



Australasian
Dance
Collective

Forgery

Creative Learning Notes

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These creative learning notes have been developed to share insight into Australasian Dance Collective's performance season of *Forgery*. They are also designed to be used as a provocation to explore improvisation methodologies and priming.

They aim to assist secondary school dance teachers with utilising and integrating the elements of *Forgery* and improvisation into dance classrooms.

All activities directly relate to the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Years 7-10 Dance Curriculum as well as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) Dance 2019 v1.1 General Senior Syllabus for Years 11-12.



About the Company >

About the Artistic Director >

About the Dancers >



Alisdair Macindoe is an Australian dancer, sound designer and choreographer.

His experience in these fields has taken his work to many countries world-wide, earning critical acclaim in the media and receiving local and international awards including five Melbourne Greenroom awards, an Australian Helpmann award, and a New York Bessie. Notable collaborations include his work as a dancer for Lucy Guerin, Chunky Move, Antony Hamilton, Stephanie Lake and Dancenorth, and his work as a sound designer for Chunky Move, Antony Hamilton, STOMPIN and Dancenorth. His choreographic work includes commissions for Dancenorth, Lucy Guerin, Next Wave, Performance Space, and STOMPIN.

Having founded his early career predominantly as a collaborator alongside choreographers and directors, Alisdair's work as the lead creative voice has begun to consume most of his focus and this year sees him in the directors seat for the presentation of 5 new major performance works: *Reference Material* presented as part of the Darebin Speakeasy program, *Progress Report* with co-director Alison Currie through Vitalstatistix residency program, *System Error* with co-creator Tamara Saulwick through Arts House residency program, *A.I.D.* a presentation of the work he created through the NO SHOW residency at Dancenorth and *Forgery* commissioned by ADC.

Find out more about Alisdair Macindoe www.alisdairmacindoe.com or you can find examples of his work on YouTube.



Forgery was born from a practice that Alisdair has been developing for many years. His interests lie across dance, coding, improvisation, music and those interests have all coalesced into his research around computer programs and dance.

Forgery is a 45-minute dance work that is literally made on the spot – the performers are fed instructions live on stage and the decisions are held by the computer, as are the directives of the light, sound and costuming. The source of the computer's directives is a program conceived, designed and coded by Alisdair. This means that the information the computer is curating the directives from, is finite and was created by Alisdair in collaboration with the dancers and coder Joshua Mu.

Alisdair chose the name *Forgery* for the piece as it is an attempt at creating a computer-generated forgery of a human made dance work.

“This work is an experiment in redesigning how dance performance can be generated, placing a computer between myself and the dancers as live mediator of choreographic ideas, where it is empowered with decision making and authorship. Through relinquishing my control of the show, I am investigating the ways in which dancers can be prompted, influenced and instructed through computer generated spoken text. This work is, at its core, an improvisational toolset that has been developed in close collaboration with the cast, who have created strategies, techniques, and material to adapt, and apply as they navigate their way through each unpredictable incarnation of the performance.

Forgery is responding to the reality that computers analyze billions of human queries and communications a day as a means to predict, influence and replicate human behaviour. At a time when, for various reasons, we are communicating through computers more than ever, it is a meditation on contemporary agency and the dynamics of human computer relations.”

— Alisdair Macindoe

[Watch behind the scenes of *Forgery*](#)

The work uses a system of automated improvisation housed in a computer program which generates dance scores that have been created to mimic what a human choreographer might explore, instruct and direct.

The system is currently called A.I.D (Artificially Intelligent Dances). The development of this system uses very basic systems to generate material based on tree logic.

Tree logic can be described easily with an example: if you were to try to imagine a colour picker as a tree, the trunk would be colour? the first two main branches might be dark or light? and the end of each of these might be the colours of the rainbow. The is a three-step tree logic map whereby asking what colour? at the base and travelling to the end of the branch you will find, for instance, bright pink.

Another example that Alisdair uses in A.I.D is a body part picker – where the first intersection at the base of the tree is a singular or plural body part (for example, head or arms) and at the end of the tree has specificity like the outer surface of the left hand.

04 — The Computer Program behind Forgery



THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The dancers began the development in late 2020 with Alisdair zooming in from lockdown in Melbourne. They began with long sessions of improvisation becoming familiar with the A.I.D system. Alisdair also led the dancers through basic understanding of tree logic and encouraged them to author their own scores.

