

I Went to the End of Time, and This is What I Found:

A Look into the Making of a Solo Performance

by

Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal

A Bound Document Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

Approved April 2014 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Eileen Standley, Chair  
Pegge Vissicaro  
Jeff McMahon

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014

## ABSTRACT

*I'll go to the end of time for you (and you don't even know my name)* is an evening-length solo performance created and performed by Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal. It premiered November 8-10, 2013 in the Margaret Gisolo Dance Theatre of Arizona State University. The solo was the culmination (suspension, really) of a wild creative journey, the distillation of a process that initially involved several collaborators. Through a series of neurotically/erotically repetitive episodes of self-composed song, text, and dance, the work mines questions of the desire to be seen and the desire to feel alive. The conventions and constructs of the proscenium stage are both utilized and subverted in examining this platform as uniquely suited for revealing the nature of these experiences and their potential relationship. This document is primarily an account of the show's process—its before and after—and serves as a site of exploration, explanation, analysis, reflection, questioning, and ultimately furtherance of the practice-based research made manifest in the performances.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you Eileen Standley, Pegge Vissicaro, and Jeff McMahon for your deep, unwavering, spacious support and guidance. Thank you too Karen Schupp for your contributions as an initial committee member.

Thank you Mary Fitzgerald for your encouragement and availability.

Thank you In Kyung Lee and Alejandro Salcido – I am (still) the luckiest.

Thank you ASU production folks for your time and energy.

Thank you Inertia DeWitt, Amanda Ling, Alexandra Mathews, and Radmila Olshansky for making the journey.

Thank you Emily DePaula, Inertia DeWitt, Anthony Gonzales, Léla Groom, Erica Ocegueda, Radmila Olshansky, and Denise Stein for your courage, curiosity, commitment, trust, vigor, and heart. You are the embodiments of inspiration.

Thank you Richard Armstrong, Aitana Cordero, Beth Gill, Keith Hennessey, Claudia LaRocco, and Eileen Standley for the permission, for the space you so courageously hold.

Thank you Cartel Coffee Lab and Lux Coffee for your aliveness.

Thank you Daniel Nagrin and Shane O’Hara for your singularity.

Thank you Kate Trammell for seeing the flame and fanning it fiercely (and tenderly).

Thank you Mom and JP, forever and ever.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 HOW TO READ THIS .....	1
2 PERSONAL HISTORY.....	2
3 THESIS BACKGROUND.....	15
4 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	23
5 MAKING & PERFORMING .....	32
a. Spring 2013 .....	32
b. Summer 2013.....	38
c. Fall 2013.....	44
6 ANALYSIS, INSIGHTS, & CONCLUSIONS .....	54
REFERENCES .....	61
APPENDICES .....	62
A “DANCE MATTERS” TALK .....	62
B PERFORMANCE TEXT .....	70

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. <i>Transcendence-Indulgence</i> , Photo by Hayley Brunetto .....	9
2. <i>(coming out party) for the directionless: My Post-Modern Mantra</i> , Photo by Arthur Fink .....	12
3. <i>Divine neuroses, please carry me home. 1</i> , Photo by Hayley Brunetto .....	13
4. <i>Divine neuroses, please carry me home. 2</i> , Photo by Hayley Brunetto .....	13
5. <i>Orange Trees &amp; Inky</i> , Photo by Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal.....	32
6. <i>Journal page 1</i> , Photo by Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal.....	36
7. <i>Journal page 2</i> , Photo by Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal.....	45
8. <i>Thesis show 1</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	48
9. <i>Thesis show 2</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	48
10. <i>Thesis show 3</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	49
11. <i>Thesis show 4</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	49
12. <i>Thesis show 5</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	50
13. <i>Thesis show 6</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	51
14. <i>Thesis show 7</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	52
15. <i>Thesis show 8</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	52
16. <i>Thesis show 9</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	53
17. <i>Thesis show 10</i> , Photo by Tim Trumble.....	53

## CHAPTER 1

### HOW TO READ THIS

This thesis document was constructed to dance between formal and informal ways of conveying information. While I generally adhere to conventional structures and headings for the container of this paper, I oscillate between the theoretical and the deeply personal; I move between texts that I wrote at different times within the last year and a half (always with contextualization); and I shift between carefully crafted narratives and verbatim transcriptions of messy talks and journal entries. My intention is to create a reading experience that mirrors the aesthetic of my performance work, which is at once theatrical and pedestrian.

## CHAPTER 2

### PERSONAL HISTORY

My life in the performing arts began early. The first time I remember appearing onstage was in my second grade class' production of *The Three Little Pigs*. After that year, I went on to participate in several summer drama camps through middle school. I enjoyed acting, singing, and dancing, although I received little formal instruction in any of these disciplines through this time. Most of the summer programs were for large groups of children and geared towards the performance of a specific production, a focus on the end product rather than on technique or process. I also started playing piano in elementary school and took private lessons. In fifth grade I began playing flute, and by middle school I was taking private lessons and gave up all other involvement in the arts to pursue flute playing exclusively. I was intensely focused all through high school, practicing flute for hours each day, and auditioned for undergraduate schools of music.

I attended James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, pursuing a Bachelors of Music with a Concentration in Music Education. For two years, I was a music major, continuing to practice hours a day and performing several times a month in various capacities including orchestras, small chamber ensembles, and solo recitals. I was also attending numerous recitals and concerts weekly. This was a treat because I was conscious even then of my deep interest in the nature of performance. Witnessing how my peers and professors presented themselves onstage, what happened to them physiologically in that critical moment when they walked from offstage to onstage, performed, and then moved offstage again; how musicians moved their bodies onstage; how they related physically to their instruments, to others onstage, and the audience; how

different musicians dealt with those incredibly exciting moments when something went wrong (which is oh-so-clear in classical music performance)... all of this was fascinating for me, thrilling even, second only to my own experience of the aforementioned phenomena as the one performing. The hours upon hours spent in the practice room were only worth it for those few sweet moments of surrender onstage—that plunge into the unknown. The urgency of those moments is what attracted me... the need to negotiate constantly between what I intended to have happen in performance from moment to moment and to be attentive and responsive to what was actually happening at the same time... that space between, the being in that space between, that suspension of time... the energetic exchange... the energy coming from the many audience members sitting quietly yet expectantly, the energy around me from the other musicians in the orchestra or from the lone pianist playing behind me, and my own body as a conduit for receiving, transforming, and transmitting this energy as my thoughts were in conversation with my sensations... This heightened state, hyperawareness, “live-ness” of performance was what made me most aware of my aliveness, what made me feel most alive.

While I recognize the tautology of this last sentence, the difficulty in describing this experience of aliveness is perhaps inherent in the fact that it cannot be captured in words. I digress from my personal history for a moment to take a closer look at this. In his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, a seminal text in the field of architecture, Christopher Alexander carefully considers this very problem. He writes,

2. There is a central quality which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and



precise, but it cannot be named. 3. The search which we make for this quality, in our own lives, is the central search of any person, and the crux of any individual person's story. It is the search for those moments and situations when we are most alive. (ix-x)

Alexander goes on to unpack the processes and structures that seem to yield buildings and towns that are “alive,” positing that such spaces then inspire and enact our aliveness as people when we are in them. I jump ahead a bit in my own story to say that I have learned that it is the space of performance—a conceptual space as opposed to a physical space—that makes me feel alive.

While Alexander identifies this quality that people seek but says it cannot be named, he does suggest there are many words used to talk about it, such as “alive,” “whole,” “comfortable,” “free,” “exact,” “egoless,” and “eternal.” Ultimately, however, each is reductive, incomplete, or rife with implication that leaves it inadequate. Interestingly, I have come to read Alexander's book at the same time that I am writing this document, and the word that Alexander seems to use most often for the quality is “aliveness.” This is also the word I used throughout my thesis research as I came to question the nature of performance and what it does for me. Accordingly, “aliveness” is the word I too use most often in this document to describe the unnamable quality.

To return to my original chronology, I remember being attracted to the idea of dancing in my later teen years, but by that point I had made a commitment to flute and thought it was “too late” to begin dancing. As my father reminded me a couple of years ago, throughout my adolescence I was often dancing my way around the house in my daily life, swaying, jumping, twirling my way up and down the hallways. At any rate, in my second semester as an undergraduate student, I enrolled in a class with the mysteriously alluring title of Dance Improvisation. It sounded like exactly what I was craving, which was something—anything—to get me out of the prison-cell-sized, windowless practice rooms of the music building, and somewhere I could explore my creative body in relationship to myself rather than to the flute. And it proved to be just that.

At the risk of sounding cliché (and melodramatic), the few hours a week spent in that class were the only ones in which I felt human. The stress, the internalized and pervasive perfectionism of my classical music studies had left me feeling perpetually inadequate yet complacent that this feeling would define the rest of my life. Consequently, it came as quite a surprise when I asked my dance professor at the end of the semester how I could continue moving creatively in some capacity and she enthusiastically explained that it was not too late to pursue dance professionally; in fact, she saw a dance major in me. Needless to say, the next couple of weeks were agonizing as I seriously pondered and then decided to make the colossal shift to dance major-hood leaving the flute behind.

The following semester I took Composition (a dance-making class) and I was hooked. Creating my own work was what I had been missing in my flute studies. I

realized that learning and playing music written by others was ultimately unfulfilling. This opportunity to craft performances in which I also performed and without a musical instrument separating me from the audience was not only invigorating but life-affirming. I finally felt like I could really say what I wanted to say, like I had found my voice, or at least my medium. What I quickly learned from my earliest dance-making days in my undergraduate studies was that the trends of the dance field (of that particular program, really) were such that quite a lot could be included (and justified) within the context of a “dance” piece.

On this note, I fast forward for a moment to say that in the fall of 2012, my second year of graduate school, it became clear to me that the dance work I was making clearly included aspects of my whole history in the performing arts—components of dance, theater, and music all living together inside the same work. Becoming aware of this multi-faceted nature of the performances I was making resulted in an even more deliberate use of each of these elements in my thesis show. I now understand that “performance” as a medium (as opposed to just “dance”) enables me to employ whatever disciplines of performing or uses of the body best serve each work.

