

Jordan Rosin

MFA 719/AEP 706 Ensemble Creation and History

24 September 2018

### Ensemble in Action:

#### Elizabeth Streb and the STREB Extreme Action Company

“My dancers eat nails for breakfast...” Arms folded across her chest and weight shifted easily to one side, a woman with spiky black hair brags to a dozen eager onlookers, including three bright-eyed kids under 8. “They’re tough as tigers....” she continues, inclining her head in a decidedly mischievous angle. The woman standing in front of me wearing a pinstripe suit and motorcycle boots, and boasting about her company is none other than MacArthur “Genius” award-winning choreographer Elizabeth Streb. Squeals of delight erupt from the children next to me as action begins to unfold behind her. The year is 2015. It’s the first time I’ve seen Elizabeth in person though I’ve known *of* her for a while. We are in the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics (S.L.A.M. for short), a converted auto garage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn littered with machines, mats, metal and those muscle-bound-but-nonetheless-mobile monoliths of humanity, Streb’s dancers, aka the “Action Heroes.” This is one of the two or three dozen rehearsals which the STREB Extreme Action Company holds annually which are open to the public. In fact, *all* of the company’s rehearsals are open to the public, one of the many gestures the company makes to create increased access to their art and help deconstruct the elitist social and economic structures in which other forms of concert dance emerged. I say ‘other’ because the work of the STREB

Extreme Action Company firmly renounces classical and modern dance, while at the same time often classifying itself as dance and clearly being rooted in it. Intent on presenting resonant, popular movement for movement's sake, choreographer Elizabeth Streb draws inspiration from not only dance, but also from gymnastics, Hollywood stunt work, boxing, and rodeo. At the Streb Lab, bodies fly through the air, jettisoned into the "un-habitual space" by air cannons, trampolines, tipping machines, spinning ladders and various other contraptions. "Writhe", "Slice", "Crash", "Squirm", and "Fly" are some of the names of pieces in the company's repertoire each no less violent, shocking, impressive, or strange than its particular title might suggest. At the center of these awesome feats is the incredible company of dancers, both male and female-identifying artists of unparalleled muscularity, grace, and bravery.

This essay is intended to provide an overview and detailed investigation of a contemporary ensemble theatre company which inspires me and whose work I intend to integrate into my own practice-as-research thesis project. In this case, while technically a dance company, STREB provides an excellent portrait of what the human body is capable of achieving (a great concern for those engaged in "physical theatre") and a unique example of how hierarchy and inquiry can be a part of an ensemble-based creative process.

The data collection for this project was inspired by classical ethnography. According to Tony L. Whitehead's 2005 paper "Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods":

classical ethnographic methods are those that have been traditionally used by anthropologists, such as secondary data analysis, fieldwork, observing activities of interest, recording fieldnotes and observations, participating in activities during

observations (participant observation), and carrying out various forms of informal and semi-structured ethnographic interviewing... (Whitehead 2)

In particular, for this project I employed the methods of observing activities of interest (like rehearsal and day-to-day operations for the company over the course of one week in 2015 and two weeks in 2018), participant observation (as I undertook during their Adult PopAction classes and Kid Action Summer Camp), and semi-structured interviews (which I made with over 16 current - and in one case former - company / staff members). The decision to collect data in this way was informed by my intuitive suspicion that an ensemble company is precisely one of those “socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings” of which it is the chief aim of ethnography to study (Whitehead 4). My informal synthesis of the information collected in this way constitutes the bulk of the content in the first three sections of this essay, which concern themselves with 1. History, 2. Aesthetics & Philosophy, 3. Business, Retention & Community Engagement. Section four contains information about the company’s creative process from a variety of perspectives with an eye towards how this company’s principles can be applied to ensemble-based modes of making theatre.