To create the scores that fed into the computer programming process of making the *Forgery* system, time was spent investigating the relationship between text and dance, and how one can be used to generate the other.

The three main exercises to develop the material were:

- ideation of a dance through writing a series of instructions and then testing said instructions
- watching an improvised dance and trying to document a series of instructions that might have led that improvisation
- calling out ideas throughout an improvisation in response to it

THE WORK

After the creative process, there are now 25 dance score generators behind *Forgery*, that the system can draw from to create the work. These include Chain Dance, Dancing on Syllables, Flocking and Phrase Variation to name a few.

Each generator distinctively affects the choreographic structure of the work (e.g., spatial arrangement, speed, dynamics, textures, phrase work, relationship of performers etc).

The scores are used as a tool to produce these familiar elements traditionally incorporated into a set dance work and therefore shapes the improvised performance to present confidently as fully embodied like that of a set choreography.

DANCING ON THE SYLLABLES

Dancing on the syllables is one of 25 score generators used in *Forgery*. This particular score manipulates rhythmic timings, spatial arrangements and textures within the group. It cuts between a variety of songs set at different speeds and the dancers can only move on the syllables. Tasks are then layered over the top and the responses may vary anywhere from extremely similar to vastly different due to the individual's interpretation of the directives. This creates an interesting dichotomy as the approach to the tasks is unique to each performer, yet the approach to the rhythm is unified and synchronised across the group through the syllable dancing.

In the context of the show the dancers have a song playing in their earpieces and move only on the syllables of that song whilst the audience hears a different soundscape. From a viewers' perspective, it can be impressive to watch a group navigate through the seemingly beatless, and sometimes sparse, sound scores the audience hears with a unified sense of rhythm and synchronicity.

CHAIN DANCE

Chain dance is a score developed around the idea of a chain of dancers copying each other in a feedback loop. Chain dance performed by three dancers would have dancer (a) copying dancer (b), dancer (b) copying dancer (c), and dancer (c) copying dancer (a). The score includes various ways in which each dancer is to interpret their role as copier and their relationship to the other dancers. Play with different combinations of instructions to find interesting group states of interconnected movement and motive.

This can be particularly interesting when each dancer is tending to several tasks concurrently, for example one dancer in the chain may be (1) reworking the order of the material, (2) quickly, (3) oscillating their proximity from the person they are copying, (4) as if they were in an earthquake. Tasks may include instructions centred around treatment of time, (e.g. “keep track of the last 10 seconds and reorder the material” or “reverse the order” or “quickly”), space (e.g. “enlarge the actions by 200%” or “while on the spot”), approach/interpretation (e.g. “without much focus on detail” or “highly precise and technical”), imagery (e.g. “like the space around you is a soft foam” or “imagining elastic strings connecting their body parts and yours”), style/aesthetic (e.g. “like you are a jazz dancer” or “like a mumble rapper”), dramatic/theatrical (e.g. “as if you are at a bus stop” or “somebody in a hurry” or “what you are copying is a love story to re-enact”), theoretical/psychological (e.g. “the material is a nightmare” or “a set of rules to follow”).

THE APPROACH

This way of working is about undoing common value judgements found in many dance practices as a way to search for new frameworks to appreciate performance outside of ‘good’ ‘bad’ ‘funny’ ‘meaningful’ ‘heartfelt’. It is a system that reflects a hyper postmodern agenda that looks away from tradition and conformity.

Production elements used within *Forgery* are carefully designed to enhance Alisdair Macindoe’s intention for the work. The production elements, and how they are utilised, are summarised in the table below. Each performance, all of the decisions behind the choreographic instructions and production elements are held by the computer.

Production Elements

Performance Space	The performance space is presented as a deliberately blank space, with a black projection screen at the rear of the space with the directives projected in white.
Costume	The costumes are simple two-part uniform outfits, sourced by Alisdair across a complimentary palette. Alisdair chose simple block colour so as to background them as a visual framework as opposed to a feature of the performance. Each dancer had 14 pieces that the system could select from and would do so just ahead of each performance curating the costuming. Occasionally the system would work collaboratively with the dancers, inviting them to select their 'favourite' combination of clothing items.
Lighting	The lighting has been designed to interpolate several of the 14 lighting states to create new states. The system then also curates the percentage of light intensity (having control of how light or dark the stage looks) and has control over when lighting states change and how long that takes. The range is huge from overhead specials to side lights (known as booms) amongst others.
Music/Sound	<p>The system has access to a huge library of Alisdair's compositions. The system can choose how to layer different elements of the score – it mixes several tracks concurrently in the background and foreground. The range encapsulates everything from strong rhythm to organic instrumentation.</p> <p>Inner earpieces – the dancers wear in ear monitors which deliver both the computer’s voice and other music that the audience doesn’t hear. That other music, for example, provides the dancers with beats for the phrase or lyrics for the dance on the syllables section.</p>