In my undergraduate years, the very first performance I made and publicly performed was a short solo for myself entitled, *It's not you...it's me*. It was my second semester as a dance major. In retrospect, it is so clear that the questions that continue to form the roots of my performance-making to this day were present and alive from the very beginning. In the solo, I used two pieces of paper, each one a photocopy of one of my hands. I walked out into the audience and held the pieces of paper up to an audience member's hands so that his/her hands met my photocopied hands; I pressed into his/her

hands from the other side but without ever coming into actual physical contact. I recall at the time of making this dance that I was dealing with some feelings of disillusionment over the thought that being a human is inherently isolated and lonely. No one can ever actually know how someone else feels or what he/she thinks. I was interested in the physical distance between humans and that our bodies literally separate us from one another. Although I did not craft the piece from a place in which I consciously understood the symbolism or metaphors of my choices, I came to see afterward that I was breaking the proscenium stage's separation between audience and performer (the fourth wall) as a way of mining the feeling of human separateness. The performance was very well received by my peers and professors, was an exhilarating performance experience, and was fulfilling in a way that I had not previously experienced even in my most exciting musical performances. This work felt wholly my own.

In the following year and a half, my last semesters of undergraduate study, I created and performed another solo; collaboratively created and performed a duet; and made a duet, a trio, and a sextet in which I did not perform. While the works I made collaboratively and for groups were each fulfilling, the solo pieces were undoubtedly the most rewarding.

I decided to pursue the MFA in Dance at Arizona State University to be able to continue making performances with the guidance and resources provided by school. The summer before my first semester of graduate school, I attended the Bates Dance Festival and made another solo that I had the opportunity to perform in an adjudicated concert. Yet again, the experience of performing (it) was affirming; to use Alexander's terms, I remembered that performance was the "situation" in which I am "most alive" (x).

When I first got to ASU, I made a trio in which I also performed. Although I had already identified at that point that the heart of my interest was in solo work, I thought that I better make work with others while I was in school and collaborators were readily available. My initial intention was to craft a highly choreographed (as opposed to improvisational) work, but as I was in the studio, I struggled time and again with the way in which the freshness, what I referred to at the time as “authenticity,” vanished after the first time something that had emerged became something set. Interestingly, this experience only occurred in watching my collaborators. When I did something, I felt as though my internal experience of losing myself to the moment, to the choreography, made it so that I was not so concerned with the fact that it was set and not improvised. There was quite a disconnect between my experiences of doing and watching. I decided to call the piece an improvisational score and construct several short episodes that had tightly structured directives about what was to occur. The stage suddenly went from total darkness to being brightly lit and then plunged into darkness once again to frame each episode. In retrospect, there is a formal structure I was playing with here, a starkly repetitious form in which I was interested. This episodic organization is something that has persisted in my work and is clearly evident in the form that my thesis show took.

By the end of my first semester at ASU, I decided to return to making solos. After making a couple by the end of my first year, in my portfolio review presentation for the dance faculty, I committed to developing a solo practice. In the presentation, a recording of my voice giving a talk that I titled “Transcendence-Indulgence” played while I performed a 20-minute score (i.e. improvisational piece) in which I traversed the space between the bottom of the curtain and the stage floor.



Figure 1. Transcendence-Indulgence

In the talk, I spoke about the times within that past year when I had felt most free, when my sense of time had disappeared. This ranged from experiences I had in classes, such as my postmodern contemporary dance technique class, to experiences I had outside of school, such as shaking my body wildly at a nightclub or practicing yoga. What was common among them was that they were all deeply embodied experiences, times in which my body was engaged in ways of being that were extremely different from my day-to-day state of being. I described my sense of perpetual falling through space in the technique class, a reckless abandon at the nightclub, and a profound external stillness at the yoga class. The two anchors of my presentation were the statements, “I seek freedom” and “Structure breeds freedom.” I described my growing understanding that, contrary to my former beliefs, freedom was not most available in the formless. This prior mode of thinking was perhaps a natural byproduct of my turn away from the rigidity I felt in my classical music life. Having come to dance through improvisation, I indulged in my freely

moving body and rejected form. But my experiences that first year of graduate school illustrated the necessity of structure. Feelings of freedom—of aliveness—were accessible through structures such as a dance phrase, or a particular space with a specific set of circumstances. The trio I created the semester before was similarly indicative of the importance of form. Now I see that that piece was much less improvisational than I had thought; the skeleton was already very fleshed out.

I deviate from my personal history here once again to reference Alexander's text with regards to the idea of "structure breeds freedom." He describes the necessity and power of a structure (i.e. a preconceived method) to help us get out of our own way, to make ourselves available to a deeper intelligence. (*Italics are Alexander's.*)

*And it turns out that, invariant, behind all processes which allow us to make buildings live, there is a single common process. This single process is operational and precise... The fact is, that even when we have seen deep into the processes by which it is possible to make a building or a town alive, in the end, it turns out that this knowledge only brings us back to that part of ourselves which is forgotten. Although the process is precise, and can be defined in exact scientific terms, finally it becomes valuable, not so much because it shows us things which we don't know, but instead, because it shows us what we know already, only daren't admit because it seems so childish, and so primitive. Indeed it turns out, in the end, that what this method does is simply frees us from all method. (12-13)*

The paradoxical nature of the relationship between structure and freedom (or “method” and “aliveness” to use other words) is made clear in this last statement. My first few years of making performances can be characterized as a discovery and reconciliation of this paradox.

Returning to my personal history, that summer of 2012 threw me a curveball. Here I was having just declared myself a solo artist when I decided to make a duet that summer at the Bates Dance Festival with a good friend of mine entitled, *coming out party (for the directionless): My Post-Modern Mantra*. This collaboration with Radmila Olshansky, while dizzyingly neurotic in the process, proved to be hugely rewarding upon our performance in an adjudicated show at the festival. It was thrilling to share the stage with another person also interested in losing herself to whatever the performance offered. The post-show moments were euphoric and the work was well received by the adjudicators and by our peers. I was left wondering why I had ever been interested in solo work when a partnership could feel this robust.





Figure 2. (coming out party) for the directionless: My Post-Modern Mantra

I returned to school looking for people with whom I could collaborate. I felt that the potential for a fruitful collaboration was so contingent upon the people involved that I began to construct a solo when I did not feel strongly pulled towards anyone. Eventually I met a woman named Emily DePaula, an undergraduate theater major, and asked her to perform with me. What resulted was a fifteen-minute work entitled, *Divine neuroses, please carry me home*, in which we were both onstage nearly the entire time but without any direct interaction.



Figure 3. Divine neuroses, please carry me home. 1



Figure 4. Divine neuroses, please carry me home. 2

My actions included dancing and singing as well as interacting verbally with the audience while hers included reading text, singing, and eating a burrito. We went on to perform this work three more times that year in three different venues and eventually a third person, Alejandro Salcido, joined the work. His role was to stand onstage for the entirety of the piece with his back to the audience holding a pole with the piñata dangling from it. Since I conceived of the first iteration of this work as a duet and then later a trio, it was surprising and illuminating to me when several people to whom I spoke about the work referred to it as a solo. While I was clearly situated as the central figure of the piece, it did not exist for me without Emily and later Alex. This discrepancy between my own perceptions of the work and how others perceived of it intrigued me. I was still coming across as a soloist.

## CHAPTER 3

### THESIS BACKGROUND

Because my collaboration that first semester of my second year felt so nourishing, I set out to craft a thesis project that would be my largest collaboration to date and that I expected would clearly be seen as a group performance, not a solo. I decided to work with several of my closest artist friends in Arizona. I also designed an independent study for the following semester in which I planned to read several books to continue to elucidate and ground my artistic inquiry in existing research and practice. As I came to write in my prospectus document (a proposal outlining the plan for my thesis show), I was thrilled to discover the existence of a whole facet of research in “art and consciousness.” This realm included the work of artists such as composer John Cage, choreographers Deborah Hay and Ralph Lemon, and performance artist Marina Abramović. I selected several books that allowed me to look at my own questions through this existing lens and also made plans to begin rehearsals in the spring semester of 2013 for my thesis show.

Around this time, I became interested in non-proscenium spaces after completing a project entitled, “A Piece for You,” a score by visiting guest artist choreographer Thomas Lehmen in which I made one dance each for three different people as gifts. (In this case, “score” refers to a set of parameters that Lehmen laid out for other artists to flesh out in crafting their own performance.) I decided to perform the three pieces consecutively in a large dance studio space with the audience seated in a circle. The close proximity of the audience and three-dimensionality of the viewing/performing experience excited me and I wanted to explore this structure further in my thesis show.

Another critical moment regarding my thesis show proposal came in November 2012 when I watched a video in which Philip Bither, Senior Curator of Performing Arts at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, interviewed choreographer Ralph Lemon about his then-latest work entitled, *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere?* My transcription of the three most instrumental excerpts of the interview follows; the bolded text for emphasis is my own.

Philip Bither: It seems like a company that is almost more like a family...

Ralph Lemon: Yeah, I feel like it's not a collective but almost— and I feel like, we're all on the same page, and you know I don't think this is a stretch, but that everyone kind of believes in the locus of the work which I think is sort of beyond grief and mourning and my particular sort of placement right now in my life, and more about just this idea of meaning and these pure aspects of just existence, that, you know it's like, certain points, you know, **it's like we are alive [laughs], and that's pretty profound. Do you know? Like being alive is really kind of miraculous, and—**

PB: **—but we mostly through most of our lives sort of ignore that fact or somehow don't feel it.**

RL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think I kind of activated the question because I dealt with some extreme absence and so that's kind of what I brought to the table. It's like absence is energetic, it's really alive, and then if you're alive along with that absence, like alchemically, something

really interesting can happen. So I feel like that's what everyone is sort of searching for in their particular actions within the work, so it's very, you know, **the dancers are not performing, do you know? There is something that they go through for 20 minutes every night that doesn't necessarily make them feel good, that they can't really accomplish, like you ask them how was it and they can't really articulate it.**

...

RL: So in the action of it, is the point, do you know? The doing. And that we can't really say no, like you have to do it.

PB: And that's what you said the other day to some students here, you said this is the difference between pretending and being. This is the real thing. You're watching a real thing.

