

## Alysia Ramos

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Application for Tenure and Promotion

Creative Research

Department of Dance

Oberlin College

October 2020

Photo: Jennifer Mana

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# Reader's Guide

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## Organization

This dossier is organized in two main locations:

1. Digital document (PDF)
2. Website: [alysiaramos.com](http://alysiaramos.com)

Both contain private links to videos on a Vimeo site, you do not need a password to view them.

## The PDF

The PDF contains all the required documents and a catalogue of my creative research and can be viewed in **Adobe Acrobat**.

The PDF is indexed with bookmarks that will take you directly to sections.

**Be aware that not every page has a corresponding bookmark, so you must scroll through the document using the arrow keys to see all the pages. It is easy for pages to not 'show up' depending on the 'view' you are using. In Acrobat, you can use the page numbers to determine if you have skipped pages.**

The documentation for each creative work begins with a title page which includes the title and reference # for each work, credits and a brief description for each work. **On this page you will also find a link to the video if available. This link will take you directly to the webpage for the correlating piece.** The title page is followed by a collection of photos, programs and other documentation associated with the project.

# Curriculum Vita

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## Degrees

- 2014 **University of Utah**, Master of Fine Arts, Dance, University Fellow
- 2006 **CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique & Interdisciplinary Studies**, Bachelor of Science, summa cum laude

## Awards & Honors

- 2020 Individual Artistic Excellence Award in Choreography, **Ohio Arts Council**
- 2014 Sally Fitt Award, **University of Utah Department of Dance**
- 2013 University Teaching Fellowship, **University of Utah Graduate School**
- 2011-14 Graduate Assistantship, **University of Utah Department of Dance**
- 2005 Diego Hidalgo Arts Scholarship, **CUNY Baccalaureate Program**
- 2004-06 Thomas Smith Academic Scholarship, **CUNY Baccalaureate Program**

## Academic Teaching

- 2015- **Oberlin College**, Assistant Professor
- 2014 **Westminster College**, Lecturer (2 courses)
- 2014 **Salt Lake Community College**, Guest Lecturer
- 2011-14 **University of Utah**, Graduate Teaching Assistant (5 courses)

## Grants

- 2020 Grant-in-Aid, **Oberlin College** for *Power of Two* with Mustapha Braimah
- 2019 Research Assistant Grant, **Oberlin College** for Kierra Nguyen to work on ODC Production
- 2018 Music Curriculum Development Grant, **Oberlin College/Mellon Foundation**
- 2017 Grant-in-Aid, **Oberlin College** for DanceWorks production at Cleveland Public Theater
- 2017 \*Arts, Culture, and Events Grant, **City of Salt Lake** for production of *Those With Wings*
- 2017 \*Project Grant, **Jordan River Commission** for production of *Those With Wings*
- 2017 \*Project Grant, **Utah Humanities Council** for production of *Those With Wings*
- 2017 Level 1 Curriculum Development Grant at Allen Memorial Art Museum, **Oberlin College**
- 2016 Powers Travel Grant, **Oberlin College** for research in Rio de Janeiro and Petropolis, Brazil
- 2016 Teaching Grant, **Oberlin College** to attend California Brazil Camp
- 2015 Project Grant, **Utah Division of Arts and Museums** for *The Mists*

\*Award received under fiscal sponsor, Ashley Anderson Dances

### Research: Media

- 2020 ***Becoming Oxum, my body remembers*** Dance Film, Role: Writer, Choreographer, Performer and Director. Additional performance by Georgianna Johnson, W Myles Reilly, Maya Fillion Ritchie and Tiago Ramos Reilly, Cinematography by David J. Ritchie, Original Music by Michael Wall, Editing by Stéphane Glynn. 15 min
- 2020 ***A Body in Oberlin***, Photo Stills of live performance improvisations. Role: Performer. Photographs by David. J. Ritchie

### Research: Proscenium Concerts

- 2018 ***Forgone Territory***, Ensemble dance theater production. Role: Writer, Choreographer, Performer and Director in collaboration with Nathan Trice (Guest artist), Kierra Nguyen, Niko Thomashow, Kalei Tooman, Kara Nepomuceno, Tyus Southern. Score by Mathew Dixon. Presented by DanceWorks at The Cleveland Public Theater, Cleveland, OH. 40 min
- 2016 ***Terra Incognita***, Ensemble, dance theater production. Role: Choreographer and director. Performed by Oberlin Dance Company. Musical arrangement by Benjamin Rempel with live performance by 5 members of the Oberlin College Conservatory. Hall Auditorium, Oberlin College. 50 min

### Research: Immersive Dance Theater

- 2017 ***Those With Wings***, Site specific immersive dance theater production. Role: Writer, Co-director and Lead Choreographer. Codirected with Liz Ivkovich. Additional choreography by Ashley Anderson. Featuring performers Ai Fuji Nelson, Liz Ivkovich, Emma Wilson, Samuel Hanson, Peter Larsen, Efen Corado Garcia, Amy Freitas and Samantha Matsukawa. Live music by Old Soldier. Produced by Liz Ivkovich, LoveDanceMore, Ashley Anderson Dances and Seven Canyons Trust. Performed at Bend in The River, Salt Lake City, UT. 60 min
- 2015 ***The Mists***, Immersive dance theater production. Co-directed and Choreographed by Alysia Ramos and Liz Ivkovich. Performed by a cast of over 60 performers including dancers and musicians. Presented by Garden After Dark and the Utah Division of Arts and Museums. Red Butte Garden, Salt Lake City, Utah. 3hrs

### Research: Short Works (less than 30min)

- 2020 ***Não Nascei em Samba***, Samba Repertoire. Role: Choreographer. Performed by SambaAmor, artistic director, Nike Olibisi. Presented at multiple venues. Cleveland, Ohio. 4 min
- 2018 ***The Obliterated Place***, Contemporary Solo. Role: Choreographer& Performer. Original music by Carson Fratus. Presented by Cleveland Dance Festival, Pilgrim Church, Cleveland, OH. 8 min
- 2016-17 ***Time Certainties Peace***, Contemporary Duet. Role: Co-choreographer and performer with Mustapha Braimah. Original music by Aliya Ultan and Carson Fratus. Presented at Oberlin College Kuumba Week, OHIO Dance Festival, World Dance Alliance Global Summit, Canada. 11min

