson, Paula Mann, Patrick Scully, Linda Shapiro, and Kristin Van Loon*

# EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES MARCH 1ST 2015



MAP PART 3 (approx. 48" x 38")  
 Drawn March 1, 2015 by Olive Bieringa  
 Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

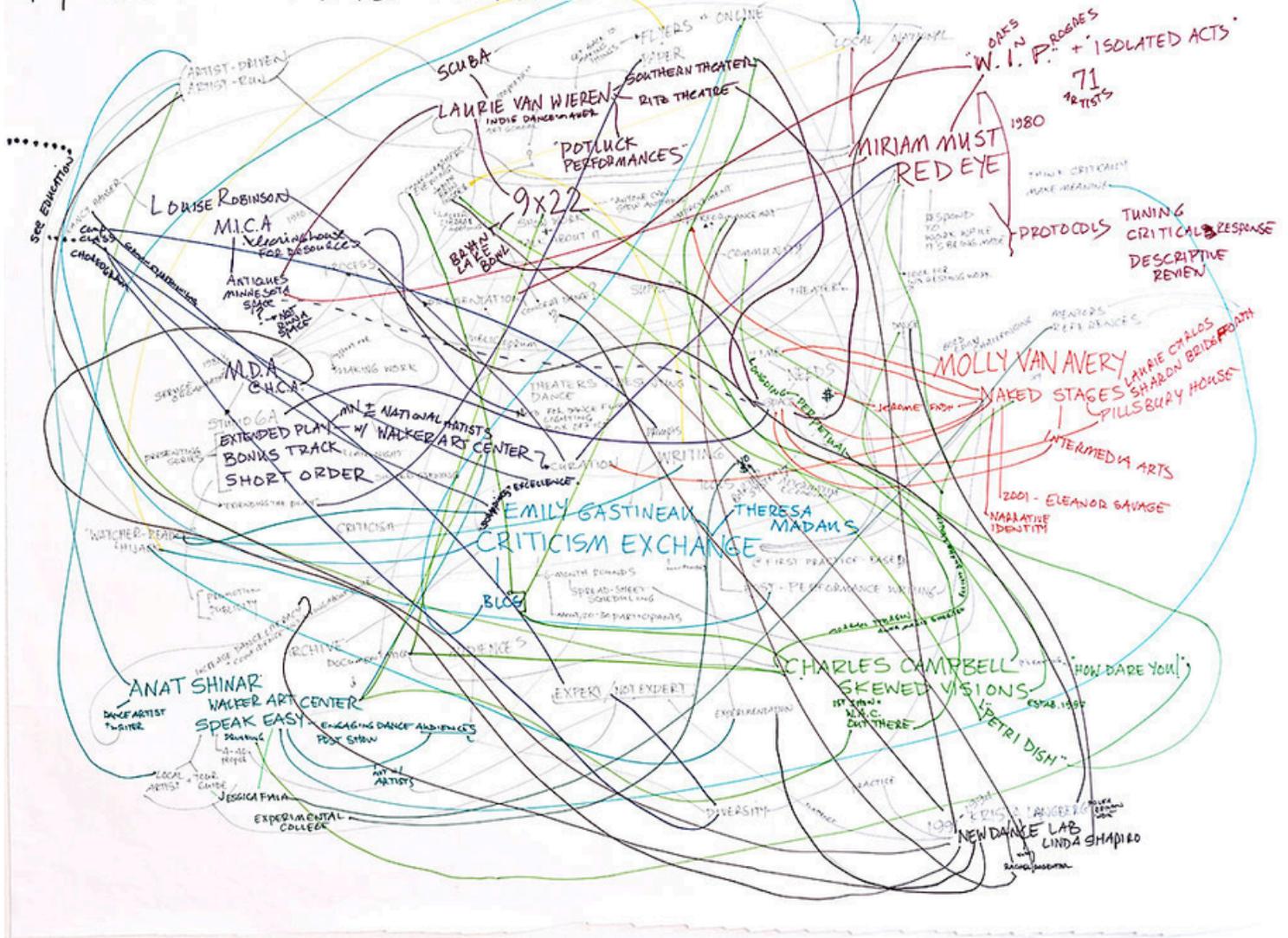
Established foundations. Passing of the baton. Teachers take control. No educators of color present until Florence Cobb steps in.