## 1. HISTORY

According to their website, the STREB Extreme Action Company was founded in 1979 and moved into their permanent home, the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics (S.L.A.M.) in 2003. In their almost-forty year history, the company has performed their action events across the globe with notable venues including Grand Central Station, the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, the

Delacorte Theatre, Madison Square Garden, 2010 Vancouver Olympics, the London 2012 Festival, and more. (Streb.org)

Founder, Artistic Director and “Action Architect” Elizabeth Streb began her choreographic work in a SoHo loft in 1972 after moving to NYC from San Francisco. With early explorations taking place near the ground, then later with poles and inclined stages, she developed a low-flying vocabulary of action and impact which she called “PopAction.” Eventually she began to integrate other dancers, as well as trampolines and other machines into her work, primarily in order to access what she would later dub the “un-habitual space”, i.e. parts of the stage we don’t often see bodies occupying (Streb, *How to Become* 63). Later still, Elizabeth would begin to stage her action events in non-traditional performance sites like the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, where she was granted creative residency for four months in 1993, or on some of London’s most famous landmarks - as in the 2012 London Festival which anticipated the opening ceremony of the Olympics there. For a more complete though still partial chronology of the company’s creative work, see Figure 1.

The 2003 move to their permanent home at 51 North First Street in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn marked a pivotal change in the life of the company. With unprecedented support from the office of the mayor, STREB was able to *buy* the building outright and renovate it to their needs. By the time of this writing, S.L.A.M. is now home to not only the company, but also their PopAction School (with classes and camps for children and adults), the España-Streb Trapeze Academy *and* countless other artists who rent the space or work there as part of the GO! Emerging Artists Residency program. The creation of the school marked the beginning of a period of great expansion. By 2018, revenue from the school now

constitutes a whopping 29% of the roughly \$2 million annual operating budget (Liles).

According to Executive Director Susan Meyers this revenue also provides a predictable source of earned income which has allowed the company to weather the kind of financial hardships and economic downturns that might prove lethal for more itinerant or presenter-dependent companies (*Personal Interview* on 31 July 2018).

With an impressive repertoire of almost 100 dances which are periodically revived and rearranged as part of modular touring engagements (like their current show SEA: Singular Extreme Actions), the company also continues to create new material, fulfill commissions and makes site-specific work. At present the company is creating three new pieces: “Gunk” which is part of a partnership project with Anne Bogart and the SITI Company; “Passage” featuring 6 dancers in aerial harnesses raised and lowered by high-speed winches on two monolithic slabs of granite in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, to premiere in October 2018; and “Molinettes” which is a new piece on a brand new machine designed by longtime collaborator Noe España set for premiere sometime in fall 2019.

Fig 1. Partial Chronology of STREB's Creative Work<sup>a</sup>

1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1979 June - Performance at Dance Theatre Workshop</li> </ul>
1980's  <b>Streb / Ringside</b>  <b>STREB Extreme Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1981 February 12-15 - "Fall Line", "Pole Vaults" and "Springboard" with Michael Schwartz at American Theater Laboratory</li> <li>• 1981 - <i>First full evening of work at Dance Theatre Workshop</i> ("Backboard", "Fall Line", "Add", and other works.)</li> <li>• 1982 February 18-21 - "Fall Line" and "Ringside" with Michael Schwartz at The Kitchen</li> <li>• 1984 November - Performance in Germany</li> <li>• 1985 April 25-28 - "Blackboard 4", "Rollerboard", "Little Ease" [premiere], and "Whiplash" with Nancy Alfaro, Daniel McIntosh and Jane Setteducato at The Kitchen</li> <li>• 1995 October 28 - Performance at Nottingham Playhouse (UK)</li> <li>• 1987 - "Airwaves" with Michael Schwartz (<i>first aerial dance with harnesses</i>)</li> </ul>
1990s	<p><i>Elizabeth no longer performs in new works.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1991 May 16-19 - "Dive", "Wall", "Groundlevel" (<i>featuring 12 dancers</i>) at The Kitchen</li> <li>• 1993 - "Lookup!", "Surface", and "Kid Action" [premieres], "Little Ease" (1985) and "Impact" at Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage</li> <li>• 1994 June 13-18 - "Bounce", "Line" [premieres], "Lookup!"(1993), "Stick Dance", and "Little Ease" (1985) at the Joyce Theater</li> <li>• 1997 July 22-25 - "Little Ease" (1985), "Wall/Line" (1991), "Free Flight" (1993), "Bounce" (1994), "Rise" (1995), "Q/Action" (1995) at Jacob's Pillow (Becket, MA)</li> <li>• 1997 - "Fly" and "Across" [premieres], plus "All/wall" (1997), "Little Ease", "Bounce", "Lookup", "Up" (1995), "Q/Action", "Breakthru" at the Joyce Theater</li> </ul> <p><i>1997 - McCarthur "Genius" Fellowship Awarded to Elizabeth Streb</i></p>
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2002 February - <i>StrebGo: ActionHeroes</i> at Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, IL)</li> <li>• 2006 - <i>Streb vs. Gravity</i></li> </ul>
2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2016 March - April - <i>SEA: Singular Extreme Actions</i> at S.L.A.M.</li> <li>• 2016 November - <i>SEA: Singular Extreme Actions</i> including "Squirm", "Tied", "Slam" at Kennedy Center (Washington DC)</li> <li>• 2018 May - <i>SEA: Singular Extreme Actions</i> at Brookfield Place</li> <li>• 2018 August - <i>SEA: Singular Extreme Actions</i> at Tanz in August and Internationales Sommerfestival-Kampnagel in Germany</li> </ul>