## Research with Student Partners

- 2019 ***Xenia***, Immersive Dance Theater Production. Created with 13 undergraduate students in the inaugural immersive dance theater course, Big Blue, Oberlin College. 60min
- 2018 ***What is Private?*** Work in-progress showing. Created with 5 undergraduate students. Music by Carson Fratus. Birenbaum, Oberlin College, OH. 10min
- 2018 ***Limbo***, Restaged Repertoire from Mezclado Movement Group. Reimagined with Contemporary 3 students. End of the semester dance showing, Warner Gymnasium, Oberlin College, 6min
- 2018 ***such is me***, Restaged Repertoire from Alysia Ramos solo. Reimagined with Contemporary 3 students at the end of semester showing, Warner Gymnasium, Oberlin College, 6min
- 2018 ***Samba***, Large Ensemble created with Samba students at the end of semester showing with excerpts performed at Student Dance Showcase, Big Parade and Brazilian Night at the Sco. 11min
- 2017 ***River that Never Rests***, Trio created with two undergraduate students for the Spring Back Concert, Warner Gymnasium, Oberlin College. 6min
- 2016 ***Interplay***, Improvisational performance, created with 10 undergraduate students, presented by the FireFish Festival, Lorain, Ohio. 30 min
- 2016 ***But a Drop***, Large Ensemble work created with Contemporary 3 students, presented at Spring Back at Warner Gymnasium, Oberlin College. 8min
- 2015 ***Violets like Castanets***, Large Ensemble created with Contemporary 2 students, presented at Fall Forward, Oberlin College. 7min

## Featured Guest Performances

- 2019 ***Samba Joia***, Lakeside Chataqua Summer Series, Danbury Township, OH
- 2019 ***Afro-Brazilian Cultural Appreciation Initiative*** (ABCAI), Guest Artist, Cleveland, OH
- 2018 ***Samba Joia***, Firelands Symphony Orchestra, Victory Park, Vermillion, OH
- 2018 ***Tropical Cleveland Carnival***, Shooters on the Water, Cleveland, OH
- 2018 ***Dance Africa Pittsburgh***, Djapo Cultural Institute, Kelly Strayhorn Theater Pittsburgh, PA
- 2018 ***Soga Dorr, Juneteenth concert***, Djapo Cultural Institute, The Breen Center, Cleveland, OH
- 2017 ***Brazil Day***, Batuqui Restuarant, Cleveland, OH
- 2017 ***Samba Joia***, Firelands College, Huron, OH

## Professional Teaching & Community Venues

- 2020 1 Zoom Samba Masterclass, **Karamu House**, Cleveland, Ohio
- 2020 3 Samba Workshops, SambaAmor **Nola Movement and Dance**, Cleveland Ohio
- 2020 2 Masterclasses (Samba & Contemporary) **OHIO 5 Dance Festival**, Denison, OH
- 2019 3 Masterclasses (Contemporary, Samba & Partnering) **Oberlin Dance Institute**, Oberlin, Ohio
- 2019 Samba Fit, weekly community class, **Solaluna Yoga Studio**, Oberlin, OH
- 2018 2 Samba Masterclasses **Djapo Cultural Institute**, Phyllis Wheatley Center
- 2018 3 Masterclasses (Contemporary, Composition & Repertory), **Ohio Dance Residency**, Hathaway Brown School, Cleveland, OH
- 2018 2 Masterclasses (Contemporary & Samba) **Oberlin Dance Institute**, Oberlin, Ohio
- 2017 Young Choreographer's Workshop, **Hathaway Brown School**, Cleveland, OH
- 2017 2 Contemporary Masterclasses, Dance in NYC Program, **Barnard College**, New York, NY
- 2017 1 Contemporary Masterclass, **OHIO Dance Festival**, Columbus, Ohio
- 2017 1 Samba Masterclass, Ohio 5 Dance Conference, Ohio Wesleyen University
- 2016 1 Mbalax Masterclass, **Oberlin Dance Institute**, Oberlin, Ohio
- 2016 1 Samba Masterclass, **Carioca Capoeira**, Columbus, Ohio
- 2016 1 Contemporary Masterclass, **Ohio 5 Dance Conference**, Dennison University, Ohio

## Other Professional Activity

- 2020 Guest Lecture, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé*, Ethnobiology, **First Year Seminar Program**, Oberlin College
- 2019 Invited Talk, *The Path is Behind You*, Faculty Talk, **La Alianza**, Multicultural Resource Center, Oberlin
- 2019 Participant, **Dance Studies Association Conference**, Evanston, IL
- 2018 Participant, **Toronto Samba Congress** Toronto, Canada
- 2018 Participant, **Pilobolus Summer Dance Workshop** Weeks 1 & 2
- 2017-18 Guest Lecture, *Choreographing Brazil*, **Latin American Studies 100** Course, Oberlin College
- 2017 Participant, **California Brazil Camp**, Cazadero, CA
- 2017 Adjudicator for Choreography Competition, **Akron School of the Arts**, Akron, OH
- 2015-16 Board Member, **CREATE! Arts in Education**, New York City, NY
- 2016 Panel Moderator, **CORD+SDHS Conference**, Pomona College, Claremont, CA

## Continuing Education in Dance

- 2017- **Samba & Candomblé Dance** with Jorge Alabe & Iya Nitinha, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2017-18 **Argentine Tango**, Cleveland Tango School, Solaluna with Micaela Berrett & Alberto Ramos
- 2015- **Capoeira Angola** with Professor Justin Emeka, Oberlin College
- 2015- **Capoeira Regional** with Profesor Santo of Capoeira Brasil Cleveland

## Academic Service

### Departmental Service

#### Concert Direction

- 2018 Spring Back & Fall Forward Student Concerts
- 2017 Spring Back Student Concert

#### Search Committee Member

- 2019 Assistant Professor of Dance Position
- 2017 Visiting Professor of Dance Position
- 2016 Visiting Professor of Dance Position
- 2016 Scenic Design Position

## College Service

### Committees

- 2020-21 Conservatory and College Interdivisional Curricular Committee
- 2020-21 Equity and Diversity Committee
- 2019-20 AAUP Oberlin Chapter Executive Committee Board Member
- 2018-20 Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Policy Review
- 2017-18 Equity and Diversity Committee, Subcommittee: Compliance analysis and planning
- 2017-18 Assemblies Committee Meeting
- 2016- Individual Major Committee

