



## Amsterdam Master of Choreography (AMCh)<sup>1</sup>

Artists who have established a professional practice and seek possibilities for further reflection and development can increase their research skills at the Amsterdam Master of Choreography. This two-year non-residential program of the Amsterdam School of the Arts aims to contribute to the field of critical and contemporary dance research and creation. The individual artistic practice is the point of departure and will be the guiding thread of the course design.

### Description

#### OVERALL CONDITIONS OF STUDY

A two-year full time study course for dance artists who are interested in augmenting their existing professional practice through immersion in a rigorous Master level arts research program. The program provides a support structure and organization to facilitate choreographic and interdisciplinary practice-led research; with an emphasis on the processes of personal practice and the exploration and facilitation of research vectors unavailable to the candidate/artists in their current contexts. Therefore, the individual's artistic practice and research is the point of departure of the program and will be the guiding thread of the course content design.

The program accepts three student/artists each year resulting in a full contingent of no more than six to eight students at one time. This curriculum structure includes one (minimally) six-week **individual residency** in Amsterdam to be undertaken in the first year; six two-week **intensive group seminars** (three-per-year); continuous **mentoring** by both internal (from the Core Staff listed below) and external practitioners; **public platforms** for presentation of both research and artwork.

One of the criteria for participation in the program is an existing professional practice (at least three years), through which the candidate demonstrates his or her capacity to maintain the necessary support structures for their art practice, and to examine and reflect on its situatedness; the multiple connections and relations immanent to the conditions of making. Students are expected to create clear research paths resonant with these existing conditions. Therefore, while attendance and participation in the scheduled residency, all seminars, meetings and platforms is mandatory, full-time residency in Amsterdam is not a requirement.

#### INDIVIDUAL RESIDENCY

The program is able to provide a variety of resources (including dedicated studio space in Amsterdam and a limited budget) for this sustained (minimally) six-week encounter with the student's making practice. The residency will be designed by the individual student with the support of the Core Staff and may involve collaborators (e.g. performers, dramaturges, designers, etc.). A draft design of the residency will already be a part of the second round of the selection process in order that AMCh program resources can be made explicit in connection to the student's proposed research plans.

#### INTENSIVE GROUP SEMINARS

The two-week seminars (three-per-year) are intended as intensive events during which each student will present their research questions, methods and processes for peer review and feedback. Students, Core Staff and invited guest presenters will work together to prepare

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly Dance Unlimited Amsterdam. Accredited by the NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders), the official diploma title is "Master of Dance" as listed in the CROHO (Central Register of Higher Education Programs) with the special orientation of "choreography". A total of 120 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) will be earned during the two-year study.



reading material or other objects of study for each Seminar. Various writing components of the program (as constituted in the Dossier) will be collectively discussed.

The **first seminar**, organized at the start of the academic year, is intended as an orientation comprising several opportunities for each first-year student to introduce their background, research plans and making practice. Second-year students will present the current state of their research activities with an overview of their trajectories. A guest artist will be invited to kick-off each seminar with an in-depth reflection on their research praxis. The Core Staff will then lead various sessions on topics such as research documentation, meta-practices, interdisciplinarity and arts research issues and debates. Each student will take the lead for a day, introducing the others to their work and problematize their motivation statements as research questions.

The **second seminar**, organized mid-year, will include a (semi) public interdisciplinary symposium. Speakers and topics will be determined in part by the various research vectors of the students; and they may be from any discipline, domain of information, area of expertise or knowledge. A segment of this seminar will focus on a more practice-based, hands-on approach to research praxis, guided by a guest artist. The writing/reading component of the course is also emphasised during this seminar; close-readings of assigned texts will be threaded through ongoing peer/mentor feedback. Selected papers of the second year students will also be discussed.