Tasks

1. Ask your students to consider how the combination of these production elements might impact the dance work, in what way, and why they think this, providing examples of their interpretation to justify their answers.
2. Allow students to brainstorm and discuss with a peer, and then the whole class, how production elements can enhance their own and others choreography.



What is something you've found challenging during the creative development of *Forgery*?

Finding a balance between full embodied movement and staying present to making choices as opposed to reacting instinctually.

/ **Jag Popham, Company Artist**

What is something new you've learnt during the creative development of *Forgery*?

How to perform with a "plot mentality"; this was a key skill to have when SYS would bombard us with detailed directives that had a very high level of physical intensity. As individuals in the work, we have autonomy over how we manage this scale of intensity. The "plot mentality" not only helped us to pace our physical journey, but also allowed us to remain present in the ever-changing environment of the space and heighten our listening and memory retention of what we just did.

/ **Josie Weise, Company Artist**

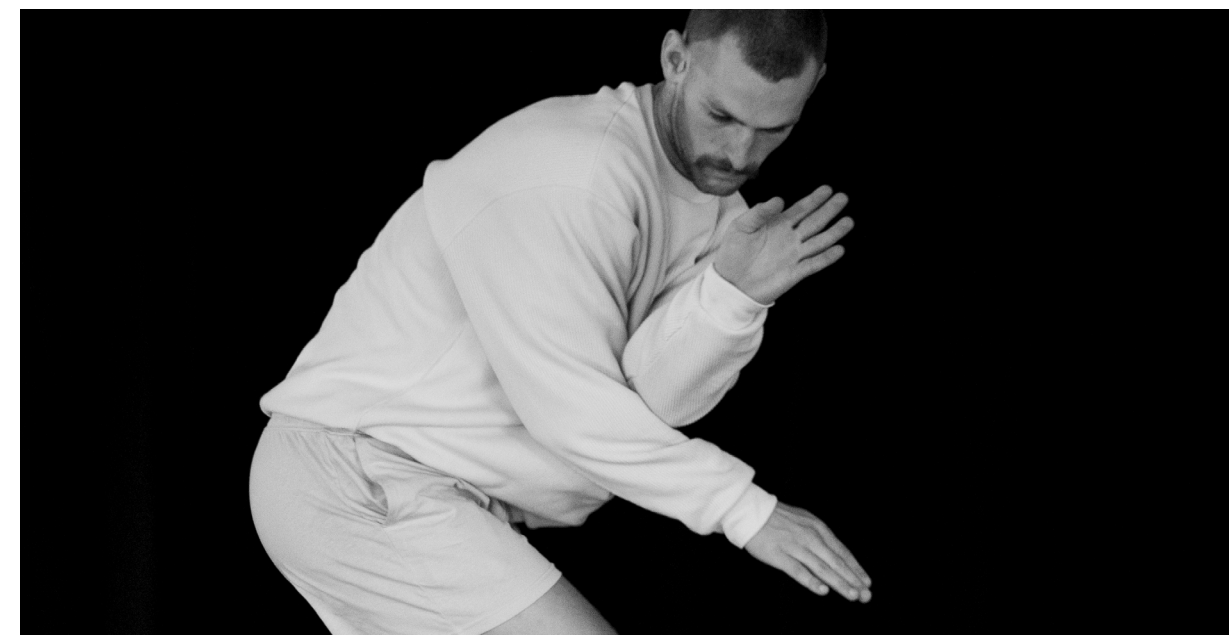
If you were to have to teach someone your role in this piece what is the most important piece of advice you could give them?

Listen! Respond without judgment - trust the algorithm to create an interesting show, all you need to do is genuinely engage with the score.

/ **Jag Popham, Company Artist**

I believe if I was to teach someone my role it would be a lot about watching and listening. This question makes you reflect on how you might respond differently to others. My role in the work was to bridge the gaps; if there were parts of the stage to fill or if a tableau needed another level etc. I took on the responsibility of completing an image. Maybe this was because I took more time to consider the task and others took on the instruction with vigour, so I was the last to arrive. It's very much about finding a dynamic in the group so if someone was to replace me, I'm sure their skills would integrate very differently.