## Professional Memberships

Ohio Dance

Dance Studies Association

American Association of University Professors

# Personal Statement

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As a dancer who has spent her life immersed in Black dance forms - from childhood training in jazz, through a professional career performing West African, African American and Caribbean concert dance, to my recent initiation into the dance-rich Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé – I have been deeply influenced by the aesthetic and philosophical traditions of the African diaspora. This is evident in the way that I think, move and create. Through the encouragement of my teachers and fellow dancers I have experienced belonging that I never found in the white Eurocentric dance forms more aligned with my cultural heritage. Although I am a white American woman, I have steeped myself in these traditions for decades. They have taught me new ways of being in my body and in the world that I honor in my choreography as well as my teaching. For this reason, I think of my work as transcultural, incorporating various movement idioms while emphasizing the importance of their cultural moorings.

My original works for stage, immersive environments and film interweave cultural traditions, seeing the human condition through personal narratives, mythology and ontological questions. My artistic vision is to compose accessible contemporary choreographies that forge connections among people while harnessing the power of the unfamiliar to transcend limitations and introduce new possibilities. My embodied research centers on exploring issues of power and appropriation at the crossroads of dance and society.

My research and teaching forces me to recognize how my positionality and privilege in Black dance spaces raises questions about what it means to cross over culturally and artistically. As a cultural outsider, I have never wanted to situate my work in one, sole Black dance style or traditional context. This hybridized approach to research and creativity springs as much from my professional training as it does from the entirety of my life experiences – my socialization, my “place” in certain social hierarchies, and my artistic collaborators all factor into my perspective and research questions. Since my somatic and cultural identities are not neatly aligned, I ask myself how I can make work that is truly different, and of difference? Work that does not perpetuate past harm or stereotypes; work that actualized a more just and diverse dance field?

I address these questions through a process centered on embodied research, intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration. In my roles as choreographer and performer working within the framework of contemporary dance, I critically digest and creatively engage with all I have gathered in the form of research, study and acknowledgment of sources and traditions of origin.

Black dance has taught me to inhabit my body and space more boldly, confidently and sensuously; delighting in a wider multiplicity of dancing bodies' shapes, sizes, and movements. My training has taught me to ride rhythm, play with time and wordlessly communicate with live musicians, to surrender to states of transcendence and connect to spirit, to improvise, to hold my own and to share space - to be in community. When I speak of embodied research as a creative strategy, I refer to the lessons years of training has wrought through embodying movement and engaging in the practice of other cultural forms. My choreography embodies *ideas* in the movement rather than merely replicating specific steps. This focus on ideas informs both choreography and attendant performance.

I begin with ideas that are broadly relatable across boundaries of national and/or generational identities. Entry points for my recent projects have included: Being lost (*Terra Incognita*), finding voice (*Those with Wings*), embracing destiny (*Becoming Oxúm*) and questions such as "What is private? (*Forgone Territory*) and "What is worth fighting for? (*Time Certainties Peace*). Once content is determined, I then assemble a diverse creative team to explore the work's concept through an interdisciplinary, collaborative process - Movement, words, music, and images are forged into a compositional structure to meet the needs of each piece.

My collaborators include dancers of different styles and backgrounds, as well as artists of other disciplines, most frequently music and theater. I attribute the preference or prioritization of collaboration and in-community creativity to values instilled in me through experiences in Black dance (where notions of hierarchical authorship or sole creators imparting knowledge 'from the top' are quite uncommon). I see my role as that of a jazz band or combo leader, bringing the artists together, setting the stage, then stepping back and becoming part of the jam. Although I view my collaborators as equal partners, my leadership drives the work, keeps sight of the overall vision, and handles projects' logistics. Depending on the size or scope of the production, I am either a Director (for larger productions), Choreographer (for smaller, dance-focused works) or Co-Director when the role is shared. From initial concept or entry point, to assembling the performers, to developing scores and choreographic prompts, the core of what I do is build frameworks for the collaboration. My research prioritizes collaboration, inviting artists with closer connections to the forms being investigated into the creative process, broadening performer and audience perspectives while building authentic relationships through the work.

I believe that diversity enhances creativity and produces work reflective of 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. I believe a willingness to embody other ways of being and knowing, to take on their wisdom and apply it toward our own efforts of building a more just dance world is how we can move from consumption to transformation. To me, this is the heart- and promise of what contemporary dance offers.

# Research

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## 1. Media

- 1.1 Becoming Oxum; my body remembers (2020)
- 1.2 A Body in Oberlin (2020)
- 1.3 Poente (unfinished)

## 2. Proscenium Concerts

- 2.1 Forgone Territory (2018)
- 2.2 Terra Incognita (2016)

## 3. Immersive Dance Theater

- 3.1 Those With Wings (2017)
- 3.2 The Mists (2015)

## 4. Short Works (less than 30min)

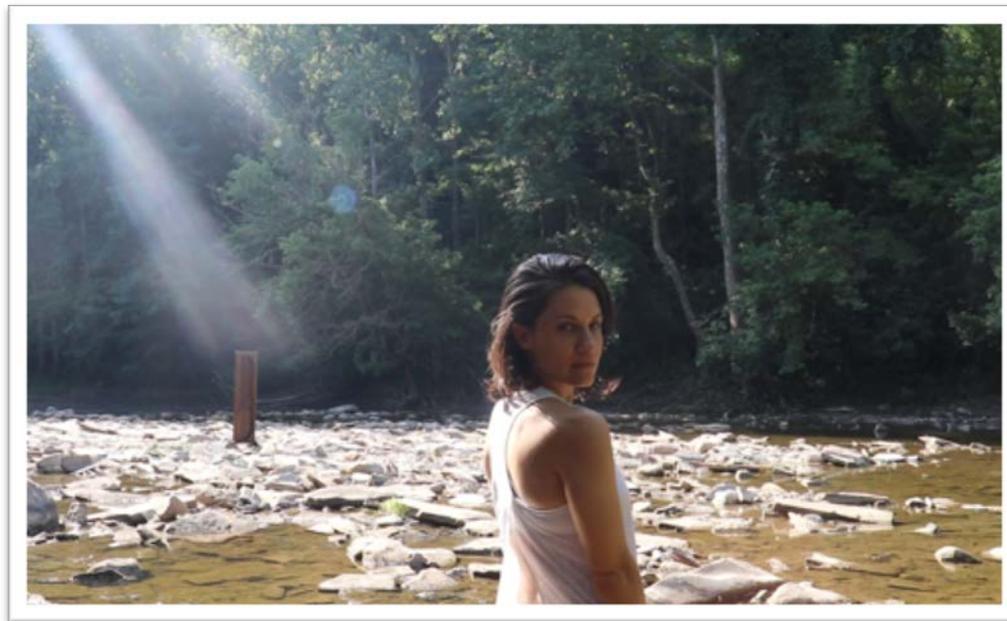
- 4.1 The Obliterated Place (2018)
- 4.2 Time Certainties Peace (2016-17)

