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"That's how we started Pilobolus," Mr. Wolken said. "By getting into the studio and—"

"Flogging around," Mr. Barnett interjected.

Mr. Wolken continued: "I'd rather use the word 'play' than 'fool.' We were fools to play, but we played nevertheless. And because we had no sense of what we should do, we produced all the missing knowledge ourselves. We filled in the blanks and created more just by seeing what was interesting enough for us to want to watch it. And if it engaged us, perhaps, we felt it would be likely to engage others."

The new piece, they agreed, while at times lyrical and sweet, is not especially funny. "The humours as originally conceived were medical humors," Mr. Wolken said. "It was serious business to try to understand how the body worked. It's likely that our humors will not be in the least bit funny, but thought-provoking."

Even though the two choreographers tend to acquiesce to each other more often than not, Mr. Barnett views the company's current arrangement as temporary. Ultimately, he understands Ms. Chase's and Mr. Tracy's compulsion to work alone. "I think it's a great relief for Alison and Michael to not have to listen to a lot of alternative viewpoints," he said. "It gives them much greater control, freedom and proficiency. But I see it just as a stage. You never know what's going to happen in the future."

For Mr. Tracy, whose "Brass Ring," a work about the relationship between dance and athletics, had its premiere at the Olym-

pic Games in Salt Lake City, the issue of collaboration is complex. "It is a matter of who you get along with, and who respects you," he said. "We have a lot of experience with that, more than we do as solo choreographers. So working alone is interesting. For me, it's the reverse challenge that most choreographers face."

Mr. Tracy was vague about what led him to make dances alone, but clearly the notion of artistic ownership was part of it. Take last season's "Symbiosis."

"It was fun because I didn't have to run ideas by Jonathan and Robby," he said. "They couldn't reject them or run them down in front of anybody. It isn't often addressed, but there's a political agenda in collaboration. It's the inevitable underbelly, even in a company as small as ours is."

Ms. Chase's reasons for going it alone are somewhat different. She left Connecticut for Maine five years ago. "The move was a career suicide for myself and my husband, but we just wanted to be on the coast of Maine, so we thought, it's either now or never," she said. "Now, whenever I'm down where the company is, I kind of go: 'God! When's high tide?' I feel dislocated."

The need to travel would make collaboration difficult, Ms. Chase said. But distance is not the only reason. Tired of being in the studio with other choreographers, she now chooses to watch the initial improvisation process alone. "I found that I was able to listen in a different way to what was being generated," Ms. Chase said. "I've always needed a little time or distance. Instead of having someone buzz in my ear, saying, 'Well, gee, I think this is the wrong direc-

tion,' you just sit and listen and feel. It made a huge world of difference, and I found that I really enjoyed it. And it's not that I don't collaborate. I love working with our costume designer, Angelina Avallone. I look for dialogue and interplay with her or the dancers. I took a lot of our standard processes and reformatted them and morphed them."

For now, Ms. Chase's process is to embrace the silence in the studio that provides her ample opportunity to listen to herself and the dancers.

But she does not rule out the possibility of working with another choreographer in the future. "We were born and raised on collaboration, and I think that it will always be a part of our process," she said. "It's the dialogue and the inner activity of building a piece that is so much part of our being. You might have to change it to keep it invigorated, but I think that we will always be collaborative souls."

On that point, Mr. Barnett cannot disagree. "Collaboration is not always fun, and it's not always easy, but I think I have discovered qualities about psychological and physical interaction of humans that have some real measure of truth and beauty," he said. "And I never would have found it without working with these people." □

Pilobolus

*Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue,
at 19th Street.*

Tomorrow through July 20.