RL: **You're watching the real thing in a—**

PB: **—in an unreal environment**

RL: **—in an unreal environment, and that's where it becomes very beautiful, right?**

...

[Note: In the work, there is a part in which one of the performers, Okwui Okpokwasili, cries continuously for eight minutes.]

PB: It's interesting, **I think you use the term aestheticizing emotion or you know you've got these raw emotions built that the work is weighted with but then you're having to choose exactly at what moment does Okwui stop crying, and it does seem like what you're saying is you've been able to not let one corrupt the other or make the other feel less important or somehow trivialized or something.**

RL: Right, right. And it's tricky, and I think in its trickiness, there's also a very real, honest confusion that is very, very much inside and surrounding this work that we have to continue to negotiate, with me with myself, me with the performers, and me with the collaborators. Okwui just said the other day like she was really mad at me. I think it was after our dress [rehearsal] or something. **I said why, she said, oh, well, you know 'cause she's crying and she's really crying so she's completely out of control and yet she has a container, and I've tried to continue to refine the container, so I'm giving her more sort of rules, and I know the conflict of that.** And she kind of understands the need for it, but there was a part of her that just got really pissed off, because it's like, it's really hard!

[laughs]

PB: Right, just lemme cry! [laughs]

RL: So, you know what I mean, it's a really human interpersonal level, these things are very fragile. The work is very fragile. (Ralph Lemon)

Lemon's use of the word "alive" resonated with me as the very thing that performance affords—a compressed and yet spacious container of time in which one really gets to feel what he/she feels (whether or not this is cultivated or accessed through some sort of technique). At that point in time I had yet to read Christopher Alexander's book that I mentioned earlier in this document, so I did not have the term "aliveness" yet to understand what interested me about performance. After hearing Lemon speak, I hooked onto the word "alive" and thought "coming alive" must be what everyone is ultimately seeking and that we all can find it in different ways.

The part of Lemon's interview that most struck me was when he said that the performers were not really performing, that within an aestheticized container, the performers are having what I would have called at the time an "authentic" experience. For example, as Lemon mentions, the performer Okwui is not just crying because the work requires it; rather, she is crying from a place of "real" feeling, an experience she apparently summons by thinking of things in her "crying book," which contains sad stories and pictures. Lemon's notions of "aestheticizing" an experience in which the performers are "not performing" was exactly what I was attempting (and then lamenting its seeming impossibility) in the process of making the trio that I described when I first came to ASU. Listening to the interview offered me some sense that it is possible to find "not performing" (again, what I called "authenticity") inside of set, choreographed movement and structures.

As these anecdotes from the interview make clear, Lemon felt that working with a group of collaborators with which he felt he could be emotionally vulnerable and vice versa was critical to the work. This affirmed my inclination to work with close friends of



mine. From the outset, I wanted to feel comfortable putting myself in inherently uncomfortable situations with my collaborators and wanted them to be interested in—eager, even—to do the same with me. Accordingly, I chose to work with eight of my closest friends, all of whom are artists and performers.

In my first prospectus, I outlined plans to begin one-on-one rehearsals with each collaborator weekly beginning in January of 2013. I was aiming towards the production of an evening-length thesis show to take place sometime in the following (fall) semester in Nelson Fine Arts Center, room 122, a large dance studio space. At the time, the potential for the public and performers to be very close in proximity and for us all to move and be moved about the space three-dimensionally (circumventing the inherently presentational nature of the proscenium stage) excited me. With the newfound language yielded by Lemon’s words, I situated two questions at the heart of the thesis work: **“What makes us come alive?”** and **“How do I aestheticize an experience and have it performed (by myself or someone else) authentically?”**

In addition to laying out these nuts and bolts of the thesis process, the first prospectus began with a vital explanation of what I was thinking about at the time. Accordingly, the first part of that document follows.

Recently, the questions that I have been asking of my work ultimately stem from a desire to explore, understand, experience, and behold the relationship between our consciousness and our bodies. As I listened to a Deepak Chopra talk several months ago in which he discussed the notion that the body exists as part of/inside of the

consciousness (and not the other way around), I marveled at the profound implications that this idea has for dance and, more generally, the body as the site of performance (from all angles – creator, viewer, performer). Performance is the medium in which there is not a third thing placed between creator and viewer like in the visual arts; rather, an experience materializes (albeit fleeting – or is it?), a sharing of time and space. This invisible, energetic exchange between performer and viewer is at the heart of my interest.

Mining this exchange necessitates self-study, an excavation of my own body-mind-consciousness. About a year ago, I began a consistent yoga practice (shortly after having started meditating daily) and the spaciousness, connectedness, and profound sense of presence I experienced in the meditative states of the practice are to what I largely attribute my burning desire to pursue a devoted study of consciousness.

I am finding my practice of consciousness and my artistic practice to be inextricably linked. My thesis work will explore this marriage quite directly as my eight collaborators and I explore states of presence through contemplative, physical, and creative practices (e.g. meditation, dance improvisation, stream of consciousness writing, etc.) to inform and inspire our experiences in the studio, both individually and collectively. (Pourzal, Prospectus 1)

In addition to this practice-based research rooted in my two Lemon-inspired questions (“What makes us come alive?” and “How do I aestheticize an experience and have it performed (by myself or someone else) authentically?”), I planned to engage in the independent study concurrently in which I would read several books to understand my work in relation to theoretical and historical frameworks of art-making and performance. I entitled my course, “Creative Consciousness – Art as a Practice of Presence, Emptiness, Disappearance, and Other Potent and Potentially Confounding Concepts for the Young American Mind.” The books I read left me profoundly changed and served as a vital cornerstone of the thesis process. The literature review that follows is a summation of my fertile time with these texts.

## CHAPTER 4

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*Learning Mind: Experience into Art*, a compilation of essays by several different artists and scholars compiled and edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelynn Baas, was my first encounter with the preexisting framework of artistic research known as “art and consciousness” that I was so delighted to discover. Each essay speaks to some manifestation of intersections between Buddhist philosophy and artistic practice in the Western world. Some are written as first-hand accounts of creative processes underpinned by Buddhist concepts and others map the history of artists working in this way. The book is divided into three sections (each one containing several essays) entitled, “On the Being of Being an Artist,” “On Making Art and Pedagogy,” and “On Experiencing Art.”

The essays within that I found to be most invigorating and apt to my inquiry were by artists who wrote specifically about the junctions between their work (and/or art in general) and contemplative practices, such as meditation. In one particular essay by Mark Epstein entitled, “Meditation as Art/Art as Meditation,” he writes,

There is a famous story about a woman named Manibhadra who attained enlightenment while carrying water from the village well back to her home. Dropping her pitcher one day and seeing the water gush out of the broken gourd, she was suddenly liberated. Like water breaking forth, her consciousness flowed out and merged with all of reality. This jarring loose, or breaking free—this going to pieces without falling apart—is

what Buddhism acknowledges as one of the self's secret needs—to be released from the grip of the known. This shift in consciousness is one thing that links the otherwise disparate world of art, therapy, and meditation, three areas of human endeavor in which process is as important as product, where the ability to willingly enter psychic territory that most people would rather avoid tends to pay off, where 'identity' can be more of an obstacle than an achievement. (Jacob, 44)

The theme mentioned here of shifting consciousness, of waking up from our conditioned minds that lead us to believe in what we think we know, is something that I began to understand as essential to “coming alive.” As I read these essays, I gleaned a new language for understanding and substantiating what I was referring to as “coming alive” in that which forms the very groundwork of ancient practices such as meditation. I had begun a daily meditation practice the previous summer, and as the last half of my yoga teacher-training program coincided with the time I began to read these books and have rehearsals, I maintained a consistent practice bolstered by other yogic practices such as chanting.

Passages like the aforementioned one helped me to see the potential connections between my contemplative practices and my creative work. Though many of the essays in the compilation are written by visual artists, I became especially grateful to be a performance-maker. I mused that the live-ness of performance makes it uniquely equipped to instantly shift consciousness; as a time-based art of direct experience, presence is demanded, and when ideas of presence are also the content, performance

becomes adeptly reflexive as a vehicle for offering awareness of one's moment-to-moment experience.

To further explore concepts of presence and consciousness through a specifically Buddhist lens, I came to read *Falling into Grace: Insights on the End of Suffering* by Adyashanti, an American Zen Buddhist. (Actually, I listened to it on audiobook as read by the author.) Adyashanti's book provides a carefully constructed journey into the disarming simplicity of our true nature as human beings. He offers stories and wisdom from many different spiritual practices, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, and draws connections among them all to illustrate that they are just different ways of understanding the same human condition. Adyashanti's message is a call to action—to wake up to the present moment by letting go of our attachments to our “selves” and falling into the perpetual unknown of (our) being.

I had never heard such soul-stirring, enlivening, liberating words. I cannot imagine a better resource for me as a starting point in excavating what I meant by “coming alive.” While Adyashanti studied with Zen teachers, a refreshing and inspiring aspect of his text was the connections he draws among many different spiritual practices, allowing me to see that coming alive has little to do with subscribing to any specific belief systems or languages for understanding ourselves and everything to do with awareness. One of the notions that struck me most profoundly was, “You are that which watches the mind create a self” (Adyashanti). The space this idea places between ourselves and our minds was remarkable to me. The notion that we can be our own witness had important implications for my ongoing questions about performance as an invitation of oneself to be witnessed. I began to understand that perhaps I had decided to

set up the one-on-one rehearsals with my collaborators because these meetings lent themselves to one person doing and one person witnessing. As I became aware of the possibility of projecting one's self as one's own witness, I initially felt as though this were only really possible while in a meditative state of physical stillness; thus, I thought, instances in which conscious (intentional) movement of the body was occurring necessitated another person to witness.

Fortuitously, I began to read choreographer Deborah Hay's *My Body, The Buddhist* as I wondered about these ideas of witnessing early in the semester. In her concise book, Hay offers a look into her lifelong creative practice as a dancer and dance-maker and what has been revealed to her throughout her career by listening to the inherent wisdom of her body. The eighteen chapters contain anecdotes of these revelations she experienced while performing, creating, breathing, and collaborating, and are carefully ordered and introduced with koan-like distillations of the significance of each.