## 5. Selected Samples of Research with Student Partners

- 5.1 Xenia (2019)
- 5.2 Limbo (2018)
- 5.3 such is me (2018)
- 5.4 Samba (Var.)
- 5.5 River that Never Rests (2017)
- 5.6 *Interplay*, (2016)
- 5.7 But a Drop (2016)
- 5.8 Violets Like Castanets (2015)

# Media

## 1.1 Becoming Oxum; my body remembers



Role: Writer, Choreographer, Performer, Director

**Description:** *Becoming Oxum, My Body Remembers*, is an autobiographical dance film inspired by my experiences as a white American woman initiating into the Afro-Brazilian religion candomblé. Shot entirely in Ohio a year after my return home from Brazil, the film doesn't depict actual events, but instead traverses sense memory to chart the physical, psychic and spiritual distance I needed to cross to find my path in the religion and come to know my orixá, Oxum. It was conceived and created after the COVID19 pandemic shut down a larger immersive dance theater production I was working on about fate, chance and the critical choices that shape the direction of individual lives, of which my story was to be just one. However, without the ability to work with my cast or a live audience, I have had to radically reconsider and reconstruct the work. At a time when the Black Lives Matter Movement has reached a long overdue fervor, I have found myself working on a project that centers my story in a culturally black experience, which at times has felt inappropriate. And yet, it is my story. In this time of isolation, making sense of it, is all I am left with and all I can do to honor my experience. Candomblé is a rich and ancient tradition that holds many stories- including and especially those of extraordinary Afro-Brazilian women carrying on African cultural traditions with pride in the face of centuries of persecution and carving out empowered autonomous lives for themselves outside patriarchal norms. I hope my film inspires viewers to seek them out, and to learn more, not just about candomblé, but from it, because I believe it has much to teach us, all of us.

**Credits:** Performances by Georgianna Johnson, W Myles Reilly, Maya Fillion Ritchie and Tiago Ramos Reilly, Cinematography by David J. Ritchie, Original Music by Michael Wall, Samba drumming by Dylan Moffitt. Orixá song by Jorge Alabe. Editing by Stéphane Glynn. Produced with funds from the Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award and Oberlin College. 16 min. 2020 \*Film has just been completed and will be submitted to festivals in 2021

**Film:** <https://vimeo.com/464857592/b34cf61f1e>

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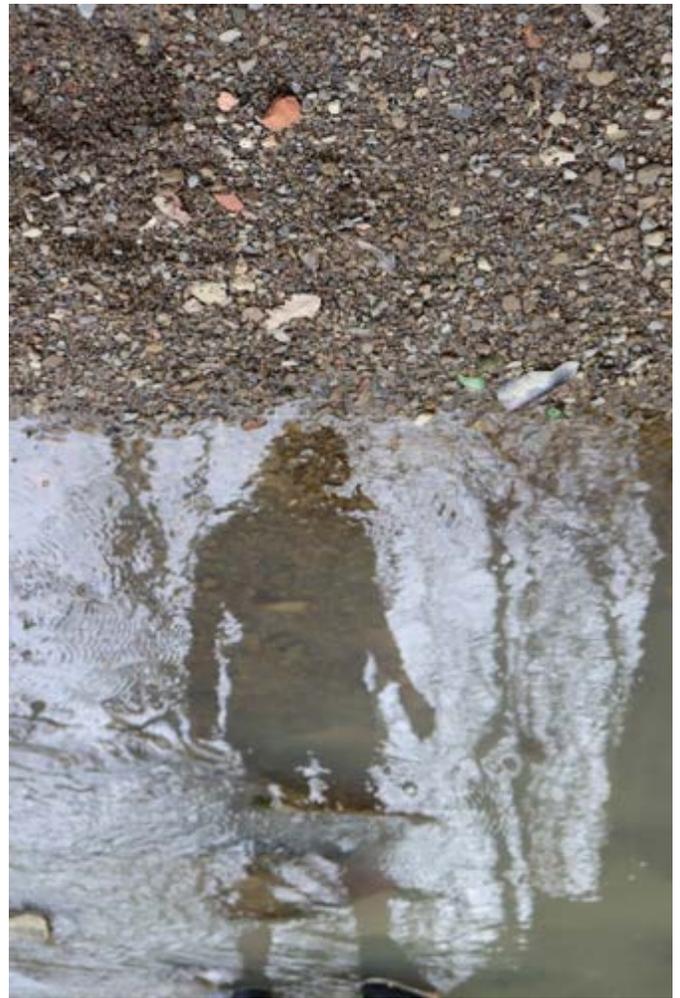
## 1.2 A Body in Oberlin



