

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Scott Tauser

Choose Your Own Adventure Movement Walking Tour

by Leslie Bush

My journey begins at a secluded café in Mount Airy. When I arrive, I search for a poster hung in the café's window, scan the [QR code](#) with my phone, and begin my exploration of [Expansions Contemporary Dance Ensemble's](#) *Connecting the Distance*. It feels like a treasure hunt.

Artistic director [Christina Castro-Tauser](#) brings together a geographically diverse cast of 21 performers in a series of dance films viewed on a mobile phone via QR code at different locations along a predetermined route. Some of the films are tightly choreographed and expertly edited. Others are recorded Zoom calls with rows of movers exploring improvisational scores in doorways, by windows, in grassy fields. There are gestures that echo throughout the films—flexed wrists crossing and uncrossing, lunges towards and away from the camera. One standout moment happens at [Madelyn & Deborah Dominican Hair Salon](#), where I watch a trio of women move fluidly in unison to [Christopher B. Farrell's](#) rhythmic sound score, used throughout the work. At [Lovett Memorial Library](#), I watch people in little Zoom tiles giving their weight to door frames, eventually disappearing through the openings.

There is no story I am supposed to follow along my journey, no demand to pay attention only to the movement on my phone. Instead, I let my gaze wander from the screen, to the scene around me, and back again. I take in the movement of people and cars, of my own movement too. Castro-Tauser gives just enough direction to each location, so that my spatial awareness becomes an active layer of the performance. The connection between the pre-recorded dances and the space I watch them in is not always overt, yet the work still feels cohesive; at points I feel like my presence *is* the thing that connects them.

The work offers two walking tours. In the Mount Airy path, I walk to local shops and down residential streets, yards loaded with Black Lives Matter and “Don’t Forget to Vote” signs. In the shorter North Philadelphia tour, my eye catches murals that reflect the predominantly Latinx culture of the neighborhood that slow down my walking pace to a stroll. Each tour offers something unique. Along

the way, Castro-Tauser suggests grabbing a coffee at [High Point Café](#) or exploring the open gallery at [Taller Puertorriqueño](#).

Connecting the Distance is a choose your own adventure movement experience—I am happy to slow down and explore.

[Connecting the Distance](#), Expansions Contemporary Dance Ensemble, 2020 Fringe Festival, Sept. 10-Oct. 4.

By Leslie Bush

September 19, 2020