Reading about how Hay's dance-making and performance practice morphed through her career and what was revealed to her along the way brought me back to my moving body—its inherent creativity and awareness. I had been so disturbed by the nature of my running mind post-Adyashanti that to be sitting still felt like movement enough to me at that point. Hay's book enabled me to recognize that I was still subscribing to the duality of mind and body by denying my moving body. Her refusal of a dualistic understanding of action and reflection is well summarized by Susan Leigh Foster's foreward in the book:

Many theories of consciousness do not permit body to be consciously aware of its own activities while in motion. Many forms of prayer and meditation, even Buddhist meditation, encourage practitioners to sit and be still. In defiance of this reflection between action and reflection, Hay asserts the possibility of a consciously aware and critically reflective corporeality. (Hay, xviii)

Additionally, Hay's book helped me to reconcile the notion that spirituality and art are disparate, or perhaps, even worse, that other artists will be quick to write me off as unintelligent and insignificant if I talk about spirituality in my creative practice. I felt a world of weight lifted off my shoulders when I came across Hay's narratives describing her struggles in this arena. Her spirituality is not one of rigidity and dogma; in fact, it is the very lack of these things. It is a spirituality of awareness of constant change and the unpredictable relationship between the body and consciousness. She writes about coming to understand terms such as "prayer" in ways that are much different from what the general (American) public imagines when presented with such words. My favorite chapter of the book is also the shortest one, number ten, in which Hay writes nothing more than, "I was never drawn to participate in sacred dance classes. I feared my irreverence, cynicism, and snobbery. Little did I realize that my problem was linguistic. Sacred dancing is redundant" (Hay, 53). This is when I realized that if I conceive of our whole earthly experience as spiritual, then it is unnecessary for me to speak about spirituality directly in reference to my art.



As I continued my research of American artists informed by ideas and disciplines of consciousness, I landed upon Kay Larson's *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists*. This book maps the trajectory of Zen Buddhism's introduction in the United States beginning in the early 1900s and how it came to infiltrate certain circles of the art world. Larson focuses specifically on the life and music of composer John Cage and illustrates how Zen philosophy became the conceptual basis of his work. I was most interested in reading about Cage's struggles early in his career when he had difficulty understanding why exactly he made music. He felt that if communication with the audience were his goal (as he had been taught), then his work was futile; he recognized that each composer around him was speaking a different "language" and therefore something specific could not be communicated through the inherent abstraction of music. Rather than continuing to make music that tried to communicate emotionally, Cage, through the conceptual lens of Zen, developed methods for composing that took his "self" out of the equation. He wanted to create music that was free of his own likes and dislikes, music that was grounded in something much greater than his small, human problems and feelings.

While I found myself very attracted to the meditative aspects of Zen presented in the book, Cage's incorporation of Zen concepts into his creative practice brought up big questions for me with regards to the purpose of my own art. As I thought back on the work I have made, I sensed that nearly all of it has stemmed from a place of emotional need—that the performance of the work evoked some level of catharsis within myself. While my primary intention in creating work has not been to communicate something

specific to the public, I have certainly made decisions based on my own likes and dislikes, even if I call this “intuition.”

Cage did not meditate; rather, composing was his daily meditation he said in that it entailed sitting for extended periods of time and opening himself to all that is through his systematic, chance-driven operations. At the time I was reading the book, I could not help but wonder about the relationship between my own meditation and creative practice. I decided that while I did not think that the act of creating itself was my meditation, my meditation practice informed my daily way of being in the world and therefore the way I engaged in creating too. Meditation afforded me an openness and expansion of awareness that served the choices I made in the work. Currently, I continue to practice meditation inside and outside of the studio. It has quite literally become a part of my process.

While I had already come to rest in the idea that “structure breeds freedom” by the end of my first year of graduate school, an important reminder of this notion came to me through Cage’s words. In his “Lecture on Nothing,” most likely given in 1952, he said, “We really do need a structure, so we can see we are nowhere” (Larson, 238). Larson goes on to say (and quotes Cage), “Structure paradoxically keeps opening us to the moment, which ‘accepts whatever, even those rare moments of ecstasy’” (238). Cage continues (*italics are Larson’s*),

*Structure without life is dead. But Life without structure is un-seen. Pure life expresses itself within and through structure. Each moment is absolute, alive and significant. Blackbirds rise from a field making a sound de-licious be-yond com-pare. I heard them because I ac-cepted the*

*limitations of an arts conference in a Virginia girls' finishing school.*

(Larson, 238)

Larson continues,

“This healing process—this ‘being alive in the moment’—allows Cage to return to sounds that had been spoiled by ‘the separation of mind and ear’ and—wondrous!—brings him back to Beethoven, who is suddenly released from Cage’s judgments. Cage has seen his own judging mind in action and has freed himself from its deadening effects. Beethoven can come alive in the present (where his music is being played), and Cage can live, too, equally free to be himself. (Larson, 239)

This page in my copy of the book is covered in stars, exclamation points, brackets, circles around blocks of text, and notes that I ecstatically scribbled as I basked in its liberating words. Here in front of me was the permission that I sought. I had left the imprisoning rigidity of my classical music training only to find myself floundering in the freedom of creating my own work and limited by a lack of imposed structure. A return to embracing the necessity of structure, I now understood, required a shift of mind. (At the risk of self-indulgence, I want to note that I have been listening to opera music as I have typed these words about Cage—Denyce Graves, to be exact. For the couple of years after I ended my formal music studies, I did not listen to classical music at all. I began regularly listening to it once again though several months ago and feeling deeply

nourished. This ability to enjoy it has become available to me through the kind of acceptance Cage experienced; I can listen to the music *just as it is*, disentangled from my identity.)

## CHAPTER 5

### MAKING & PERFORMING

*Spring 2013*

My weekly one-on-one rehearsals with each collaborator in the spring of 2013 were one-hour long and typically centered on a score (i.e. improvisational structure) of some sort. I did not craft scores with a conscious goal in mind. Rather, I allowed myself to work more intuitively, bringing scores that interested me for reasons I did not necessarily understand before doing them. Many rehearsals included timed writings in which I posed a broad prompt (such as “I come alive when...”) and my collaborators and I would write nonstop for two to five minutes. I also took time to write alone after each rehearsal to document what had happened, how I felt about it, and what was revealed in the doing. Some of the scores included:

- At a specific outdoor location, one collaborator “performs” while the other witnesses. The performer can do anything he/she wants for however long he/she wants. The witness then becomes the performer and attempts to replicate the performance he/she just witnessed exactly. Switch roles.
- In the studio, one collaborator moves (with eyes open or closed), beginning by moving slowly and pausing often in stillness, while the other witnesses. Afterward, both performer and witness write responses to the following four questions: 1) When did I feel most/least present? 2) Describe the interplay between internal and external motivations for moving (or that you witnessed); when/why/how did these shifts happen? 3) Was the internal process shaping the

external movement, or vice versa? 4) How did you feel/what did you think about being witnessed or about witnessing? Switch roles.

- In the studio, one collaborator witnesses as the other performs a “good dance” and then performs a “bad dance.” Switch roles.
- In the studio, one collaborator witnesses as the other first moves continuously without speaking for seven minutes, then speaks continuously without moving for seven minutes, then moves and speaks continuously and simultaneously for seven minutes. Switch roles.
- The two collaborators sit back-to-back in stillness with eyes closed on a grassy patch in the center of a very busy part of campus for fifteen to thirty minutes.
- The two collaborators sit across from one another (a couple of feet between them) and maintain eye contact for thirty minutes.
- The two collaborators observe and interact with two particular orange trees in whatever way they want for twenty to thirty minutes without talking.



Figure 5. Orange Trees & Inky

Particularly in the beginning of the rehearsal process, I made use of scores that emphasized witnessing, in which one person was witnessed by the other. It is clear to me now that these were ways of mining the nature of performance, of seeing and feeling what happens to us when we know we are being watched. My collaborators and I spent a lot of time debriefing what would come up for us in being witnessed and in witnessing. Knowing that I was being watched seemed to heighten everything, namely my awareness of my thoughts and sensations, and imposed a continual consideration of how I was appearing and how this was being perceived from the outside. Each of these scores had different constraints as a means of discovering new sides of the experience of being seen; the change in the container, so to speak, allowed different qualities/aspects of its contents to be revealed.

In addition to the heightened state afforded by being witnessed, there was some sense of validation too. To be seen, particularly in these moments in which I was inviting myself to be seen, empowered me. I am reminded here of the following excerpt from *The Artist's Body*, a book that charts the rise of the use of the body through the twentieth century in visual arts (italics are from the source):

In her important book of 1974 on body art, the Italian curator and writer Lea Vergine laid out terms for understanding the obsessive performative surfacing of the artist's body in the visual arts that had burst on to the Euro-American scene in the 1960s and early 1970s. Vergine's gloriously hyperbolic text proclaims that the body artist is 'obsessed by the obligation to exhibit himself in order to be able to *be*... The choice of the

body as a means of expression is an attempt to deal with something *repressed* that subsequently returns to the surface of experience with all the narcissism that surrounds it.' (Warr and Jones, 18-19)

As Vergine points to, I was finding that the intentional exhibition of my own body helped me to *be*—more specifically, to be unafraid to be seen, to feel less inhibited and self-conscious. Additionally, being witnessed made everything I did feel important, not because each moment was in fact significant for me, but because I knew that the viewer would be deriving some kind of meaning or intentionality from what I was doing.

Through the first couple months of these weekly rehearsals, I felt myself struggling against myself. I often left feeling upset that the time had been fruitless. I realized that I had a deep desire for my collaborators to feel nourished, to feel like they were getting something valuable out of our time together. I was elated when they expressed to me in rehearsal that they had had a revelation or felt really good about what we had done. In this way, being with other people in the studio completely closed me off to the idea that our time had been well spent unless there was an identifiable result, a shared discovery that could be described in words. In retrospect, I abandoned any trust in process and in the energetic, that which cannot necessarily be talked about—the very thing that I had described in my original prospectus as the heart of my interest.