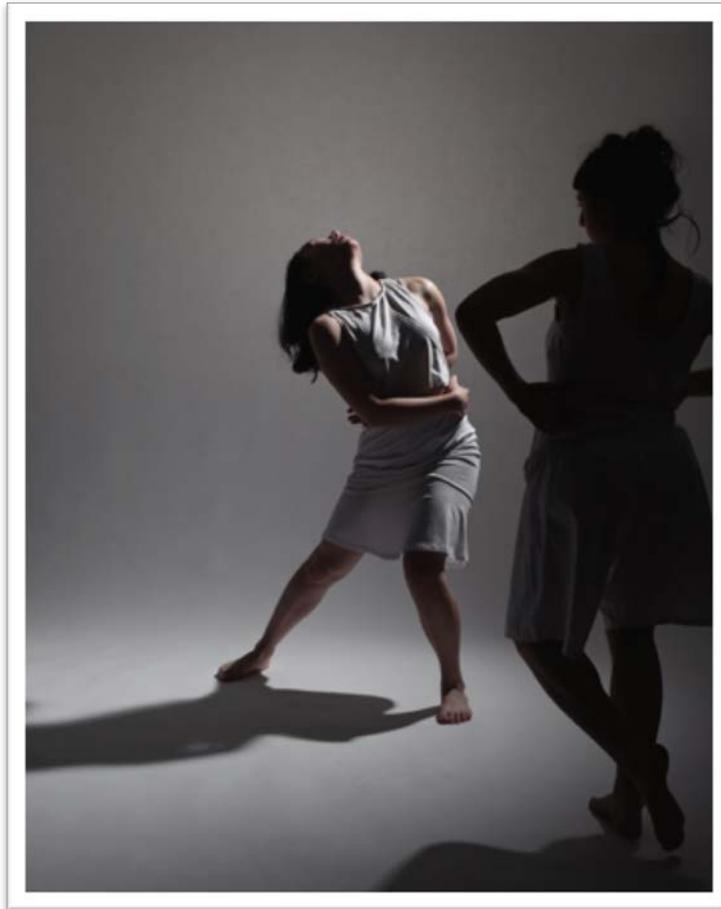
Role: Performer

**Description:** When COVID19 shutdown colleges, studios, theaters and public gatherings of all kinds it brought my artistic projects to an abrupt halt. Not just mine of course, but all artists from the most seasoned, to students just beginning. Luckier than most, I worked at home through quarantine, engaging my students in an ongoing inquiry into what it means to make art in tragic and turbulent times and how to make it when the usual means have been disrupted. Yes, there's video, but what if what we want to make requires the immediate and unmediated expression of live performance? Inspired by a work by Eiko Otake "A Body in Fukushima," I created this project as an experiment in performance in isolation. The town of Oberlin emptied out by the pandemic was my inspiration, location and audience for 3 hours of improvised solos. Like the Otake project, I brought a photographer. Not so much to document the work but to bear witness to its happening. I include this "piece" here not because it is a polished example of my creative research, but because it is an important bridge between my work in progress pre-pandemic and my film created during the pandemic. 2020

**Credits:** Dance by Alysia Ramos. Photography by David J Ritchie



## 1.3 Poente



Role Choreographer, Director & Performer

**Description:** Envisioned as an immersive dance theater work that examined modern questions of belief and existence through the lens of the candomblé concept *Ori* (personal destiny). This work was intended to integrate my research in Afro-Brazilian performance practices with my work in immersive dance theater. Set designer Laura Carlson Tarantowski and I were in the process of building a fully immersive environment in the Wurtzel Theater in which the audience would navigate through the stories by chance, choice or guidance from performers - leading to the discovery of unique paths and a personalized experience of the work. Inspired by *poente*, (the theoretical space of the future that is located *behind*), the choreography investigated reorienting conceptual spaces through embodied experience. Unlike in western thought where “the past is behind me” and I move “forward into the future.” The ancient Yoruba conceived of these theoretical spaces oppositely. *Back* is the future. *Front* is the past. Life moves like a wheel turning ever backwards - spinning the unknown future behind, into the visible present in front. Backbending, falling, travelling backward, animating the backspace and reaching into the unknown dance mobilizes *poente* within the body and across space. Additionally, the cast was developing stories that told of critical moments that shaped their becoming and interactive scores that invited audience to contemplate their own destinies. Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, it is unlikely I will return to this work. Below I have assembled some documentation of the creative research that was in progress.

**Credits:** Research assistant, Kierra Nguyen Performers: Akane Little, Gabriel Gomes, Mayu Evans, Emmacate Saur, Puma Guerrero Sisson, Analise LaRiviere, Georgianna Johnson & Kierra Nguyen.

**Work in Progress**

**Akane & Gabe Duet:** <https://vimeo.com/458654270/dc1e5fe2b0>

In this duet, one character struggles to let go of a previous identity and move on

**Floor Sequence:** <https://vimeo.com/458655039/8683a0f144>

This choreography would have been shown by different characters on a loop repeatedly throughout the show, in a room we called “the dark night of the soul room.” It is meant to evoke the transformation that can be brewing beneath the surface when outwardly nothing much seems to be happening. We thought of this choreography as a sort of movement installation that the audience could observe freely from different perspectives or simply pass through.

**Backwards Guiding Score:** <https://vimeo.com/manage/458655167/general>

In working with the concept *poente* we experimented with many improvisation scores that generated movement that traveled backwards. In this score called guiding from behind one dancer attempts to follow impulses initiated by the dancer leading them from the back. With more time this would likely have been developed into a duet.

These **photos** are tableaux inspired by political cartoons that were being developed into theatrical scenes. The cast was working on establishing recognizable scenes and then disrupting them to reshape the outcomes and or explore the consequences.



**Quartet:** <https://vimeo.com/461076551/58e7e94ecd>

This quartet links several political cartoons and reactions to them into a choreographic sequence.



# Proscenium Concerts

## 2.1 Forgone Territory



Role: Choreographer, Script Editor, Director, Performer

**Description:** *Forgone Territory* uncovered the shadow side of the sharing age. It asked, what is private when technology increasingly infiltrates personal lives? Interweaving text, movement, and music, the work examined the conflicting desire to be seen coupled with the fear of being exposed.

**Credits:** Collaborating choreographer and director Nathan Trice, Performers, Kierra Nguyen, Niko Thomashow, Kalei Tooman, Kara Nepomuceno, Tyus Southern. Original score by Mathew Dixon. Lighting by Brad Petot. Presented by DanceWorks

**About:** This work was the first production of a new venture called Oberlin Dance Project (to distinguish it from Oberlin Dance Company a student company). This project-by-project company consists of a rotating roster of national guest artists, local professional dancers and highly skilled college dancers and alumni coming together to collaborate on original and interdisciplinary dance theater works.

**Venue:** Danceworks at The Gordon Square Theater, Cleveland Public Theater

**Dates:** June 7-9, 2018, Cleveland, OH.

**Length:** 40 min

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/283758262/14fe36d0b1>

# DANCEWORKS

Every year, Cleveland Public Theatre welcomes the opportunity to showcase Northeast Ohio's contemporary dance companies as they premiere new work and revive celebrated performances. Six dance companies take the stage in this acclaimed series.