From Educational Outcomes

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

With Diane Aldis, Colleen Callahan, Kathie Goodale, Mary Harding, Judith Howard, Linda Shapiro, and Kenneth Yoder

# 5/31/15 DEVELOPING DANCE



MAP PART 4 (approx. 48" x 38")

Drawn May 31, 2015 by Kristin Van Loon

Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

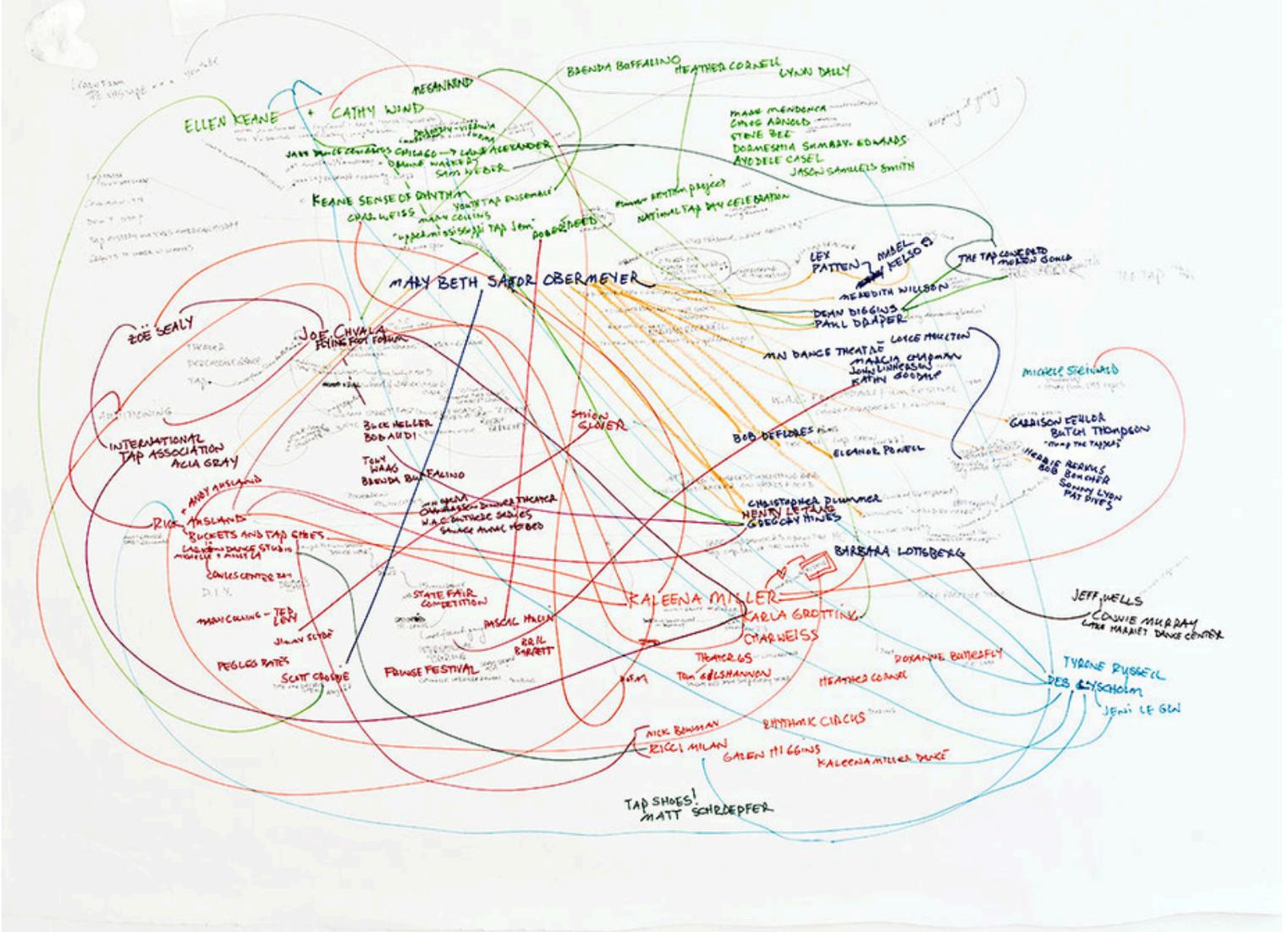
Works-in-progress platforms. Thematic influences emerge. Structured support. Grassroots initiatives. Stuff in between.