In looking back at my thesis notebook from that time, I can see that I was becoming aware of how my desire to please my collaborators was killing my creative process by early March. After attending a workshop led by guest visual and performance artist Suzanne Lacy on March 4, 2013, I wrote:



Today (from Suzanne Lacy), I learned that I am fiercely committed to the fulfillment (and discovery) of my own aesthetic. And of course I am. And of course that's okay. So that puts me in a strange place for my thesis, b/c I'm not so interested in the sort of equity/egalitarianism that I was sort of thinking. Yes, I want this thesis process to be nourishing for everyone, but it is my work and my aesthetic...like w/ 'coming out party' & 'Divine neuroses,' – I definitely crafted these. (Pourzal, Thesis journal)

And a couple weeks later, I was painfully aware. On March 24, 2013, I wrote:

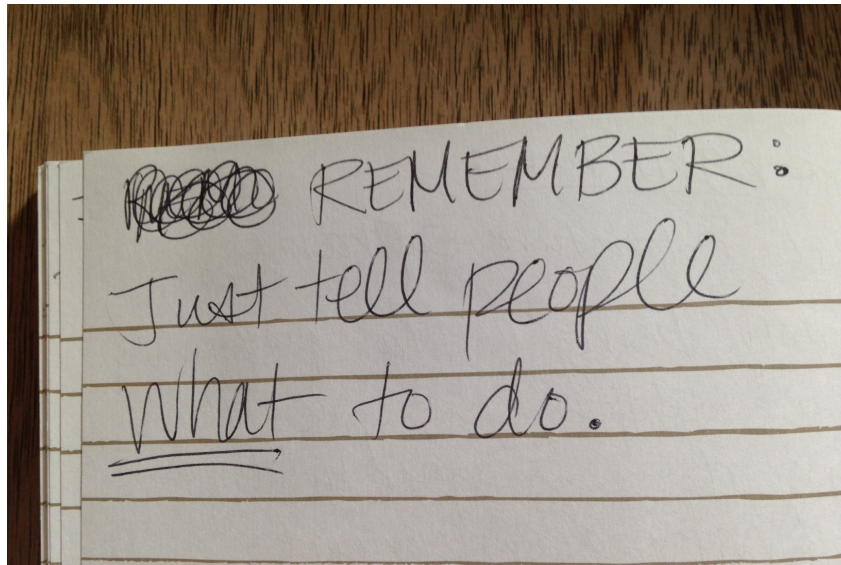


Figure 6. Journal page 1

In grappling with my inner turbulence as I continued to work with my collaborators, what I did in rehearsals became more and more reduced. I was craving stillness and nothingness, ideas that were coming to me especially strongly through Kay

Larson's book about John Cage and Zen Buddhism. This is when the scores at the end of the previous list that do not so directly involve being witnessed came into play, such as being with trees and meditating. I needed this kind of interaction with my collaborators that did not necessitate any talking, explanation, or justification. Instead, I made space for us to slow down, find silence, feel our shifting energetic states, and watch our thoughts. How all of this would feed into the evening-length-thesis-show-to-be was unclear to me at this point.

Additionally, in mid-February, I visited an alternative performance space in downtown Phoenix called The Icehouse, and it struck me that this would be the ideal venue for the work. The Icehouse is three interconnected warehouse spaces, each distinct in size, look, and feel. I was taken by the raw majesty of the place with its exposed brick, concrete floors, and high ceiling (or, in the case of one room, no ceiling at all with an open view of the sky). The prospect of utilizing each of the rooms for different sections of the work thrilled me; we as performers could journey through the building over the course of the piece and the audience could follow. By the end of February, I had booked the space for a series of three consecutive performance days in early November and spent the rest of the semester dreaming up a thesis show that wound through this setting.

*Summer 2013*

I left Arizona for the summer looking forward to the time and space away from weekly rehearsals to process everything that had happened so far and to see what emerged from this settling. I needed a break; it had been quite an emotional semester. I was perpetually questioning my work and process. As my personal and artistic lives coincided, I wondered, how much space should there be between art and life?

I had several experiences that summer while at a dance festival overseas that shook me up and made me reevaluate, reconsider, and remember some vital aspects of my artistic inquiry. By early August, my revelations had shifted the way in which I was thinking about my thesis so greatly that I came to formulate a second prospectus. It begins,

In late July, I traveled to Vienna, Austria to take part in the ImPulsTanz International Dance Festival where I took workshops and saw several shows. After three shows in particular—works by Ivo Dimchev, Xavier LeRoy, and Jérôme Bel—I remembered my obsession with the proscenium stage. This deep interest in the traditional theater structure and the expectations it breeds has been of fundamental interest to me, but recently I was taken by the possibilities afforded by other, nonconventional spaces. What returns me so powerfully to the proscenium stage from the works I have just seen is the way in which the choreographers chose to both adhere to and break the conventions of the proscenium spaces in which their work was performed. I find that tension

to be so exciting, so rich, so full of possibility. The theater was a necessary container for such choice-making to be evident to me as a viewer.

(Pourzal, Prospectus 2)

To give a little more specificity here, what particularly struck me about Ivo Dimchev's work, an evening-length quartet entitled *X-on*, was the impromptu way in which he interacted with the audience. Dimchev was wearing nothing but a skimpy loin cloth and high heels, his body was painted all white, and he assumed a severe sway back as he strutted about the stage like a strange, gawky bird. In the work, he spoke in English and primarily in a wispy, cartoonish voice. At a couple of different moments, technical difficulties were encountered, and Dimchev just stopped the show. He looked offstage and yelled to a stagehand that the microphone needed to be fixed. The music paused and the stagehand walked onstage to deal with the faulty microphone. Dimchev waited for the awkwardly long length of time that it took for the issue to be resolved without any apparent concern for how this may be pulling us as viewers out of the work. He also spoke directly to us in some of these moments and "broke character" in the sense that he used his normal voice, dropping the physicality of his creature-like identity. When the microphone worked once again each time, the music resumed and he fell right back into the performance and into character. His transparency was delightful and refreshing.

As for Xavier LeRoy's *low pieces* and Jérôme Bel's *Disabled Theater*, I also appreciated the way in which the audience was directly acknowledged and addressed. LeRoy's work featured two sections in which the performers engaged in conversation with the audience without leaving the stage. In Bel's work, a narrator of sorts sat at a table at one side of the stage and began each episode of the piece by explaining with words exactly what each episode addressed. Again, I was struck by the transparency of these interactions with the audience. As opposed to Dimchev's work though, in which the audience interaction seemed unplanned, in these two cases they were clearly crafted—intended by design.

In all three cases, the informality and/or directness of the interactions that transpired between performers and audience members provided a powerful counterpoint to the theatricality and formality of these staged works. I remembered that this juxtaposition in the theater excites me and is something I seek to create as a maker.

Continuing from my second prospectus,

Clearly, when I first embarked on this thesis process, I was not aware of the continued centrality of the proscenium stage to my inquiry or else The Icehouse would have never been an option. However, the last several months during which I dreamt in terms of The Icehouse were certainly not a waste of time. To be able to dream so big was a gift. It decontextualized me in a way that allowed me to feel totally disoriented and yet grounded at the same time. To envision the work in a vast space with three distinct sub-spaces provided two transformative characteristics

that were outside of the limits that I had previously imposed on the proscenium stage—the possibility that it is much larger than we perceive and the potential for many different worlds to exist within what seems to be one space. Now I dream of the proscenium stage with an expanded sensibility.

In my original Prospectus, I positioned two questions at the center of my thesis inquiry. They were, “What makes us come alive?” and “How do I aestheticize an experience and have it performed (by myself or someone else) authentically?” While I still feel close to the impetus for these questions, I no longer seek to ask them in this way. The research in which I have been engaged since January both in the studio and through the reading, writing, and dialogue of my independent study have shown me that both of these questions are rooted in the nature of performance and its relationship with the proscenium. For this reason, it is misguided to place these two questions at the center of the inquiry without regard for their underpinnings.

Performing itself is what makes me feel alive. The proscenium structure—its conventions—is what I wish to employ in aestheticizing an experience for the stage, and by that I mean to say making clear and exact decisions about framing events in time and space as opposed to leaving the borders around time and space more loose. As for performing “authentically,” I am no longer concerned with this idea for now. When I formulated this second question many months ago, I was thinking of

authentic performance (that is, an honest—unconditioned—response to each moment’s happenings) as separate from the intention to fulfill a predetermined task or choreography. **I have come to a place now where I no longer wish to see anything as inauthentic.** The difference I previously perceived has something to do with habit—habitual ways of being when it comes to performing. Our perpetual examination of and negotiation with our own habits is a fact of life, and in terms of one’s approach to performance, this process does continue to interest me. But I think its investigation entails another thesis project unto itself. For now, suffice it to say that I have chosen to work with the collaborators that I have (and I include myself as a performing entity in this instance) because I already value something about their way of being onstage.

My thesis questions now are: What are the conventions of the proscenium stage? What expectations are bred by these conventions? How do I craft an experience that is continually moving between adhering to and breaking these expectations? (It’s something about the space between...) (Pourzal, Prospectus 2)

Accordingly, the new plan was for the evening-length thesis show to be performed in the Margaret Gisolo Dance Theatre on the campus of Arizona State University, November 8 through 10, 2013.

*Fall 2013*

I came back to Arizona towards the end of August eager to begin rehearsals once again, now with all of my collaborators together in the studio. Some of my most impactful experiences at ImPulsTanz, particularly in a workshop with choreographer/performance artist Keith Hennessey, guided my rehearsals. With Hennessey, I had done a shaking score in which we wildly and continuously shook our bodies for one hour. The sense of community that was urgently engendered in an experience like this where the body was pushed to such extreme limits deeply interested me. I also loved how I experienced a heightened sense of awareness of my shifting states of being in the shaking. In this way, the shaking afforded a similar experience as finding stillness and silence in the body—an opportunity to keenly feel, moment to moment.

In my first several rehearsals, my collaborators and I shook for anywhere from twenty to forty minutes. There was a way in which I felt myself loose, warm, and available after shaking that I thought would be an optimal place from which to perform. I decided that my collaborators and I would shake onstage behind the closed curtain for the thirty minutes before each show. I was interested in the buildup of energy created by our collective shaking in the stage space and the rush of this energy out into the audience as the curtain opened.