MAY - JUNE						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Verb Ballets			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
			MorrisonDance			
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
			Inlet Dance Theatre			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
			Oberlin Dance Project	Marquez Dance Project		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			Double-Edge Dance			

The Gordon Square Theatre is ADA compliant, featuring a ramped entrance and an all gender, wheelchair accessible restroom.

**cleveland PUBLIC theatre**  
8415 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland OH 44102

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**SAVE THE DATE**  
**PANDEMONIUM**  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

**CLEVELAND PUBLIC THEATRE SEASON SPONSORS**  
The George Gund Foundation • Deborah & Ross Ruzner  
John Vukobratovic • Matthew R. Pilgus

cleveland PUBLIC theatre presents

# DANCEWORKS

2018

may 17 - june 16  
7:30pm

Photo: Verb Ballets. Photo by Jason Chu.

# DANCEWORKS

**WEEK #1 (MAY 17 - 19)**

**VERB BALLETS**  
Fresh Investigations

Experience vibrant performance and bold artistry highlighting the other side of creation through the dancer's lens. Verb Ballets presents premieres of new works by Associate Director Richard Dickinson, MFA, company dancers Kate Webb, Michael Escovedo, Lianeke Matla, and trainee Jocelyn Hagons.  
verbballnets.org

Photo by Susan Beahm

**WEEK #2 (MAY 24 - 26)**

**MORRISONDANCE**  
Celebrating 20 years of creativity

Embark on a journey through strange worlds inhabited by computer viruses, confused zebras, quirky book characters, peacock spiders, Dalí's dreams, and more. In this enlightening retrospective showcase, MorrisonDance shares handpicked pieces from their last 20 years of staged works.  
morrisondance.org

Photo by Will Perkowski

**WEEK #3 (MAY 31 - JUNE 2)**

**INLET DANCE THEATRE**  
...home...

Inlet Dance Theatre explores connection, empathy, and acceptance inside a world burdened by division, judgement, and rejection. The company remounts a work created through an artist exchange with the Rapa Nui people of Easter Island and premieres two new works investigating the world's current condition while instilling hope for the future.  
inletdance.org

Photo by Steven Thompson

**WEEK #4 (JUNE 7 - 9)**

**OBERLIN DANCE PROJECT**  
Forgone Territory

Forgone Territory uncovers the shadow side of the sharing age. What is private when technology increasingly infiltrates personal lives? Interweaving text, movement, and music, Oberlin Dance Project examines the conflicting desire to be seen coupled with the fear of being exposed.  
alysiaramos.com  
nathantrientsals.com

Photo by John Safford

**DOUBLE BILL**

**MARQUEZ DANCE PROJECT**  
Ripple Effect

Using theatrical, physical, and often surreal imagery, Marquez Dance Project presents a series of vignettes exploring the delicate balance between discord and harmony, the significance of cultural identity, and the power of oneness.  
marquezdanceproject.org

Photo by Cary Johnson-Reynolds

**WEEK #5 (JUNE 14 - 16)**

**DOUBLE-EDGE DANCE**  
Love Cry/Reckoning

Double-Edge Dance, co-founded by choreographer Ross Radella and composer Ross Feller, celebrates 25 years with two new duets. Love Cry, with textile art by Rebecca Cross, taps into the transformative powers of Cleveland-born Albert Ayler's music, and Reckoning navigates close encounters with an intense drama between Radella and theatre artist Chris Seibert.  
koraradella.com  
rossfeller.com

Photo by Robert Banks

**GORDON SQUARE THEATRE**  
Thursday - Saturday | 7:30pm

**TICKETS**

\$30	\$27	\$12
General Admission	Students & Seniors	Every Thursday

Stay after the show on FREE BEER FRIDAYS to mingle with the artists and enjoy a drink on CPT.

**WWW.CPTONLINE.ORG | 216.631.2727 x501**

Skip the box office! Order online with no service fee.

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Photo: Verb Ballets. Photo by Bill Neenan

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**DANCE  
 WORKS  
 2018**

may 17 - june 16

PRODUCER  
 Raymond Bobgan  
 PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGERS  
 Lauren Calevich, Colleen McCaughey

LINE PRODUCER  
 Beth Wood  
 REPERTORY LIGHT PLAT DESIGNER  
 Benjamin Gantose

**DANCEWORKS**

2011/2018 SEASON  
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**NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

Since its inception, CPT has provided platforms for artists to create extraordinary, imaginative works of performance and connect to the wider community. DanceWorks has played a critical role in CPT's new work development mission since 2001, evolving over the years from one-off performances to deeper collaborations. Now a treasured annual series, DanceWorks is CPT's opportunity to play host to some of our oldest friends, collaborators, and colleagues—and to develop relationships with new companies looking to create innovative and remarkable work. We are proud to present such a diverse range of aesthetics, forms, and stories. Dance, like theatre, invites us to think in new ways about ourselves and our place in the world—it allows our imaginations to take flight into other worlds and fresh experiences. Such experiences enrich our community and add to the fabric of our incredible city. Thank you for being a part of DanceWorks 2018!

—Raymond Bobgan

**DANCEWORKS SCHEDULE**

**WEEK #1 (MAY 17 - 19)**

**VERB BALLETS**  
 Fresh Inventions

Experience vibrant performance and bold artistry highlighting the other side of creation through the dancer's lens. Verb Ballets presents premieres of new works by Associate Director Richard Dickinson, MFA, company dancers Kate Webb, Michael Escovedo, Lieneke Matte, and trainee Jocelyn Magons. [verbballets.org](http://verbballets.org)

**WEEK #2 (MAY 24 - 26)**

**MORRISONDANCE**

Celebrating 20 years of creativity

Embark on a journey through strange worlds inhabited by computer viruses, confused zebras, quirky book characters, peacock spiders, Dalí's dreams, and more. In this enlivening retrospective showcase, MorrisonDance shares handpicked pieces from their last 20 years of staged works. [morrisondance.org](http://morrisondance.org)

**WEEK #3 (MAY 31 - JUNE 2)**

**INLET DANCE THEATRE**

...home...