/ **Lonii Garnons-Williams, Company Artist**



How would you describe your perception of the piece in the studio and then your perception of the piece after having performed it?

There's an extra element of energy from live audiences to consider compared to that of a studio space. It can be enticing to go bigger or perform in response to their reactions so my attention towards completing tasks purely and responding intuitively to directives became stronger.

/ **Josie Weise, Company Artist**

What is the hierarchy of your attention when tackling this experience – do you listen to SYS (the system) or the other dancers more?

I like to think that I have three brains in this piece. My first brain is on SYS (the system), my second brain on the group - constantly checking in where everyone is - and my third brain would be on myself.

/ **Chase Clegg-Robinson, Company Artist**

These choreographic tasks have been drawn from the creative development of *Forgery*, designed to encourage your students to explore a variety of movement development techniques through the Making strand.

<p>All tasks make strong connections to the Australian Curriculum Dance Aims of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• body awareness and technical and expressive skills to communicate through movement confidently, creatively and intelligently• choreographic and performance skills and appreciation of their own and others' dances• aesthetic, artistic and cultural understanding of dance in past and contemporary contexts as choreographers, performers and audiences• respect for and knowledge of the diverse purposes, traditions, histories and cultures of dance by making and responding as active participants and informed audiences	<p>The following creative tasks use the below 21st Century Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking• Creative thinking• Communication• Collaboration and teamwork• Personal and social skills
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Task A — Create a score generator

This score generator tool is an effective way to take the pressure off creating, and alleviating analysis paralysis or judgment in choreographic choice making. You can create your own scores through brainstorming categories of choreographic elements and choosing how to structure them in a sentence. Shuffle around the variables and enjoy observing each other's responses and exploring the endless possibilities for movement with freedom. Below is a set of steps to follow and examples of how to generate the scores.

STEP 1

Making Score Categories

Begin by creating lists of different choreographic elements and writing down many options for each category.

Insight: Consider ways to affect the spatial arrangement, movement physicality, group relationships and body parts in use. See an example of some score categories in the INDEX at the bottom.

STEP 2

Structure a Score Sentence

Form the skeleton of a sentence by selecting a few of the score categories you've created and write them down. Then write down a random word from each category. For example...
Score Categories: Body part + Direction + Travel Locations
Words chosen within Score Categories: R arm + towards + centre

Insight: At first, keep it simple with a small selection of score categories from your lists to practice with (suggestion 3-4). When you get more comfortable you can add on more categories later!

STEP 3

Fill in the Blanks

After choosing multiple words from your score categories, the skeleton of the sentence may not make sense. Look at the string of words and add **linking words** until your sentence is complete and coherent. You can also shuffle the order of your category words if need be. Get creative, there is no right or wrong way to fill in the blanks. For example...

Select the categories: travel pathways + animal embodiment + texture + travel location + body part. The structure of the resulting sentence reads as: rounded, wombat, cracking, centre, upper gum.

You can shuffle the order and add linking words to structure the sentence to read as: ***In a*** ROUNDED ***pathway, travel to*** CENTRE, ***embodying a*** WOMBAT ***with a*** CRACKING UPPER GUM.

Insight: The category titles can prompt how to use the descriptor word

STEP 4

Explore Your Score

Now that you've generated a score sentence it becomes the physical task to explore. There are many ways to explore these scores within the classroom. A single score sentence could be explored by the whole group, each individual could be allocated a different score, small groups could explore multiple scores etc.

Insight: In the studio with Alisdair we would often split the room into two, write scores for a partner and observe how these scores can be physicalised on another body.

Enjoy making new scores and continue to practice, witness and discuss in a playful group environment.

INDEX ————— Score Categories Examples

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Body Parts

***Suggested linking words (the, your)**

hip bone, throat, R arm, fingers, L ankle, tailbone, nose, sternum, palm,
elbows, teeth, hair, R knuckles, occipital joint, L ear, cheekbones, stomach,
intestines, belly button, L big toe, tongue, eyelids, eyebrows, upper gum,

Direction

***Suggested linking words (moving, traversing to, travel, go)**

Towards, away from, upwards, offstage, onstage, prompt, opposite
prompt, behind something, on top of something, in front of something,
next to, opposite to, parallel to, avoid, underneath.