a. This chronology is only partially complete and constructed by Jordan Rosin from a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to give a general sense of the timeline across which the STREB Extreme Action Company evolved. All performances are in New York City unless other locations are specified.

## 2. AESTHETIC & PHILOSOPHY

“Anything that’s too safe is not action.”

- Elizabeth Streb (*Born to Fly*)

By her own report, when Elizabeth was 22, living in San Francisco, taking ballet and modern dance classes, she realized that if a dancer was to make up their own vocabulary or technique, it had to happen “now” (*Personal Interview*). Despite her eremitic tendencies she knew that with performance she could not hide, writer-like, in her room and hope to one day be published. She therefore forced herself to “get into shows and get exposure” (Streb, *Personal Interview*). Her first dance showings from 1976 to 1979 in New York took place at venues like DTW and The Kitchen and were self-choreographed solos, allowing her to begin to develop, on her own, the system of inquiry which would underlie all her future choreographic efforts, including later work with groups.

Since then, Elizabeth has been on a quest to excavate the “grammar” of movement and to deal honestly with issues of time and space (*Personal Interview*). As she says in her book, “Real movement doesn’t try to tell a story. It doesn’t merely indicate. It is not about anything, separate from itself” (25-26).

Parallel to this quest for a new understanding of pure movement is a renunciation of the privilege and elitism which Elizabeth sees as the major pitfall of classical and contemporary dance. Elizabeth claims that the presentation of acquired physical skill which happens on most stages is “a thinly veiled exposition of privilege” which “surreptitiously celebrates a class

divide” (*How to Become* 46). Therefore, her action shows are framed as “*events*, not presentations” in which physical skills are employed towards a “non-predictive outcome” for the purpose of enduring “turbulent conditions, to exhibit determination, perseverance, and survival”(46) qualities with a presumably much broader popular appeal. In this way, STREB’s work with movement seems to interestingly parallel the populist theatrical forms of most import to the twentieth century ensemble/physical theatre icons Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq, and Carlo Mazzone-Clementi (i.e. Melodrama, Commedia, and Clown).

In many ways, Elizabeth’s work with groups and vision for her company directly supports the populist and anti-elitist approach to art-making which she promotes. The diversity of the current Extreme Action Company in terms of gender, skin color, body type, and overall appearance far outshines the diversity of most ballet companies and - according to former Associate Artistic Director, Fabio Tavares - has been an important part of Elizabeth’s vision for a long time (*Personal Interview*). To see such a diverse group of people so ardently pushing the boundaries of what a body can do seems to send a message: While most may not want to, anybody *could* pursue Extreme Action. *Anyone* can be a *hero*.

Elizabeth’s aesthetics and philosophies are already widely documented in sources like her book *How to Become An Extreme Action Hero*; two feature-film documentaries about the company: *Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity* (2014) and *Streb: Pop Action* (2002); as well as countless other online videos and interviews. Examples of the company’s work are also plentifully available on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Therefore I will not go into further detail on the company’s aesthetics or philosophy here except in summary to say that the



company's sometimes polarizing work, drawing criticism and acclaim alike, is inarguably innovative, boundary-pushing, and intentionally broad in its appeal.