Inlet Dance Theatre explores connection, empathy, and acceptance inside a world burdened by division, judgement, and rejection. The company remounts a work created through an artist exchange with the Rapa Nui people of Easter Island and premieres two new works investigating the world's current condition while instilling hope for the future. [inletdance.org](http://inletdance.org)

**DANCEWORKS SCHEDULE**

**WEEK #4 (JUNE 7 - 9)**

(DOUBLE BILL)

**OBERLIN DANCE PROJECT**

Forgone Territory

*Forgone Territory* uncovers the shadow side of the sharing age. What is private when technology increasingly infiltrates personal lives? Interweaving text, movement, and music, Oberlin Dance Project examines the conflicting desire to be seen coupled with the fear of being exposed.

[alysiamos.com](http://alysiamos.com) | [nathantricerituals.com](http://nathantricerituals.com)

**MARQUEZ DANCE PROJECT**

Ripple Effect

Using theatrical, physical, and often surreal imagery, Marquez Dance Project presents a series of vignettes exploring the delicate balance between discord and harmony, the significance of cultural identity, and the power of oneness.

[marquedanceproject.org](http://marquedanceproject.org)

**WEEK #5 (JUNE 14 - 16)**

**DOUBLE-EDGE DANCE**

Love Cry/Reckoning

Double-Edge Dance, co-founded by choreographer Kora Radella and composer Ross Feller, celebrates 25 years with two new duets. *Love Cry*, with textile art by Rebecca Cross, taps into the transformative powers of Cleveland-born Albert Ayler's music, and *Reckoning* navigates close encounters with an intense drama between Radella and theatre artist Chris Seibert.

[koraradella.com](http://koraradella.com) | [rossfeller.com](http://rossfeller.com)

**DANCEWORKS 2018 PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGERS**

Lauren Calevich (Production Stage Manager weeks 4 & 5/Line Producer week 5) is a Cleveland native and full-time Event Consultant with her company, LCEventsCLE. With an extensive background in theatre, Lauren has Production Stage Managed throughout Cleveland and has worked in multiple capacities for Cleveland Public Theatre since 2008. Most recently, Lauren was the Event Manager for Station Hope 2018, and has been the Production Manager for Pandemonium since 2015. Her background also includes experience in logistics management and creative problem-solving, as well as client relations and fund development.

Colleen McCaughey (Production Stage Manager weeks 1-3) (see season program for full bio) is a stage manager, performer, and singer, and is the Grants Manager at CPT. She holds a bachelor's degree in both Theatre and Political Science from Allegheny College. From 2013-2015, she worked in New York City as a stage manager for various theatre companies including The Play Company, The Flea Theater, and Lincoln Center, while serving as the Administrative Associate for Dixon Place Theater. Originally from Hudson, Ohio, Colleen has appeared onstage in several Northeast Ohio theatre productions, most recently at CPT in the world premiere of *The Loush Sisters get HARD for the Holidays* (*Ripple-Kai-Yay Mother-Loushers*), the world premiere of the Cleveland Core Ensemble's *Red Ash Mosaic*, and *44 Plays For 44 Presidents*. She frequently serves as a stage manager for CPT productions and special events.

**THANK YOU TO OUR DANCEWORKS SUPPORTER**



## 2.2 Terra Incognita



Role: Choreographer, Director, Script Editor

**Description:** This evening-length dance theater work contemplated getting lost, losing oneself, being found and encountering the unexpected through a collection of stories, dance and music. Inspired by Miles Davis' album "Kind of Blue," (a groundbreaking departure into the unknown) and Rebecca Solnit's book, "The Field Guide to Getting Lost," *Terra Incognita* wove together literary musings and student writing with original choreography that drew on emblematic moments in each dancer's history. A band of conservatory musicians drew upon the music of Miles Davis, Omar Sosa, Joni Mitchell and Christian Scott, to interact with the dancers through live improvisation.

**Credits:** Becca Cohen, Alex Katz, Carson Fratus, Zoe Martens, Tyus Southern, Ben Miyamoto, Cara Cook, Alana Reibstein, Lola Gatti, Marquis Junior, Sandia Ashley, Andre Cardine Molly Gorin, Rachel Nesnevech understudy Molly Barger Band leader Ben Rempel Conservatory musicians Ethan Rode, Timothy Fenton, Ashley Hale. Stage Manager, Bryn Weiler

**Venue:** Hall Auditorium, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH

**Dates:** April 29-30, 2016

**Length:** 50 min

**Video/ dress rehearsal:** <https://vimeo.com/166396492/4660999d05>

OBERLIN DANCE COMPANY PRESENTS

# TERRA INCOGNITA

APRIL 29TH & 30TH

Performances begin at 8:00pm

Hall Auditorium

\$8 General Admission

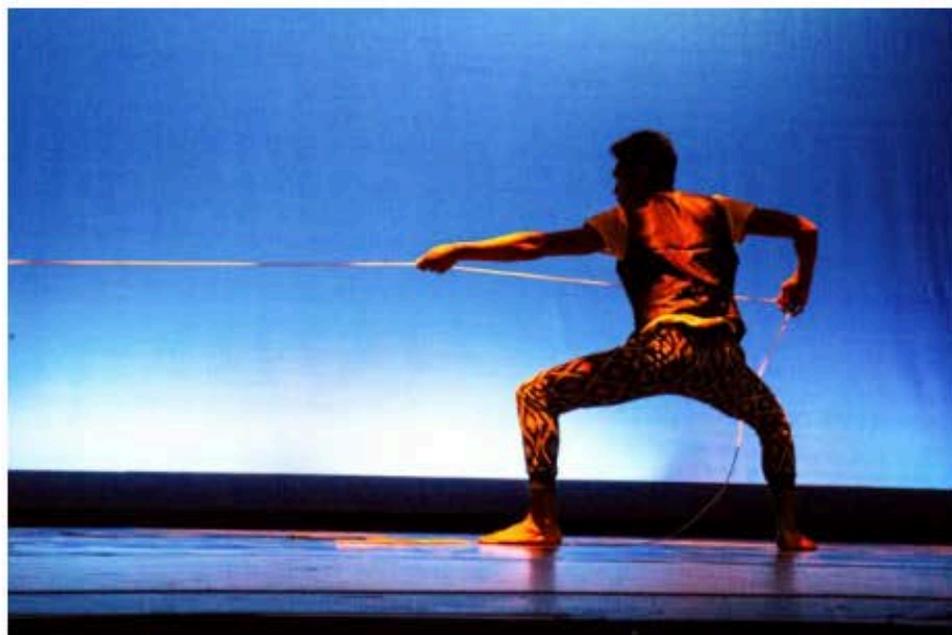
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## Feature Photo: Terra Incognita