In addition to these thoughts about shaking, I came into my early rehearsals with a few other solidified ideas about what I wanted to explore. This included text (all of which I wrote over the summer), a few objects (glass bowls—one filled with oranges, one with water, one with nothing) and ways in which we would interact with them, and a couple of dance phrases.



From August 22 through September 14, 2013, I had rehearsals with my collaborators three times a week for one and a half hours each. Perhaps not surprisingly, I felt the surge of inner conflict that I had experienced in my one-on-one rehearsals once again—the need to serve my collaborators, to not make them uncomfortable. I was upset to reencounter these feelings. While I was quickly suffocated all over again, I thought I just needed to accept that this work was going to feel difficult.

In those few weeks of group rehearsals, I pieced together several episodes comprised of what had emerged from the explorations of the aforementioned components into a continuous twenty-five-minute work. I had a showing for my thesis committee on September 10. The feedback was tough to receive, and I was unsure of what to make of it. Comments about the relationships amongst us as performers and the dynamics and differences in the ways we moved revealed to me that I was not interested in such matters at that time in my artistic work. While I was assured that each of us as performers was dynamic and that all of us together made for quite a captivating crew, it was clear that there was a way in which our differences as movers ultimately made for a scattering of attention rather than the desired cultivation of something highly concentrated. I did not want to coach movement or a way of being, and this felt especially hard to do anyway from my insider role as performer. I felt overwhelmed by the seeming incongruity of choosing to be both performer and maker in the context of a group work. I was lost.

That Saturday, I went into the studio alone. This solitude within the context of the workspace immediately engendered a sense of relief in me. I was struck by how I had not given myself any time alone in the studio up to this point in the semester; it was no wonder that I was feeling depleted. I knew something had to change. I decided that I was not going to leave the studio that day until I knew what that something was. I spent awhile being very quiet and still and I also shook vigorously for a good length of time. Afterwards, I wrote continuously, and the answer presented itself:

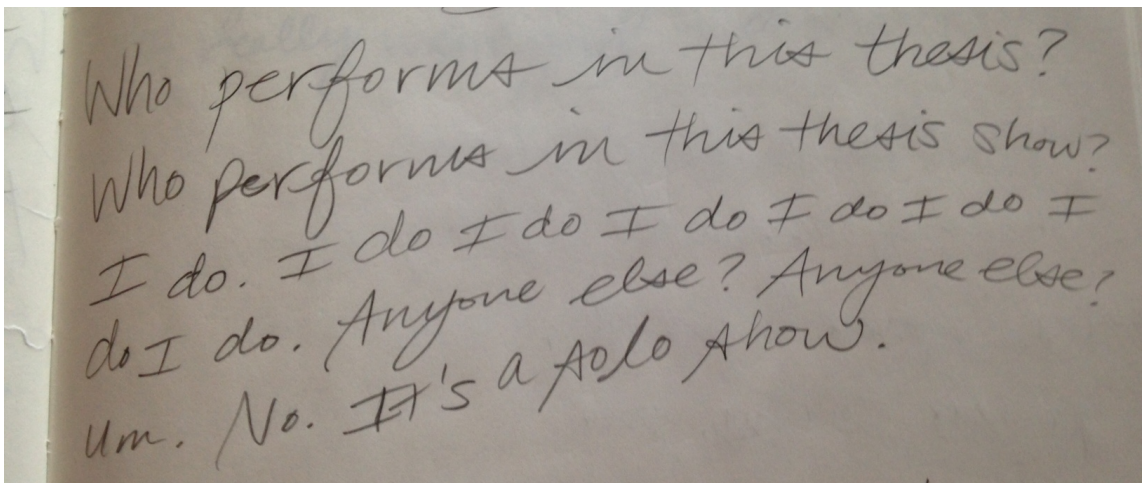


Figure 7. Journal page 2

After this revelation that the work was a solo, things came quickly. It was a profound experience, actually. A new title, *I'll go to the end of time for you (and you don't even know my name)* emerged. (The conceptual underpinnings of this title are described in the "Dance Matters" talk in Appendix A.) Over the next two weeks, I went into the studio alone, and using some of the material that I had been exploring in group rehearsals and also allowing some new sections of text, song, and movement to emerge, I had a forty-minute solo work by the next showing for my committee. The meeting that

followed was incredibly constructive and generative; emotionally, it was a wholly different experience than my first committee meeting. The feedback felt affirming in that it addressed what I really wanted to know as the maker—how the triangulated interactions among the work, the audience, and me as performer registered and resonated with the viewer. Also, the comments felt manageable in that I only had to translate them and understand their implications with regards to myself as both maker and performer.

Through the month of October, I continued to rehearse and modify the work, making changes here and there in exactly how each episode played out and transitioned to the next. I also had more frequent meetings with In Kyung, the dramaturg. In this critical role, she served as my outside eye. She watched rehearsals and gave me feedback about how the work was reading from the viewer perspective. Additionally, I met with Alejandro Salcido, the lighting designer, several times in the weeks leading up to the show. We spent time together both in and out of the studio, talking, watching rehearsal videos, and experimenting with lighting and placement of soft goods in the theater space. In Kyung and Alejandro were both vital to this work. I totally trusted and found a world of support in them. Our interactions helped me to clarify decisions about how time, space, and energy were being utilized and when to make modifications that would more optimally enact my intentions for the work.

As November neared, I created advertisements for the show with the following blurb:

An acidic journey through the basic nature of being alive, this solo involves a series of neurotically/erotically repetitive episodes of self-composed song, text,

and dance. Through them, I deal with the duality of the emotional experience of appearing to be one human in one body — the heartache of feeling separate and yet the empowerment of feeling singular — while flirting with the possibility of a timeless space within and beyond it all in which this illusion dissolves. But actually, mostly I want to flirt with you.

As planned, I gave three public performances in the Margaret Gisolo Dance Theatre on Friday, November 8 at 6:30pm; Saturday, November 9 at 7:30pm; and Sunday, November 10 at 2pm. The final version of the work ran approximately 55 minutes in length with no intermission. Here are some photos from one performance, ordered chronologically.



Figure 8. Thesis show 1



Figure 9. Thesis show 2



Figure 10. Thesis show 3



Figure 11. Thesis show 4



Figure 12. Thesis show 5



Figure 13. Thesis show 6





Figure 14. Thesis show 7



Figure 15. Thesis show 8



Figure 16. Thesis show 9



Figure 17. Thesis show 10

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS, INSIGHTS, & CONCLUSIONS

As has often been the case with my work, I gleaned a deeper and more specific understanding of what exactly I was dealing with in the piece (and how I was dealing with it) during and after the performances. (I recently watched an interview with choreographer Xavier LeRoy in which he is asked what *low pieces* is about, and he says, “What I say now is what I think the work is about after doing it... You understand what the work is about by how it is presented” [“Low Pieces - Xavier Le Roy.”].) The days after the shows were, naturally, a collision of thoughts, feelings, questions, and revelations. The Thursday following my final performance, I gave a talk about the work at Dance Matters, the dance program’s weekly school-wide meeting; I spoke to the work’s conceptual content and form and shared several significant revelations. As a way of capturing something of its live-ness, I have transcribed the talk verbatim—“um’s” and “uhh’s” included—and with some of my physical actions described in brackets. This transcription in its entirety is included in Appendix A.

An important point to highlight here from the Dance Matters talk is that I came to realize yet another set of questions as the work’s true basis. They are, “How do I make myself most available to be seen?” and “How do I make myself most available to see?” My initial questions of aliveness and aestheticizing authenticity and later questions of the conventions of the proscenium stage are either part of these more fundamental questions or are another way of asking essentially the same thing. In examining how the theater was used, I see now that I crafted opportunities to connect with the audience in ways that at least slightly subverted the inherent separation of performer and public in a proscenium

stage. My thought was that these methods would make me more available to see the audience and be seen by them.

One way in which I sought to foster a connection was through the exchange of objects that necessitated a breaking of the fourth wall (i.e. performer crossing the line that separates the stage and the house). To begin the show, I emerged through the slit of the closed curtain with a collection plate in each hand filled with little slips of paper on which I had hand-written the full title of the show (see Figure 8). Each slip also had a penny attached to it. I passed the plates around until each member of the audience had one. (The audience did not get programs until they were leaving the theater at the end of the show, so up until now, they were empty-handed.) Much later in the show, I broke the fourth wall again to walk slowly through the house with a large bowl of water in my hands, coming very close in proximity to some audience members. Speaking aloud, I invited them to make a wish upon their penny and imagine themselves throwing it into the bowl so their wish would come true. I then placed the bowl in a corner of the house that they would pass as they left the theater and said they could deposit their penny as they did so, if they wished.

In addition to speaking directly to the audience with regards to pennies, I used my voice in other ways to acknowledge them. To end the show, I wheeled a piano out very close to the front row and sang a song. (See Figure 17. See Appendix B for the text—the song starts at the line, “I really want you.”) In writing the song, there was one part I intentionally left open-ended in order to insert words that were particular to the people in attendance at any given show. It followed the format “what you \_\_\_\_\_ about,” and I first used general actions that are widely relatable, such as “what you think about,” “what

you dream about,” and “what you cry about.” Then I sang several lines in this format that were audience-specific, such as “what you stay in LA about” during a show when a friend who lives in Los Angeles was there. Sometimes I would also make eye contact with the person I was referencing as I sang about him/her.

On the note of visual focus, throughout the show I made as much direct eye contact as possible with audience members. Even during the moments when the work fit most neatly into what may be called a traditional dance performance (i.e. I was onstage performing dance phrases), I sought to subvert our separation in space by consciously seeing the people before me. My feeling was that by acknowledging their presence in this way, I was more clearly inviting them to see me.

While I recognize that this thesis document is in fact an inanimate vestige of words that supports my live (no, once-living) thesis show, it becomes enacted and animated within you, the reader, as you read this. There is a particular way in which you are receiving and making meaning of these words right this moment that is a result of what has happened to you today (not to mention in all your years of living thus far) and the ways in which you have been conditioned to understand things. What is in your stomach right now? What are you currently digesting? This contributes to the live-ness of this moment for you.