### 3. BUSINESS, RETENTION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BUSINESS. The business model at S.L.A.M. is, from my reasonable experience, fairly unique for the non-profit arts sector. Besides Elizabeth, as the creative head of the organization, the entire business is overseen by two Executive Directors, Susan Meyers and Cathy Einhorn, who collaboratively raise funds (there's no development director) and supervise the remaining six full-time, salaried staff members. (The 8-9 performance company members are *not* full-time, averaging about 30 hours per week through rehearsals and teaching, and are paid a combination of an hourly wage for teaching and rehearsal and a daily or weekly salary for performance and touring.) The administrative staff, modeled by Susan and Cathy after Elizabeth's vision for the performance company, are highly collaborative and fluid in their responsibilities. To that end, almost all the administrative staff have hybrid or compound titles which aim to clearly convey the scope and nature of their jobs and which are reviewed and changed often, especially in times of turnover or transition. For example, at the time of my visit in 2015 the role of Education Director was a stand-alone job. Now it's combined with the role of Associate Artistic Director and performed by long-time company dancer Cassandre Joseph. Similar examples of compound titles include the job of Registrar, Director of Administrative and Marketing Relations performed by Mary Schindler and the job of Community Programs Manager/Assistant to the Artistic Director performed by Shannon Reynolds.

At weekly staff meetings, all administrative staff are given the opportunity to update the group on what they're doing, on what they've achieved recently and on what challenges they're facing and are encouraged to think explicitly about the intersections between each other's work. Staff meetings like these were instituted only eight years ago, when Susan and Cathy took over as Executive Directors from the former Managing Director. In this way, newer staff members are able to gain a more comprehensive view of the organization as a whole and to develop their own agenda for professional development or advancement within the organization. Shannon Reynold's responsibilities as Community Programs Manager, for example, are based on a need she first perceived while working as Elizabeth's assistant and which she only stepped into with Cathy and Susan's blessing last year (Meyers, *Personal Interview* on 31 July 2018).

It is interesting that the majority of folks working in the administrative staff show the same burnout potential which afflicts most non-profits, each of them averaging between 50 and 60 hours of work per week. To combat this, staff are reminded regularly to ask for what they need, including time off, and are sometimes allowed to work from home, though the physical demands of running a brick-and-mortar school obviously make this difficult (Schindler). In a given week Shannon, Bobby, Mary as well as a few others can all be seen taking turns at the front desk, which helps lighten the customer service workload for any one individual.

RETENTION. Though the dancers themselves are contracted seasonally and are not full-time, the business is largely organized in a way that supports the retention of this more or less permanent performance company. According to the current Associate Artistic Director, Cassandre Joseph, "Elizabeth prides herself on keeping dancers for a long time" (*Personal*

*Interview*). Cassandre theorizes that since the inception of S.L.A.M. in 2003 and the addition of so many classes, which company members can be paid to teach, the rate of retention amongst the company members has grown substantially. The requirement that the dancers teach at least two classes per week in either the PopAction School or Kid Action school further contributes to a culture of ongoing respect for learning. The former Associate Artistic Director, Fabio Tavares, who left the company almost a year ago after a record-setting 14 years there, maintains that dancer retention is important but much harder to track. He cites insufficient pay and the growing expenses of getting older as his primary reasons for leaving the company, but mentions also the difficulty of teaching in a space like S.L.A.M. which, as an undivided multi-purpose space with multiple activities happening at once, is a poor energetic container for the efficient instruction of children (*Personal Interview*).