*From Developing Dance*

*At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts*

*With Charles Campbell, Emily Gastineau, Paula Mann, Miriam Must, Louise Robinson, Anat Shinar, Molly Van Avery, and Laurie Van Wieren*

9/20/15  
The History of TAP in the Twin Cities



MAP Part 5 (approx. 48" x 38")  
Drawn September 20, 2015 by Kristin Van Loon (with orange lines added by Beth Sartor Obermeyer on August 27, 2017)  
Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

Oral histories committed to memory. Waves of effort and care. Underlying stories.

From History of Tap in the Twin Cities

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

With Rick Ausland, Joe Chvala, Ellen Keane, Kaleena Miller, Beth Sartor Obermeyer, and Cathy Wind



# 4/10/16 COVERING DANCE



MAP Part 7 (approx. 48" x 38")  
 Drawn April 10, 2016 by Kristin Van Loon  
 Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

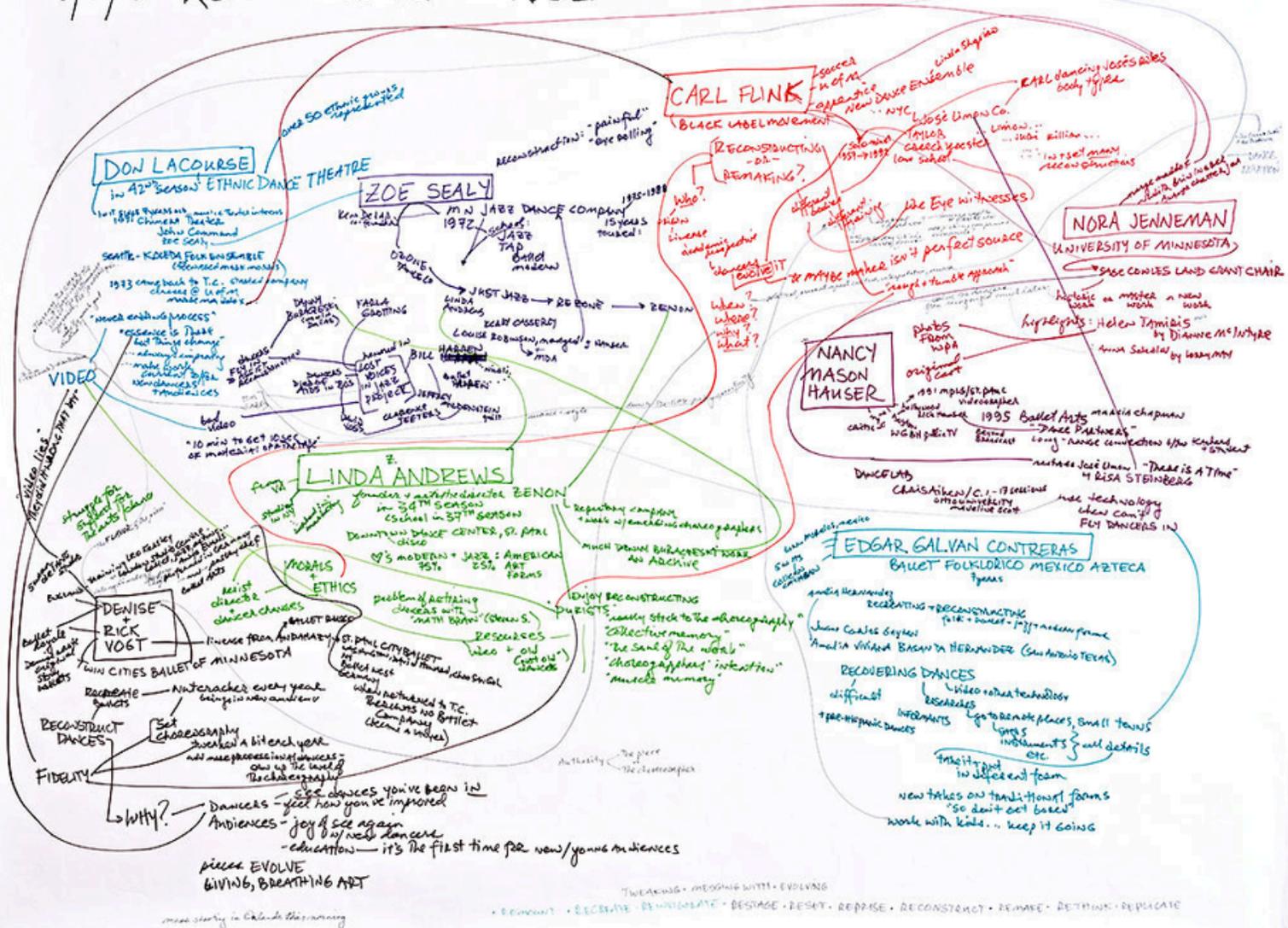
Writing about the moving body in performance. Long-forgotten platforms. Rigorous. Righteousness. Evaporating opportunities.