One of the most central aspects of my experience of performing the thesis show was that its live-ness was what made my thoughts and feelings inside of the work dramatically different from show to show. In this way, the work felt like a living creature over which I had some control but also with a strong will of its own and I was at its mercy. There was a constant toggling between the part of me that knew what came next

in the work and stayed committed to carrying it out, and the part of me that relentlessly took note of how any given moment in the work felt different from ever before. This is a perpetual dialogue between the known and the unknown that live-ness affords and that makes me “come alive.” The theater space and set material (choreography, text, melodies, etc.) provided the known container for the unknown to be entered, for the contents to be animated by each moment’s set of unrepeatable circumstances.

For example, Saturday’s show was particularly memorable due to an infant being held by her mother in the front row of the audience. I noticed the baby about halfway through the piece because she began occasionally making soft noises, coos and squawks. I did not know her or her parents. Something about her presence really moved me. For the rest of the performance, she became an anchor for me, a point in space and also in my mind to which I continually came back and directed my energy. It was profound. I became singularly focused—intent.

While the energetic exchange between performer and audience serves as a crux of my interest (as explicitly referenced in my first prospectus), it had never been so clear to me just how vital an audience is until the week leading up to the show. Each of the four nights preceding the night the show opened, I had dress rehearsals in which I performed for a virtually empty house. They were difficult, emotionally and physically. I felt so depleted by the end of one of the runs that I hobbled onto the stage afterward, collapsed, and exclaimed, “I’ve created a monster!” Thankfully, opening night was a crucial reminder of the necessity of an audience; all the doubt that had accumulated in the days before vanished when I felt them before me that night. I was supported. The audience’s physical presence and attention held the space inside which the work sprang to life once

again. As my committee chair, Eileen Standley, put it so eloquently in a meeting several weeks after the shows, “It’s a living thing; it needs a public to exist.”

Perhaps the most fascinating experience in the days and weeks after the performances was hearing from many different members of the public about what parts in particular continued to resonate in them. Although I did not intentionally construct the songs that I sang in the work to be catchy or memorable, people continue to tell me even now, four months later, that they find themselves singing these songs in their daily lives. This has been the most rewarding feedback. I am honored and inspired to know that something of the work has stuck with people on a very conscious level. A few people of note even mentioned that the songs make them feel empowered, that there was something liberating about watching and hearing me sing them, and to recall the songs takes them back to that big place.

Interestingly, the work was very vocal yet I did not set out to create something with a vocal backbone. The heart of almost every episode for me existed in whatever my voice was doing. The final episode of the work in which I sat down at the piano and sang for several minutes was the ultimate treat for me—the dessert at the end of a feast. It seems that the deep pleasure and sense of freedom I derived from these moments of singing somehow translated into a potent experience for much of the audience. The staying power of the songs certainly also speaks to the nature of singing and music as something that hooks into the human psyche; one need look no further than the use of jingles in advertisements for some basis here.

The audience was hit with currently popular, upbeat music (e.g. Rihanna, Macklemore, Beyoncé, etc.) as they entered the theater, this pre-show playlist fueling my

thirty-minute onstage shaking ritual. Even when the group work became a solo piece, I decided to keep this component. After one of my initial dress rehearsals that left me feeling exhausted though, one of my committee members, Jeff McMahon, suggested that perhaps I did not have to adhere to the ritual so rigidly. Accordingly, for the rest of the dress rehearsals and shows, while I continued to put myself onstage thirty minutes prior to the show with vigorous music playing, I allowed myself to do whatever I felt like I needed to do. For any given show, this included some shaking, dancing, stretching, vocalizing, and a good bit of seated stillness. This use of the pre-show time set me up to enter the work much more effectively in that I was becoming available to myself, listening deeply and allowing myself to engage accordingly. While shaking for extended periods of time was an important part of my practice in crafting this work, I came to realize that the idea that I had to do it before performing was actually rooted in fear. Giving into this fear left me closed off and depleted. This was quite a revelation.

In looking back on my time in graduate school and the shifts between working solo and collaboratively, I understand now that what made these transitions so jarring each time was the idea that there is one, unchanging, optimal way of working that I must find. What I see now is that there is actually a fluidity in terms of how each project and period of work manifests. The work has a life of its own that may ask for configurations I do not expect or yet recognize. Furthermore, my thesis project in particular represents a very specific way of working I had not previously considered; that is, working collaboratively is a viable methodology for making a solo. Additionally, while my body was the only one seen onstage in the shows, my close relationships with my dramaturg



and lighting designer persisted in such a way that the process was in fact collaborative to the very end.

As evidenced by my two prospectuses and Dance Matters talk, the questions at the root of this work kept shifting. They all harken back to the essential nature of performance. From *The Three Little Pigs* to my thesis show, a great deal has been revealed to me. So where am I now? I am able to articulate my driving questions more clearly than ever before. As humans, what are our feelings about being seen, and how have we constructed spaces in which we can play out those feelings, in which we invite ourselves to be seen? As Kris, what are my feelings about being seen, and how can I make choices about using such spaces that continue to reveal more to me and the viewer about this ever-elusive question?

And where am I going from here? I am moving to New York City to continue making work, both solo and collaborative I suspect. The exploration and use of my voice will continue to serve as a primary focus. I am particularly interested in making more evening-length pieces for the proscenium stage and perhaps also for gallery spaces. Major museums seem to be increasingly presenting performance recently; choreographer Sarah Michelson debuted her latest work at the Whitney Museum of American Art earlier this year, and choreographer Miguel Gutierrez will be premiering his latest piece in the Whitney Biennial this May. I look forward to planting myself in the mecca of contemporary American performance and seeing how it grows me, how my aesthetic voice affects and is affected by this burgeoning scene.

## REFERENCES

- Adyashanti. *Falling into Grace: Insights on the End of Suffering*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2011. CD.
- Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979. Print.
- Disabled Theater*. Chor. Jérôme Bel. Akademietheater, Vienna, Austria. 28 July 2013. Performance.
- Hay, Deborah. *My Body, the Buddhist*. Hanover, NH: University of New England, 2000. Print.
- Jacob, Mary Jane, and Jacquelynn Baas, eds. *Learning Mind: Experience into Art*. Chicago, IL: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2009. Print.
- Larson, Kay. *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists*. New York: Penguin, 2012. Print.
- Low Pieces*. Chor. Xavier LeRoy. MuseumsQuartier Halle G, Vienna, Austria. 27 July 2013. Performance.
- "Low Pieces - Xavier Le Roy." YouTube. N.p., 03 Mar. 2012. Web. 08 Apr. 2014.
- Pourzal, Kristopher. "Thesis journal." 2013. Print.
- Pourzal, Kristopher. "Prospectus 1: THESIS À GOGO." 2013. Print.
- Pourzal, Kristopher. "Prospectus 2: these buddhas sit beneath disco balls." 2013. Print.
- "Ralph Lemon in Conversation with Curator Philip Bither." YouTube. Walker Art Center, 22 Oct. 2010. Web. 08 Apr. 2014.
- Warr, Tracey, and Amelia Jones. *The Artist's Body*. London: Phaidon, 2000. Print.
- X-on*. Chor. Ivo Dimchev. Volkstheater, Vienna, Austria. 21 July 2013. Performance.

APPENDIX A

“DANCE MATTERS” TALK

The video recording of this talk can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/92183777> (Password: KRISTOPHER). Note that the talk begins with a song from the show and then the text I have transcribed here follows.

As mentioned in the document, in an effort to capture something of its live-ness, I have transcribed the talk verbatim—“um’s” and “uhh’s” included—and with some of my physical actions described in brackets. I have bolded certain bits for emphasis.

November 14, 2013, approximately 4:00pm, Margaret Gisolo Dance Theatre

“Um.. yeah, **so I think my main question, the main root of the work was the question, ‘How do I make myself most available to be seen?’** [Pause, eye contact] **And, ‘How do I make myself most available to see?’ So, as I worked uh, on the work and had this question kind of fueling the whole thing, um you know I started developing different ideas about how this exchange, these exchanges, happen in performance and how we can make ourselves, um sort of open ourselves most widely in performance for this exchange to happen.** [Inhale through nose] Um I also think I’m drawn to this question because for me it really like blurs the lines between art and life, or performance and life, because uhh I think what this question is getting at is the desire to be seen, the desire to be acknowledged, which I think is just inherent in being human, um but also like the shadow side of that or the counterpart of that which is the desire to hide and the desire to conceal um uhh so I just feel like those are so universal and I’m so interested in how they dialogue with each other and how they play with each other and the space in between the two of them, so I uh I think this was sort of echoed in the work in that um like you know the work was in this space so of course **on**

stage you have a backstage and you have an onstage you have parts that are lit and parts that aren't lit so for me playing in this kind of space gave me so much range and possibility for dealing with those questions because I could make decisions about leaving the stage—I don't want to be seen anymore—or I could make decisions about still being onstage but then maybe there's gradations between like uhh I'm working with something that really allows me to be seen in this moment, like wailing my guts out at the piano [hand on piano lid], or other parts, there were other parts for example where I was more interested in something more inward or something more concealed even though I'm still seen. So, just sort of like playing in all of those possibilities, playing in that world, UM if you saw the work, maybe you remember the part where there was like a downpool of light and I circled in and out of it LOTS of times, so for me that part um very concretely deals with that question, like uhh 'Here I ammm!' for a second, and then I'm concealed concealed concealed, reVEALed, concealed concealed concealed concealed... you know, something about the parts of ourselves that we want people to see, and then the parts of ourselves that we sort of want to conceal, shadow parts, shadow sides. [Inhale through mouth] Yeah, something like that...