In the current company of dancers, the most senior members have been with the company for 10 years, the next, 8. In fact, almost half of the current dancers have been with the company for more than 7.5 years. This retention and maturity is crucial in a line of work where, as Elizabeth says, new dancers aren't usually put on the most dangerous hardware until they've been with the company for 2-3 years. Whether by coincidence or design, the company has also started to balance the higher impact low-flying work with lower-impact aerial work in a way that feels more sustainable to veteran dancers like Cassandre. Though it all falls under the umbrella of "Extreme Action", there is something to be said for the immense diversity of work, skills, experience, and environments at play now at STREB, distinct from when Elizabeth first began her mostly impact-based experiments in the 1970s.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. Community Engagement is most definitely at the core of the mission behind STREB. From open rehearsals, Kid Action Scholarships, an Action Opportunity Program, and accessibility as a top aesthetic priority, to the extensive partnerships with local organizations which Shannon oversees, the company is a model for community engagement done ethically and sustainably. During the school year, for example, the company has active partnerships with upwards of five public schools at a time, taking the form of 8-week long, once-per-week residencies in which company members teach children PopAction at the schools, albeit with limited equipment and resources, and which then culminate in an epic field trip to S.L.A.M. where the children get to test their technique in the company's state-of-the-art facility. Other partnerships include STEAM programs, post-testing field trips, and events for children with autism. They've even had doctoral students rent the facility for guided parties as a reward for passing exams (Reynolds) and classes for the US Air Force (Meyers, *Personal Interview* on 2 August 2018).

#### 4. CREATIVE PROCESS

In her book, *How to Become An Extreme Action Hero*, Elizabeth Streb writes:

When I first tried to fly, I crashed crudely into the ground. ... As rudimentary as this may seem, it was the genesis of my heuristic method of experimentation with the body. It starts with a simple thought experiment: Can a person fly? Then tasks are set up to address the question, and data is collected. The investigation is based on our STREB agreement that we will not make assumptions about outcomes. We agree to not know. As

a rubric, we develop the types of questions that you forget to ask because they appear so unquestionably true. (38)

This agreement to ‘not know’ and its high importance in the company interestingly echoes the kind of “ethical framework” pioneered by such ensemble theatre practitioners as Jerzy Grotowski (Britton 40) and is at the heart of STREB’s creative process. It is this agreement to not know and to not make assumptions about outcomes which allows all company members the opportunity to participate equally in the inquiry-based process of creation.

When asked if their creative process is “ensemble-based” each of the company members interviewed says ‘yes’ though many also describe how seniority plays a huge role in precisely how and in what degree. It is generally acknowledged that Elizabeth is the “author” of the work, but the dancers themselves - especially the more senior ones - play a huge role in the creation of that work at multiple stages of the creative process.

“There is a lexicon, but Elizabeth is interested in pushing it. ...We carry this lexicon with us and then we’re expected to go beyond it or grow it” says Associate Artistic Director, Cassandre Joseph (*Personal Interview*). She continues:

For Elizabeth, it is dance pieces, it’s choreographed pieces, but it’s really about a set of *conditions* directly relating to the forces that it creates. In her mind she’s thinking, “Impact, I want a dance about impact.” So then we start. I like to do things differently than Daniel and Daniel and I will feed off each other and we’ll create something and she’ll say “I like that. Let me put that in the dance.” And then we get to name it and so we have a lot of say in terms of where and how that lexicon takes shape.

This example stands at one end of the spectrum from some of the other ways the creative process unfolds at STREB. Input from the dancers is sometimes not permitted. Elizabeth often finds herself saying, especially in the early stages of working with a new machine, “I don’t need your help choreographing” (*Personal Interview*). Rather than a constant stream of input from the group, she prefers as much focused rehearsal time as possible to test with an almost-scientific rigor the questions she’s pre-designated in her planning process for a given piece. Working with rotations on the Molinette machine, she asks “Can you do two in a row?” That achieved, she asks “Could a *partial* circle be legislated by your will?” (Rehearsal on 2 August 2018). In this way the field of possible moves on a given machine is discovered and the vocabulary of the dances are established. Elizabeth will then sequence and arrange the content of the dance in ways that further test the limits of the dancers’ ability and stamina. The machines themselves, it should be noted, function therefore almost like a third and very important partner in the creative process, both restricting certain actions and making possible new ones. Their reliance on machines and their relentless pursuit of what those machines promise parallels the approach to mask and devising at Dell’Arte and contributes to a feeling of ensemble by minimizing any potential pressure for either the director or performers to be a sole source of creativity, since they can always direct their attention to the thing outside themselves, which contains within it certain (but not all) potentialities.