Textures

***Suggested linking words (with a ___ texture, experiment with, explore a ___ body, in a ___ way)**

Towards, away from, upwards, offstage, in stage, prompt, opposite prompt,
behind something, on top of something, in front of something, next to,
opposite to, parallel to, avoid, underneath.

Travel Locations

***Suggested linking words (travel to, at the, whilst moving to, arrive, find your way)**

3 meters behind the centre, stage r, stage L, upstage, downstage, in the
centre of the room, at the front right corner of the space, at the front left
corner of the space, at the back right corner of the space, at the back left
corner of the space, along the back edge, centre

Travel Pathways

***Suggested linking words (in a _____ pathway/fashion)**

rounded, zigzag, rhombus, square, triangle, squiggly, double helix, straight,
floor bound, circular, looped, curly, pinball

Animal Embodiment

***Suggested linking words (embody a, in a _____ fashion, how would a _____)**

Dung beetle, camel, pelican, wombat, frog, hedgehog, walrus, baboon,
raccoon, sea snake, bilby, octopus, eagle, dodo, cheetah, dragon, iguana,
dingo, rabbit, golden mole, krill, polar bear, panda, chicken, cow, dog, squid,
ant, rat, blue-tongue lizard, t-rex, goldfish, ancient tortoise, salmon, bear

Formations

Suggested linking words (in a, create a, make)

clump, grid, triangle, diagonal line, two parallel lines, circle,

Group Possibilites

***Suggested linking words (as a, in)**

solo, duet, trio, quartet, group of 5, pairs, whole group

Speed

***Suggested linking words (in, with a _____pace, in a _____way)**

slow motion, fast forward, continuous pace, quickly, briskly, normal,
reverse, really really fast, even faster, slowly

Size

***Suggested linking words (with a ___size, explore _____, gesture, at)**

miniature, giant, medium, small, barely visible, large, toddler, grown adult,
little, head level, knee level

Action

***Suggested linking words (experiment with, whilst, try to, begin)**

Holding hands, sipping tea, cutting grass, twisting a doorknob, making the
bed, putting out washing, scratching, yawning, blinking, wriggling, brushing,
slapping, raging, skipping, tripping, falling, hang, spear, tickle, brush the hair
of, have a conversation with

Task B — Dancing on the syllables

As outlined in **05 The Creative**

Process – Dancing on the Syllables is a score that manipulates rhythmic timings, spatial arrangements and textures. It can cut between a variety of songs set at different speeds and the dancers only move on the syllables.

Tasks are then layered over the top and the responses may vary anywhere from extremely similar to vastly different due to the individual’s interpretation of the directives. However, the reactivity to the rhythm prescribed by the lyrics should be unified.

STEP 1

Music

Pick a song

STEP 2

Listen

Start by stomping your feet or clapping your hands to the syllables of the song and noting the silences. Hot tip: Having the lyrics in front of you can help.

STEP 3

Movement

Once you’re familiar with the song, you can begin incorporating other body parts and experimenting with different movement on the syllables.

STEP 4

Explore

You and your students can create a list of tasks to layer over the top and call them out at random while dancing on the syllables. Consider ways to affect the spatial, textural and dynamic arrangement. Some examples of different tasks include; a floating cloud body, changing your levels, travel to a corner of the space, catch flies with chopstick fingers, melt on the silences and grow on the syllables, make a line as a group, crawl like a beetle.

Get wild with your imagination and be playful.

STEP 5

Repeat

Pick another song and repeat the process. You can even select a variety of songs to cut between and explore different syllable timings.

FURTHER LAYERS OF COMPLEXITY

To generate the scores to add on top of the Dance to the Syllables section we focused on three main activities.

- Things that created a physical dance for each person in their kinesphere
- Things that created locomotion
- Things that created group structures

Here is an excoerpt from one of the show files illustrating the three activities

Kinesphere	Locomotion	Group Structure
Do a national dance	Army crawls	Step to the perimeter of the space
Tiny short sharp moves	High knees	Come into a clump
You're a flag twirler	Natural Walking	Form one line
Only move wrists	Pas de bourée	Drag to the side of the space
Get dressed	Your feet are bear paws	Walk back and forth across the stage

Task C — Phrase generation

Alisdair also used the system to generate a phrase: for example, the system would allocate a dancer a set number of counts to create material for and then generate a task to set on those counts. That dancer would then teach the whole group their material and counts and this process was repeated with each person until enough material was created for a unison phrase.