The **third seminar**, at the end of the academic year, will serve as the context for a research progress report from all first year students and the final research presentation for those finishing the program. Final presentations will take place in a public venue, engage a selected wider audience and give evidence (through documentation, demonstration, lecture, performance and other means) of the quality, reflexivity, rigor, relationality and integrity of the two-year arts research process. The regular seminar programme of text discussion, research activity and writing feedback will be interleaved with the graduating student's presentation agenda.

## MENTORING

A critical component of the program, mentoring supports the large independent study component and is provided by both Core Staff, as internal mentors, and external mentors with qualifications in the specific research vectors of the students. Responsive to a range of dynamics and relationships, mentoring augments written course materials and guidelines; integrates the results of ongoing quality assurance measures and enhances the contents of the study course.

**Internal** mentoring provides the necessary continuity of engagement between the student and the course structure; and site visits (outside of Amsterdam) are possible. (see also Dossier)

- Six documented mentor exchanges (staff mentors may be interchangeable)
- Self evaluations/ progress reports with mentor comments after each semester
- One mentor visit per year to the student's studio
- In total this amounts to 12 hours per student per mentor per year; additional hours are paid by the student from student budget

**External** mentoring is undertaken as a commission from the student for advice and feedback on the research process and progress; and to provide critical and professional input and reference points. As early as the first round of the selection process, the student is encouraged to propose external mentors who can best complement their research objectives. Core Staff and the internal mentor will help to facilitate the eventual commission(s). External mentoring provides a vehicle for structured relationships with experts from complementary fields (science, social science, cultural studies, etc.) as well as professionals from the choreographic field.



- Three external mentor sessions per year. Can be translocally implemented via Skype, iChat, email/blog, etc.
- Feedback from the external mentor on the half-year reports of the student
- The standard fee for external mentors is 300 euro per student per external mentor

## PUBLIC PLATFORMS

In addition to the final research presentation during the third seminar in the second year, it is the aim of the program to facilitate a single public presentation of the students' performance work in local professional contexts. Negotiations are currently underway with Netherlands based performance platform/venues including Springdance, Utrecht and WG Frascati, Amsterdam.

## DOSSIER/ DOCUMENTATION/ DISSEMINATION

The **Dossier** is a cumulative project that supports and explores writing across a range of registers including: enhancing communication, expanding observation and critical faculties and expository and creative writing based on reference research and extant literature. Questions arising from the relationship between writing, reading practices and research materials will be explored throughout the course. The final Dossier will include the four Half-Year Reports, two publishable papers and documentation of research activity. The Dossier will also contain the six reports from the mentoring sessions per year.

**Documentation** refers to the specific methods and approaches used to trace something of the contours (physiological, phenomenological, psychic, nomadic, critical, emotional, theoretical, diagrammatic, etc.) of the practice-led research. What questions does one circle around and return to through this process? What means and modes of reflection are made possible through documentation and how can its **dissemination** further the public's engagement with the research?

Although AMCh is a practice-led research program and as such takes the position that it does not focus primarily on theoretical practices per se (as would an academic Dance Studies degree course); the ability to communicate aspects of the process of personal practice through writing and various forms documentation will be a prerequisite for satisfying the terms of the study.

Half-Year Reports (4): these documents, due in the spring and end summer of each year are focal to the assessment (self-assessment, mentor feedback and institutional assessment) of the programme. They contain a chronological synopsis of activity, notes from the seminars and residency, documentation of experiments, methods, projects, productions, reading/writing, etc., undertaken during the period.

Internal Mentor Reports(6): Synopses of meetings with mentors and dramaturges including suggestions and task assignments that may emerge from these sessions.

External Mentor Reports (3): Synopses of meetings/correspondences with mentors including suggestions and task assignments that may emerge from these sessions.

Papers (2): Two publishable papers of word length 3000+ and 5000+.

Documentation: Additional audio-visual, textual, pictorial, etc., material of the research process, residency period and production results (if any).