One of the great benefits of the clear hierarchy in STREB’s creative process is efficiency. Efficiency becomes all the more important when both human safety and considerable money are on the line. At any given rehearsal, at least ten company members are in attendance coming in and out of risky activities, getting paid their hourly wage (a wage that goes *up* based on

seniority) (Meyers, *Personal Interview* on 31 July 2018). There are *also* usually 3-4 burly technical assistants on hand to move mats and machinery and otherwise serve the space. By my rough calculation, I would guess that each hour of rehearsal costs the company at least \$300 in personnel alone (that's \$1,200 per *rehearsal* or \$4,800 per *week*). It's therefore understandable that Elizabeth has little patience for wasted time and for people not doing their jobs, which besides being expensive, she claims can typically cause "some kind of danger to my people" over whom she is fiercely protective (*Personal Interview*).

In the early days, Elizabeth says that she would pay her dancers \$10 per hour and rehearse each piece no more than 1 hour, because she reportedly didn't trust herself to direct anyone for longer than that and didn't want to rack up her bills (*Personal Interview*). Now, the intricacy of the work demands that each piece be rehearsed for much, much longer. Though I didn't explicitly ask in my interviews, based on the rate of progress in the five rehearsals I've observed, I would guess that each new dance (which run anywhere from 3 - 10 minutes in performance) must require *at least* 24 hours of rehearsal, typically spread out over the course of 6 to 12 months or more. This is not to mention all the training which new company members must undergo to familiarize themselves with the unique hardware and apparatus so that they can be integrated into existing dances. Elizabeth herself spends hours upon hours drawing diagrams of her dances, watching videos from rehearsal, organizing her ideas, designating the questions to be answered in a given process, and otherwise working the choreography out on paper or in her imagination. Having their own space, having an extensive repertoire of already-created dances, having multiple projects on the table and the ability to change up the focus of a given week of rehearsal or to take entire weeks off from rehearsal further centralizes Elizabeth's authority and

contributes to her “authorship” of the pieces since she is likely thinking about and working on each new dance for far more hours than any other given company member.

As a different, but related example of the company’s creative process at work, the structure of their Kid Action Summer Camp is, like the professional company, highly ensemble-driven. Children enroll for entire weeks at a time (no drop-ins or day-by-day), form a mini-ensemble with their age group, collectively vote on a theme for their end-of-week final performance, and create and rehearse dances together based on that theme. The instructors function very much like Elizabeth as the provocateurs and editors of the final dances, but a large amount of time is spent answering the question “What can your body do?” and letting the choreography emerge from that investigation.

Elizabeth Streb sometimes refers to herself as the Action Architect, and the company of dancers at STREB as the Action Engineers. This act of borrowing vocabulary from the field of architecture and construction is fascinating and may be an interesting key to formulating ensemble-based creative processes free of the baggage and cultural associations some have with the words ‘company’, ‘director’, or ‘ensemble.’ In many ways, the designations ‘architect’ and ‘engineer’ perfectly capture each party’s role in their creative process: Elizabeth creates the overall design of the machines and choreography, literally drawing it all in immense detail; the Action Engineers figure out, through a process of investigation, *how* to bring her designs to life.

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction to the 2013 anthology *Encountering Ensemble*, theorist and practitioner John Britton identifies four elements of ensemble which have recurred throughout his research: 1.



Organizational structure, 2. Longevity, 3. Prior training. 4. Common Purpose. (Britton 7) Though no one in the STREB Company independently refers to themselves as an ensemble, when asked they uniformly agree that it is one. To apply Britton's four considerations as an external test for whether or not STREB constitutes an ensemble also results in a resounding yes. The organizational structure, while not democratic, completely revolves around sustaining a more or less permanent company of performer/creators. The longevity of the company is proven by their 40 year history and their high retention of performers throughout this time. Prior training is evident in each of the company's audition notices, which call specifically for "People with professional-level training in any form of ACTION including dancers, acrobats, athletes, gymnasts, martial artists, etc." (info@streb.org) as well as in their no-cut, three day long auditions in which potential dancers are exposed to the fundamentals of the PopAction technique before even being considered for membership in the company (Joseph). Common purpose is evident in the company's agreements to not make assumptions and to risk getting hurt as they commit to a rigorous investigation of movement in its purest form.