Umm, **the second big thing** [all five fingers of right hand pressed together and emphatically gesture forward, short "click" sound of sucking the teeth] **that I want to tell you about which is related of course is um, I was curious in... I was curious tooo consider the audience as uhh, like a romantic partner, sooo uhh... yeah, looking at audience-performer relationship as something sort of flirty, umm and a little dangerous and a little scary but also you want to throw yourself into and be totally**

vulnerable in... so, and all ranges of that, like maybe like a first date where you're still on your best behavior, and um, you know so that's me as a performer like trying to put my best foot forward, like look at how well I can daance [vibrato, little shoulder shimmy], look at how well I can sing, but then what is it when I uhh maybe allow you or invite you to see parts of myself that I would otherwise not show on a first date, maybe I would only show you if I were in a really serious relationship with you. But yet, here we are in this venue where I'm inviting you to see those parts, um, looking at you as the audience as my, you know, longtime lover as well. Um, so in addition to that, so there's this sort of two-way road, right?, of energetic exchange between performer and audience, and then I was also curious in my relationship with something beyond myself. So [exhale out the mouth], seeing that as this sort of open pathway, this open channel, like uhh, what is it if I become aware of, or or I dunno, seek to be connected to something beyond myself and beyond you all, and also be really connected to myself and also be really aware and connected to you. [gesture upward, downward, out towards audience, back in, back up, repeat 2 times while speaking] So it's this like really fluid and open, dynamic channel, or something. Yeah... something like that. **Um, and, the way, uhh, another way you can sort of maybe see this is in the title, I say um, the title is I'll go to the end of time for you, [in a lower-pitched voice] parentheses and you don't even know my name. So, "I'll go to the end of time for you," I feel like that's something you would say to um somebody you like really love, like if you're in a really loving relationship, you'd be willing to do that for that person, um and I like that phrase because there's something about performance that has a timelessness about it. So for me as a performer entering a**

**space of timelessness where I'm so focused, I'm so aware, I'm so sort of um, centered in terms of my focus that uhh time disappears for me, and can I create that experience for you as an audience where you become so absorbed with me, um [look upward self-consciously] that time disappears for you too? So me as performer, I'll go to the end of time for you, parentheses and you don't even know my name, because there is this anonymity in the audience, like, most of the people who saw the show of course I know, but some I don't, and so it's like, it's unconditional. As performer, I still want to be that devoted to the work and to my obsession with performance that um, I'm willing to do it even if you don't know my name.**

Something like that. Um, okay...

**...so then the third thing that I wanted to tell you was that—IS that—uhh [pause], from the very beginning of my dance-making um I've been curious in the experience of being a singular human, like being one human in one body, and I was thinking back earlier today to the very first dance I ever made, which was called [look upward], "It's not you...it's me." [audience member Chareka laughs, look at her] And um, it was about... [point to Chareka] Chareka saw it, I went to undergrad with Chareka. Um and, and it was a solo in which I was dealing with feeling so isolated as one human in one body... [inhale through mouth] It's sort of like when you're cuddling with somebody that you really like, or love, and you can only ever get so close to them, you know you're like already filling each other's nooks and crannies, you're like completely spooned or whatever, but your body is still in the way... you know? You can't get beyond it, even if you want to, even if you want to completely merge with that person somehow. [Inhale through mouth and look up] **So, yeah, that very first work I ever made was like ahhh,****

dealing with those feelings of isolation, like I'm so isolated in this body and want to get beyond it somehow, so I think that THIS work [point down] now several years later is sort of a reconciliation for me. I'm not choosing to look at that feeling of isolation as one thing anymore. I'm trying to see it as the dual nature of being one human in one body, and actually... the something beyond that dual nature. So not only is there maybe some depression or...[exhale out mouth the mouth] ughhh...*that* that comes with like the loneliness or the feelings of aloneness that could come with feeling like just one person isolated in this one body, but also maybe there's an empowerment that comes with feeling singular. You know, like feeling individual? [Right hand in fist emphatically placed at right hip] Especially in this culture I think. [Gesture emphatically with right hand, furrow brow, look up] Be all you can be! and [Gesture with left hand] you know, like uhh... Do you. [Laugh a bit] Right? We say that a lot here. *Do you!* So like, maybe that's also really empowering to be one human in one body. So I was playing with both those sides of being one human in one body and then also trying to imagine the third, I dunno, space between or beyond that... beyond the emotion of it. So maybe it's serious and not serious, maybe it's light and it's heavy, but I wanted the work to be purposefully sort of ambiguous and complex emotionally for that reason. [Exhale out mouth] Yeah...okay...



And then the fourth thing that I wanted to tell you which I already sort of started to touch on is why the proscenium stage? I'm so in love with the proscenium stage. Um, and so for me it's about the fact that this is a container where everything becomes meaningful somehow. So I think as an audience, we come into the proscenium thinking okay, an artist has purposefully intentionally crafted something for this space, so there's something deliberate about the way things have been framed, about the way things are presented to you, to us as audience. And I like this sort of focusing that the proscenium creates, this sort of importance that the proscenium creates, um, around what's happening. And, um, what I also love about it is I think there's a suspension of social norms that happens in the, the theater space. Because for example that part of the work where I'm like [Italian accent] 'Are you ready to-uh be-uh with-uh me-uh,' you know, like if I just ran around on the street and said that, people would probably like hold their purses a little closer and walk faster, you know what I mean? However, I can invite you into this shared time and space, to this theater [point back at stage], and so you're sort of suspending social norms, social obligations, social responsibility, and you're seeing me run around a little bit crazed saying, 'Are you uh-ready to-uh be-uh with-uh me-uh' and you're okay with it, you know? You're thinking, oh there's a purpose, there's an intention, there's a reason, what is this all about? [Inhale through mouth] Um...so there's that, and then on the flipside in a way there's also very specific codes of conduct that we have come to agree to, usually, when we enter into a theater. **We've...we've sort of accepted like yes I'm an audience, I will sit here quietly, I will watch, maybe I'll laugh... but you know, like I'm not gonna really actively engage, I'm not gonna run up on stage or anything, um, so, I**

**really like that there's such strong expectations that come with our shared experience of the proscenium stage, and then the opportunity for me as a maker and a performer to sort of flirt with those lines. Um...like maybe coming out, giving you something, or being at the piano but making direct eye contact with you and saying something about you, or something like this. So not breaking the lines or the walls so strongly that I like pull you onto stage or anything like that, but how can I use my eye contact, how can I use my words, how can I use my physical presence in space to** [rock weight back and forth quickly and swirly rolling gesture through right hand and wrist] **you know, mess with those lines a little bit.** Um...and uhh...related, um, I also, for me, there's something so connected uhh between the proscenium stage, the theater, and like a church, a house of worship, for me this is like a house of worship um [look upward] that has space for the sacred and the profane and everything between, just like the gamut of human experience, [inhale through mouth] and uhh so, this sort of maybe explains in a way why at the beginning I come out with those collection plates, but I wanted to reverse the action. Usually collection plates are given in a church and then you're supposed to put something in it. Instead I had you take from it. So I wanted to make that reference but mess with it. [Inhale through nose] I also wanted to mess with, as audience, the expectation that what you're seeing is going to make sense or is going to have a meaning, so I gave you a penny in the beginning... I gave you cents/sense. [Rock head back and forth] Yeah? [Nod head. One audience member claps. Look at her. Other audience laughs.] That was the last thing I was going to say actually. [Laugh and throw head down and bounce back up] Um, are we out of time? ...What was that? We need to move on, okay. Thank you so much.”

APPENDIX B  
PERFORMANCE TEXT

(Note: The following is all text I wrote that was used throughout the course of the performance. It was heard in the order that it appears and spanned from the beginning of the work to the end. Some of it was sung, some spoken, some yelled...)

I might be someone tonight  
I might be your own lover  
I might be somebody tonight  
And you don't even know my name

Repeat (x4)

My name is...  
[Tea kettle]

Gimme all your money  
Say you love me  
Please say you love me  
Oh my god  
Call me baby  
Please, pretty please, call me baby  
Tell me I'm beautiful  
Actually, just stop talking  
Oh my god please  
Oh god  
Oh my god  
I thought this was supposed to feel good  
What?  
It does feel good  
Oh good  
Wait, what?  
No one said this is supposed to be anything  
Oh god  
Oh my god  
Oh my god  
Oh my god  
Oh my god  
Oh my god

[Ad infinitum]

Swing low, sweet chariot  
Comin' for to carry me home  
Swing low, sweet chariot  
Comin' for to carry me home

At the beginning of the show, I gave you a piece of paper with the title of the work and a penny attached to it...one cent. Maybe you already lost it—that's okay. Maybe you want to keep the penny—that's okay too. Or maybe you want to get the penny now, make a wish upon it, and imagine yourself throwing it into this bowl of water so that your wish will come true. You can start wishing and imagining... now.

Maybe you imagine yourself missing. Maybe you imagine yourself making it. Either way, you may drop the penny into the bowl on your way out of the theater tonight, if you wish.

I really want you  
I really do  
I really want you  
And you don't even know (my name)

I really want you  
I really do  
I really want you  
And you don't even know (what you don't even know)

I really want you  
I really do  
I really want you  
And you don't even know (my name)

I really want you  
I really do  
I really want to know

What you think about  
What you feel about  
What you dream about  
What you scream about  
What you eat about  
What you sleep about  
What you leave about  
What you grieve about  
What you fly about  
What you sigh about  
What you cry about  
What you die about  
What you strum  
What you drum  
What you come about  
What you drink coffee about

What you eat your cereal about  
What you say I'm sorry about  
What you say good job about  
What you [insert audience-specific things here]  
What you wear a cross about  
What you stopped wearing a cross about  
What you do good deeds about  
What you read Facebook feeds about  
What you make art about  
What you toast a poptart about  
What you open your heart  
What you are afraid to start about  
What you steal from Walmart about  
...  
...  
...

Fuck...  
Fuck fuck fuck...fuckin' A  
Fuckin' B  
Fuckin' C  
Fuckin' D  
Fuckin' E  
Fuckin' F  
Fuckin' G  
Fuckin' H  
Fuckin' I  
Fuckin' J  
Fuckin' K  
Fuckin' L  
Fuckin' M  
Fuckin' N  
Fuckin' O  
Fuckin' P  
Fuckin' Q  
Fuckin' R  
Fuckin' S  
Fuckin' T  
Fuckin' U  
Fuckin' V  
Fuckin' W  
Fuckin' X  
Fuckin' Y  
Y  
Fuckin' Z

(Repeat Fuckin' ABC's one time very fast)

Allons-y, allons-y, allons-y  
Allons-y, allons-y, mon ami  
Let's go in French, let's go in French  
LET go in French

Z Z Z  
Rest in peace  
Rest in peace  
Rest in peace

Okay, that's the end. That's the end of this show. Really, that's the end.

By the way  
By the way  
My name, my name is  
Kris  
Kris Kris Kris Kris  
Kris with a K