## POINT SYSTEM/EVALUATION FOR CREDIT

### Program Year 1

3 seminars of 2 wks Sep/Jan/June	15 ects
Residency 6 wks	10
Individual track / mentoring	20
Writing practice	5
Choreographic productions	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

### Program Year 2

3 seminars of 2 wks Sep/Jan/June	15 ects
Research presentation	10
Individual track / mentoring	20
Writing practice	5
Choreographic production	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

## EVALUATION

Research plans for the selection interview will lay the ground for the generation of appropriate individualized **evaluation criteria** for the candidate/artist. Upon selection, these will be further contextualized in and around the research plan, aims and objectives and the emerging documented results of the research process of the individual student.

Evaluations are written together by candidate/artist, mentor and external mentor at the end of every semester. Within the formal sanctioning parameters of this process, an evaluation incorporates a qualitative assessment accompanied by crediting. The credits provide a basis for confirming the student is passed to go onto the next study year (or to repeat the study year) and ultimately confirming the conferral, or not, of the final diploma.

### Types of Evaluation:

1. Half Year Reports: Continuous Evaluation of each student takes place through **meetings** with mentor(s) and results in **Half Year Reports** written at the end of each semester. **Mentor reports** are integrated within this document and are indicative of the student's development and progress based on the individual student's own evaluation criteria. The Half Year Report is written by the student with commentary added by internal mentor(s) and the external mentor in relation to the larger aims of the programme.
2. Dossier: Research Practice evaluation is based on documentation of Individual Study through **writing requirements (the dossier)**. The artistic merit of the final presentation in **choreographic practice** is **not assessed**, but is made accountable through documentation of professional reviews. The articulation of the research process and its documentation is assessed according to each individual student's authorized evaluation criteria. At the conclusion of the **practice-based research activities**, the mentor(s) and coordinator review the documentation of these activities producing a written evaluation in the second year.



### Assignment of Credits<sup>1</sup>:

1. The evaluations of the **research process, writing requirements (the dossier) and presentations** result in the assignment of credits. In the case of the non-graded writings and presentations, the evidence of the completed work is sufficient for credit assignment. For the essays and presentations, the process engages core staff members and a committee comprising a mentor, two other course related reviewers and one external reviewer. If a passing mark is achieved, credit is assigned. At the end of the year the internal mentor(s) and the AMCh coordinator meet with the participant to evaluate the research progress. The credits are accordingly credited per term.
2. During the research process and **practice-based activities**, students produce documentation including reports of meetings with external mentors, which is reviewed by the mentor and coordinator; if sufficient evidence of activities is shown, credit is assigned.

### Evaluation Criteria/ Process:

A committee comprising two staff teachers of AMCh and one external assessor evaluate the research presentations. The evaluation consists of an initial presentation in a public context (stage, screen, etc.) followed by an oral presentation prepared and delivered by the student concerning the research project, giving evidence of completed work correlated to the assessment criteria.

On the following day, the committee engages the student in a one-hour discussion, facilitated by the committee chairperson. Topics such as those bulleted below are discussed and defended by the student:

- the student's raison d'être for artistic research
- the quality and integrity of research strategies with respect to current practice
- methods of problematising
- decision processes
- production constraints

The writing assignments are pass/fail. The study progress, to which academic writing guidelines are applied, are evaluated according to the set of criteria established in the research plan, by at least two Core Staff teachers.

Final presentations at the end of the second year will take place in a public venue, engage a selected wider audience and give evidence (through documentation, demonstration, lecture, performance and other means) of the quality, reflexivity, rigor, relationality and integrity of the two-year arts research process.

### Award of Diploma:

A final graduation talk takes place when all credits have been received and all obligations have been met. Here, the development of the student during the study course, the level achieved (in relation to the Final Qualifications) and future plans and expectations are discussed with the mentor(s) and the coordinator. At the end of the final graduation talk, the student receives the diploma.

### BUDGET

Each candidate/artist is entitled to a personal budget that can be used to take care of the expenses of additional advisors, dramaturges, collaborators, technicians. For more detail about practical matters see the appendix. The exact amount of the budget will be determined every year in spring.