In conclusion, the STREB Extreme Action Company and its Action Architect Elizabeth Streb are pioneers in the field of dance and movement and may, through their example, have a lot to contribute to the field of ensemble-based theatre. Employing a highly ensemble-based though still hierarchical, iterative approach to creating work, the company stands as an excellent model of how inquiry, hierarchy and a sparing, but special use of machines can inform ensemble-devised creative methods.

WORKS CITED

- Britton, John. Introduction. *Encountering Ensemble*, edited by John Britton, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013, pp. 7, 40.
- Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity*. Directed by Catherine Gund. Kino Lorber, 2014, 01:05:35 - 01:05:52.
- info@streb.org "Re: STREB EXTREME ACTION Auditions in September!!" Received by Jordan Rosin, 10 July 2017.
- Joseph, Cassandre. Personal Interview. 31 July 2018.
- Liles, Henry. Personal Interview. 17 July 2018.
- Liles, Henry. "Re: Interview for Research Project on STREB." Received by Jordan Rosin, 31 July 2018.
- Meyers, Susan. Personal Interview. 7 July 2018.
- Meyers, Susan. Personal Interview. 2 August 2018.
- Streb, Elizabeth. *How to Become An Extreme Action Hero*. The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2010.
- Streb, Elizabeth. Personal Interview. 2 August 2018.
- Streb, Elizabeth. Rehearsal on 2 August 2018. Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, New York. 2 August 2018. Notes.
- Streb.org, www.streb.org Accessed 31 July 2018.
- Streb: Pop Action*. Directed by Michael Blackwood. Michael Blackwood Productions, 2002.
- Tavares, Fabio. Personal Interview. 14 August 2018.

Whitehead, Tony L. "Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Method." *CEHC: Cultural Ecology of Health and Change*, 17 July 2005, pp. 01–04. *Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural Assessment Research Systems (EICCARS) Working Paper Series*, [www.cusag.umd.edu/documents/workingpapers/classicalethnomethods.pdf](http://www.cusag.umd.edu/documents/workingpapers/classicalethnomethods.pdf).

#### WORKS CONSULTED

Cruz, De'Sean. Personal Interview. 25 July 2018.

DuBoys, Tyler. Personal Interview. 25 July 2018.

Dunning, Jennifer. "Dance: Elizabeth Streb." Review of performance by Elizabeth Streb. *The New York Times*, 2 May 1985, p. C00014, [www.nytimes.com/1985/05/02/arts/dance-elizabeth-streb.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1985/05/02/arts/dance-elizabeth-streb.html). Accessed 15 Sept. 2018.

Elias, Robin. "Some Unusual Memories." *Unusual.co.uk Blog*, [www.unusual.co.uk/blog/some-unusual-memories-robin-elias](http://www.unusual.co.uk/blog/some-unusual-memories-robin-elias). Accessed 15 Sept. 2018

Flansburg, Kelly. Personal Interview. 25 July 2018.

Germán, Luciany. Personal Interview. 27 July 2018.

Hess, Felix. Personal Interview. 23 July 2018.

Hedglin-Taylor, Bobby. Personal Interview. 26 July 2018.

Joseph, Cassandre. Personal Interview. 31 July 2018.

La Rocco, Claudia. "Streb" Review of *Invisible Forces* by Elizabeth Streb. *The New York Times*, 8 December 2008, vol. clviii, no. 54518.

Reynolds, Shannon. Personal Interview. 24 July 2017.

Rosin, Jordan. *STREB Extreme Action Observation Journal*. N.d. TS. Author's private collection.

Rysak, Daniel. Personal Interview. 26 July 2018.

Schindler, Mary. Personal Interview. 26 July 2018.

“Sreb\_FallLine\_Program.pdf.” [sic] *archive.thekitchen.org*, The Kitchen, 1982.

[www.archive.thekitchen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Sreb\\_FallLine\\_Program.pdf](http://www.archive.thekitchen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Sreb_FallLine_Program.pdf)

Tooman, Kalei. Personal Interview. 27 July 2018.

Wilkinson, Alec. “ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE Elizabeth Streb’s daredevil dances.”

*Newyorker.com*, 25 June 2015,

[www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/rough-and-tumble](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/rough-and-tumble). Accessed 15 Sept. 2018.