For example, “Lonii - on counts five, six, seven, eight, one, two, you are searching through a tiny room full of baskets with your elbows. Chase - on counts three, four, five, sparkling sternum flips pancakes onto the knees.”

This method can be easily adapted without a computer. One interesting approach could be to create a numbered list of body parts and directions/shapes, then roll a single dice to determine your combination of directives and roll again to determine the number of counts to set the movement to. You would end up with instructions like “left hand, circles, for 3 counts” etc.

Here’s an example of the method

STEP 1 / ROLL THE DICE, THE NUMBER ON THE DICE REFERS TO WHICH BODY PART TO USE

Body Part

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Eyebrow | 4. Left hand |
| 2. Knee | 5. Elbows |
| 3. Pinky toe | 6. Right thigh |

STEP 2 / ROLL THE DICE, THE NUMBER ON THE DICE REFERS TO THE SHAPE/ DIRECTIONAL PATHWAY

Direction/Shape

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. Circular | 4. Wobbly |
| 2. Linear | 5. To the floor |
| 3. Zig zag | 6. Floating |

STEP 3 / ROLL THE DICE AGAIN TO DETERMINE OVER HOW MAY COUNTS YOU MUST SET MOVEMENT TO

Responding tasks

These tasks aim to develop students' ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate different ways of creating and curating dance examining the techniques applied in *Forgery* through the Responding strand.

TASK 1

Students can complete a reverse chronology research task on Alisdair Macindoe to discover the influences on his concepts and choreography to ultimately enhance the depth of their knowledge of *Forgery* and its creator. This research can also encapsulate investigation of other choreographers that use chance as a choreographic tool – eg. Merce Cunningham. By exploring who else uses this methodology, students can compare different ways that chance is utilised in choreography.

TASK 2

After completing the choreographic and improvisation tasks within these notes, students can take time to interrogate and analyse *what does it mean to be a choreographer*. While a choreographer may create, direct, provoke, curate and hold ultimate responsibility for the decisions on how a piece is crafted, there are many ways to approach and develop a practice. Encourage your students to reflect on what might inform their own choreographic practice moving forward.

The main method for score generation employed in Forgery uses a simple tree logic language called Context Free Grammar. To create a score generator using this system you will create two things.

1. Terminals. Think of terminals as the ends of branches where there are no more decisions to make, and you have reached a set answer. These will always end up being words.
2. Nonterminals. Think of these as the points where stems of the tree split in two or more directions. These need to be represented with a symbol that references another part of the map.

A really simple generator could be as follows. Here one single nonterminal layer creates three possible outcomes for the score. To create a new score just work through each nonterminal until you have only text.

<score1> = Move the <body_part>

<body_part> = leg (or) arm (or) shoulder

A more readable format for dancers to write in Context Free Grammar can be employing a new line as the “|” OR separator, hashtags as the nonterminal symbol and > as the equals sign, this takes up a lot more page space but is easier to read and decode. As Follows

>score1

- Move the #body_part#

>body_part

- leg
- arm
- shoulder

Possible outcomes = Move the leg. Move the arm.

Move the shoulder.

The following score has two layers of nonterminals.

Note: so long as each nonterminal has a unique name,

any nonterminal in the database can be accessed

at any time in the process of generating a final

terminal sentence, thus this generator also uses the

nonterminals already established in the previous score.

- <score2> = <speed_adverb> <action_noun_phrase>

- <speed_adverb> = quickly (or) slowly (or)
 <collaborative_speed>

- <collaborative_speed> = at your own pace (or) in
 time with everybody else (or) when you think its a
 good idea

- <action_noun_phrase> = <score_1> (or)

- <locomotion_verb> to the <place_in_space_noun>

- <locomotion_verb> = walk (or) step (or) gallop

- <place_in_space_noun> = the back corner (or) the
 centre (or) the front.

>score2

- #speed_adverb# #action_adverb#

>speed_adverb

- quickly
- slowly
- #collaborative_speed#

>collaborative_speed

- at your own pace
- in time with everybody else
- when you think its a good idea

>action_noun_phrase

- #score_1#
- #locomotion_verb# to the #place_in_space_noun#

>locomotion_verb

- walk
- step
- gallop

>place_in_space_noun

- the back corner
- the centre
- the front.

Possible outcomes: Slowly step to the back corner.

Quickly move the shoulder. In time with everybody else
move the leg. when you think it is a good idea gallop to
the centre.

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