

William Forsythe (1949) is an American choreographer who has choreographed pieces on an international scale. Regarded by some as a “neo-classical” choreographer, he received extensive dance training at places such as the Joffrey Ballet and Jacksonville University. One of his mentors at Jacksonville, Nolan Dingman, was a student of Balanchine, which heavily influenced a number of Forsythe’s works early on. As his choreography evolved, he began to view movement from a new perspective, incorporating a number of variables that could influence movement and constants that many people fail to notice. In doing so, he created a very distinct style of choreography that has gained him recognition across the world.

A key to Forsythe’s creative process is the implementation of propositions. This is a system in which he takes classical shapes in dance and visualizes how they can be transformed and shifted into other parts of the body. He does not believe in the creation of new bodily functions, but merely the folding and unfolding of current functions. When working with a group of ballet dancers, Forsythe took into account the training they have received and came to a conclusion that they focus on matching lines and forms in space. He offered that they keep this idea of movement, but focus on dropping or distorting lines to create an endless range of movement.

Forsythe does not believe that choreography is limited to dance and only dance. His belief is that choreography can apply in everyday movement. How a room is set up can determine how those within this space move throughout it. They may come in daily, hang their coat up, plop down on the couch and watch their favorite show. Their walkway is determined by the setup of the room’s furniture. Forsythe believes that falling into these restricting habits limits the opportunity of experience. For that reason,

he stresses that all of the objects in a room should be taken into account when moving through space, paying attention to how these objects can influence and inspire movement.

Inspiration for Forsythe's work comes from a number of different places. Some of his ideas stem from those of Rudolf Laban, a Slovakian dance theorist. Laban believed that the body related to 27 different points within the "kinesphere", or the space people move within. This helped Forsythe to visualize the many relationships a dancer's body has with space. Based on these relationships, Forsythe created a sort of index of movement, which he refers to as his "alphabet". His alphabet is composed of 135 different set movements that set the standards for his dancers. He required his dancers to know this alphabet through and through so that they would be able to think about movement sequentially.

Forsythe teaches his dancers to focus on the beginning of movements rather than their endings. In doing so, he creates an endless number of choreographic possibilities in addition to the many possibilities inherent to the surrounding world. His close attention to even the most minute of details is what makes Forsythe such a fascinating choreographer, and his ability to approach movement from a number of different points of view that aren't always considered is refreshing.