From Covering Dance

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

With Rob Hubbard, Judith Brin Ingber, Camille LeFevre, Caroline Palmer, Susannah Schouweiler, and Linda Shapiro

# 6/12/16 RECOVERING DANCE



MAP Part 8 (approx. 48" x 38")  
 Drawn June 12, 2016 by Kristin Van Loon  
 Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

One of my favorites. Disparate entities, overlapping approaches. Remount, repertory, recreate, reinvigorate, restage, reset, reprise, reconstruct, remake, rethink, can never replicate. Curiosities and ingenuities.

From Recovering Dance

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

With Linda Andrews, Edgar Galvan Contreras, Carl Flink, Nora Jenneman, Donald LaCourse, Nancy Mason Hauser, Zoe Sealy, and Denise and Rick Vogt





# 2/26/17 A SURVEY OF NATIVE AMERICAN DANCE IN THE TWIN CITIES



MAP Part 11 (approx. 48" x 38")  
 Drawn February 26, 2017 by Kristin Van Loon  
 Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

Circular. Cultural care.

Repatriating statement. Repairing lifeways.

Invitation extended to Native voices only. Some reparation.

From A Survey of Native American Dance in the Twin Cities

At The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts

Hosted by Rosy Simas with Athena Cloud, Lumhe Sampson, Winona Tahdoohnippah, Larry Yazzie, and Sandy WhiteHawk, with blessing by Janice Bad Moccasin



# 10/8/17 MINNESOTA DANCE + THE ECSTASIES OF INFLUENCES PT. 13: ART + ATHLETICS



MAP Part 13 (approx. 48" x 72")  
 Drawn October 8, 2017 by Kristin Van Loon (with support from Carl Flink while Van Loon spoke)  
 Photographed November 29, 2019 by Alice Gebura

Camaraderie, empathy, perseverance, physicality, strategies, ethics.

From ART + ATHLETICS

At the Ordway

With Brian J. Evans, Carl Flink, Deneane Richburg, Morgan Thorson, Kristin Van Loon, and Pramila Vasudevan







Each map carries the residue of its event's traces. With 16 separate events, framing topics, and the contributions of 100+ speakers and their personal stories, everyone can [watch the talks](#) and [dig into the archival collection](#) anytime, and draw their own conclusions.

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Special thanks to The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts (2014-2017), Ordway (2017-2018), and Minnesota Museum of American Art (2019) for their partnership in producing MN Dance & the Ecstasies of Influences, and to my esteemed colleagues and advisors (Judith Brin Ingber, Cecily Marcus, Kathryn Hujda, Nancy Mason Hauser, Linda Shapiro, and Kristin Van Loon) for tirelessly guiding the series onward.

Performing Arts Archives collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries: <https://archives.lib.umn.edu/repositories/9/resources/7254>

The Cowles Center's YouTube channel videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyTsRheFILhCC-SxaHg8QOu2UDNbn-Rwi>

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This article is part of the [series](#) by guest editor [Kristin Van Loon](#).

## Tags

Archive

Documentation

History

Mapping

Network

## Author



44 Arts Productive is the organizing work by Michèle Steinwald, who has an impressive assortment of curatorial, institutional, artistic and educational bona fides. (If you'd like, you can skip to the end of all this and find them listed handily below.) But the fact is, she'd much rather talk to you about Deborah Hay, about Rosas' Bartok or maybe Jan Fabre. Maybe you'd like to hear about the punk and dance convergences that shaped her young career, or her thoughts on dance as ... [read more](#)