

Coming Home to New York



Pittsfield, MA July 2017
Photos by William Johnston

Dear Friends,

Nearly four months since my last e-news, I still start this one with the same questions: How are you and where are you? Are you staying healthy?

I add: Are you involved in your work, community, and the world wherever you are at this crucial time? Are you reaching out to your family members and friends near and far?

After being in Japan for five months, Koma and I are coming back to New York on September 2. Everything that happened and everything I did in the spring and summer were different from what I had imagined in the winter.



In Japan, I have been living in a small house my mother left me. She

died last year. The house is full of items that remind me of my childhood or connect me to the time before my life. I would like to share with you some of the things I have been working on while being here.

My [letter to Sam Miller](#) is up on MoMA Magazine. Many of you perhaps have a similarly important friend who passed away whom you still talk to. This assignment was to write about my "vision of the future" but I ended up writing about how all of my recent works are my letters to the future.

This summer, I have taught online classes at the University of Tokyo and the [Seattle Festival of Dance Improvisation \(SFDI\)](#). Though I was skeptical of Zoom at first, the participants and I have really invested in getting to know each other. I learned new possibilities and discovered ways to teach virtually but also feel it is just as important to acknowledge how we miss studio practice. Here is a [video mosaic](#) that SFDI's participants created, bringing together their movement exploration on the last day of the class. This fall, I teach two online courses at Wesleyan and NYU.

As the number of Covid-19 cases soared in Tokyo, I joined a symposium and gave a video lecture virtually. Working with my mother tongue but presenting myself without performing to the people who do not know me at all was a challenge I embraced. My motto, as always, is to make myself available to a wide range of people anywhere. For those of you who understand Japanese, please view or share my [17-minute online presentation](#) and/or my [90-minute online lecture "Disasters and Art."](#)



Virtual Residency Continues

Allison and I created many more pages for my [Virtual Studio](#). All the video pieces are short. None was made as performance archive. Editing them was a different kind of choreography. [Dialogues](#) that made me connect with friends and collaborators during the pandemic have been very important for me. I am grateful for this rich web of friends, including you. I will highlight some pages below, but please visit Virtual Studio and let us know your responses. I learn a lot about possibilities and about yourself when you share your thoughts with me. Thank you Wesleyan CFA and thank you Allison for your hard work.

Your Morning is My Night

Iris McCloughan and I experimented with how we could continue our studio practice over Zoom. 6761 miles away. David Harrington of Kronos Quartet gifted (and challenged) me with a music piece that he listens to over and over. It has been a long time since I danced to music. Thank you David and Iris.

For Eva Yaa Asantewaa

Writing to answer the questions Eva posed to many choreographers was a hard and satisfying experience. Thank you to Eva for her continuing presence in the dance field and for connecting movement artists through this series.



On Boundaries and A Letter to DonChristian

The Kitchen invited DonChristian Jones to introduce and respond to their archival video of Eiko & Koma's 1981 performance of *Trilogy* and *Nurse's Song*. This started a series of long phone conversations with him. Following his essay, I wrote this letter revealing both the difficulties and the joys of our intergenerational collaboration and friendship. Thank you Don and sending cheers for your work at [Public Assistants](#).

Calling Out for Our Mothers

On May 29, Minneapolis-based artist Patrick Scully invited John Killacky and me to screen and talk about our work [Elegies](#). It was four days after George Floyd was killed. The program became a gut-wrenching community get-together. Being a part of it taught me again how sharing work brings me new occasions to connect with others and

think hard. In *Elegies*, John and I talk to our mothers, and we were aptly reminded that Floyd called out to his mother as he was being killed and that his mother had died on the same day two years prior.

Elegies, a collaboration with John and Brian Stevenson, has been shown widely. John is a close friend, artist, the former director of of Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, and a Democrat in the Vermont House of Representatives. Brian is a cinematographer and production manager at Vermont PBS. The work was shown in an exhibit at Helen Day Art Center, screened at the Vermont International Film Festival, featured on the Trickle Up NYC (An Artists Network), and aired on Vermont PBS. Thank you John and Brian.

We received many responses from viewers. Some of them revealed that during this pandemic, caring for parents and losing them have been particularly hard. We send our deepest sympathies to those who have lost their friends and family members and to those who have had a difficult time in attending or not being able to attend to their loved ones.

June 9th

On the day of George Floyd's funeral, I made another effort to make distance malleable by thinking and moving and moving and thinking.



We look forward to conversing with our U.S. friends without the 13+ hour time difference. Stay safe, and we hope to hear from you.

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