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<sup>1</sup> see AMCh Study Guide 2004-2006, p. 18-19 (overview of credits)



## CORE STAFF

**Sher Doruff**, formerly Head of the Research Program at Waag Society, is currently a Research Fellow with the ARTI Lectoraat of the Amsterdam School of the Arts. She received her PhD from University of the Arts London/Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2006. Her research investigates the role of collaborative interplay and creative processes in performance practice, evolving the concepts in her dissertation: "The Translocal Event and the Polyrhythmic Diagram." She has published numerous papers, edited a book on Live Art, regularly lectures and presents in academic and artistic contexts and nurtures a modest artistic practice.

**Jeroen Fabius** (AMCh Director of Program) was head of department of the School for New Dance Development in association with Robert Steijn from 2000-2002, and has been teaching Dance History and Anthropology since 1991. He is currently Research Fellow with the Art Theory and Research and Art Practice and Development Research Group, Amsterdam School for the Arts and is doing his PhD with the University of Utrecht (working title: "Material political bodies. The role of proprioception and kinesthetics in political subjectivity"). He has been a member of the Dance committee for the Fonds voor Amateur en Podiumkunsten since 2004.

**Myriam Van Imschoot** is enmeshed in the making and thinking of dance performance. Originally a dance historian and essay writer, she has become a regular collaborator of Meg Stuart and Benoît Lachambre (as a dramaturg and occasionally as a performer and co-teacher). She has been involved in projects with Vera Mantero (curator of Connexive), Antonia Baehr (performer), Philipp Gehmacher (dramaturg), Tristero (coach) and Jérôme Bel (bookmaker). Together with Jeroen Peeters she leads Sarma, a workplace for dance related research with an extensive text collection on [www.sarma.be](http://www.sarma.be). In 2008 she is researcher in residence at Kaaitheater and Workspace Brussels with 'Crash Landing Revisited (and more)', a research project that seeks to develop a collaborative and curatorial approach towards shared historical praxis and is invested in themes like improvisation, catastrophe culture and sound.

**Bettina Masuch** (\*1964, Solingen, Germany) worked between 1998 – 2003 as Dramaturge at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin and as dramaturge for Meg Stuart at the Schauspielhaus in Zurich ("Alibi", 2002, "Visitors Only", 2003). Between 2003 – 2008 she was Curator for dance at the Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin: Artistic director of the dance festival „CONTEXT“ Member of the artistic direction panel of „Tanz im August“, Berlin. Since 2008 she is Artistic Director of Springdance Festival in Utrecht.

**Thomas Lehmen** is a freelance choreographer, dancer and teacher based in Berlin. He studied from 1986-1990 at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. His productions, e.g. "distanzlos"(99), "mono subjects"(01), "Schreibstück"(02), "Better to ..." (04), oder "Lehmen lernt"(06) are touring worldwide. In the stage pieces as well in projects like "Funktionen" (Toolbox) 04, he is interested in communications, cybernetics and the status of human beings in correlation with structures as a conceptual approach. He is teaching at universities for example in Amsterdam, Berlin and Hamburg, and gives workshops worldwide.

[www.thomaslehmen.de](http://www.thomaslehmen.de)

**Susan Rethorst** has been creating dances since 1975. Her work has been presented by many New York venues including The Museum of Modern Art; The Kitchen Center, Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace Saint Marks, as well as at various dance theaters, universities, and festivals throughout the U.S. Internationally her work has been produced by The Holland Festival, Spazio Zero Rome, The Kunsthalle Basel, The Aix-en-Provence Festival, among others. In 1999, she was the recipient of a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. She has recently co-initiated SUPA (studio Upson in Pennsylvania), a program dedicated to choreography: how it is thought of and taught, and what of its knowledge is applicable to other fields. Her current work is a series of 'no-money-no-space dances' and addresses issues of displacement and security in relation to space.