Emma Webster

Louise Edwards, Arts Editor  
May 6, 2016



College senior Benjamin Miyamoto dances in Oberlin Dance Company's Terra Incognita in Hall Auditorium Saturday. Choreographed by Assistant Professor of Dance Alysia Ramos, the multimedia show illustrates how it feels to delve into the unknown and find the unexpected. Conservatory musicians accompanied the dancers, improvising to coordinate their sound with onstage movement. Inspired by Miles Davis, Omar Sosa, Joni Mitchell and Christian Scott, the spontaneity in the music fit with the show's theme of exploring unfamiliar experiences. Ramos based her vision on Davis's album Kind of Blue as well as Rebecca Solnit's book The Field Guide to Getting Lost. Themes in the book, as well as students' writing, meshed with the dance and music in this hybrid performance.

Alysia Ramos arts feature photo Louise Edwards Terra Incognita

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### Arts Comic



Comic  
Athina Apazidis, Staff Cartoonist

Oberlin Dance Company Presents

## TERRA INCOGNITA



Original dance theater by Alysia Ramos  
Created in collaboration with the Oberlin Dance Company

April 29-30, 2016  
Hall Auditorium

### TERRA INCOGNITA

1. Enter the Labyrinth
2. A Chosen Surrender
3. Threads
4. Los
5. Lost
6. & Found
7. in your arms
8. Social Wilderness
9. Lost Soul
10. The Other Side
11. Tis better to have...
12. Turns at Random
13. Terra Incognita
14. Blue
15. Pink

*"The question then is how to get lost. Never to get lost is not to live, not to know how to get lost brings you to destruction, and somewhere in the terra incognita in between lies a life of discovery."*

-Rebecca Solnit

Terra Incognita runs 1 hour

Please turn off all cell phones, watch alarms, pagers, and other noise making devices  
No photography, food or drink permitted in Hall Auditorium. Thank you.  
Please recycle your program in the lobby.

## TERRA INCOGNITA

**DIRECTOR**  
ALYSIA RAMOS

### DANCERS

SANDIA ASHLEY	MARQUIS JUNIOR
ANDRE CARDINE	ALEX KATZ
REBECCA COHEN	ZOE MARTENS
CARA COOK	BEN MIYAMOTO
MOLLY GORIN	RACHEL NESNEVICH
LOLA GATTI	ALANA REIBSTEIN
	TYUS SOUTHERN

UNDERSTUDIES: MOLLY BARGER, CAITRIN HUGHES

### MUSICIANS

TIMOTHY FENTON	ASHLEY HALE
CARSON FRATUS	BEN REMPEL
	ETHAN RODE

Musical score features songs by Omar Sosa, Christian Scott, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, and Bill Withers along with original music and improvisation by the band. Text excerpts from "The Field Guide to Getting Lost" by Rebecca Solnit adapted by Alysia Ramos. Original text by Molly Gorin, Alana Reibstein, Tyus Southern, Ben Miyamoto, and Zoe Martens.

### PRODUCTION TEAM

BRYN WEILER, Stage Manager  
ERIC STEGGALL, Managing Director  
JOSEPH P. NATT, Technical Director  
JONATHAN MAAG, Master Electrician  
DAVID BUGHER, Assistant Technical Director  
TAYLOR OVCA, Lighting Designer  
JANET BOLICK, Wardrobe  
TOMOYO JOSHI, Poster Designer  
JEREMY HARR, Light Board Op  
RACHEL FORD, Sound Board Op  
SOFIE RIMLER, Costume Crew  
ISABEL LEVEY-SWAIN, Stagehand  
WILLIAM OSBORN, Stagehand  
BJ TINDAL, Stagehand  
JESSICA TOLTZIS, Stagehand

### SPECIAL THANKS

Nathan Trice, Ben Rempel, Mathew Wright, The Oberlin Departments of Dance and Theater and the Hall Staff

### Dancer Bios

**Sandia Ashley** (4th year, Brooklyn) Did we both lose each other, in some way, for at least a little bit?

**Andre Cardine** (2nd year, Chicago) There is beauty in being lost in someone else, there is beauty in being lost in yourself.

**Rebecca Cohen** (4th year, New York) Lost on a static platform, found in purgatory between concrete chaos and encroaching chariots, glistening through dark depths.

**Cara Cook** (3rd year, Woodstock) Already lost to me, somewhere in between.

**Molly Gorin** (4th year, New York) At night being lost looks like adventure and the city looks like a playground. Of course, that's because it's dark and you can't see clearly.

**Lola Gatti** (2nd year, New York) Yes, I was alone, but I knew without a doubt that they would eventually find me.

**Marquis Junior** (3rd year, Atlanta) My stubborn ways sent me the distance, but back to where I started in dramatic fashion.

**Alex Katz** (4th Year, Boston) Efforts in vain, it splintered into thousands of glinting shards. Destined to join the sculpture – already started.

**Zoe Martens** (4th year, Minneapolis) I look at myself from above, breaking away from earth.

**Ben Miyamoto** (4th year, Los Angeles)  
No one found anything this weekend.  
No one found anything to fill the emptiness.  
But we stood together, and I guess you could call that beautiful.

**Rachel Nesnevich** (4th year, Chicago) She steps forward, uncertain as to where she is and where she's headed.

**Alana Reibstein** (4th year, Larchmont) I would have only been a block away, had I not turned right. I use a GPS from 2009.

**Tyus Southern** (1st year, Wilton) Black spots in my eyes as they search through the sting, the asphalt's dull ring, then the purpling azure of the heavens, blemished by the sun.

**Molly Barger** (4th year, Mukilteo) My mind was reeling, coming up with plans A through F—God I could use a drink. Or my mom.

## Band Bios

**Timothy Fenton**, bassist (3rd year, Albuquerque) Searching everywhere for what's lost, looking nowhere for what's been found.

**Carson Fratus**, percussionist (3rd year, Knoxville) Rolling, falling, heedless of space. Floating through the river of time, motion never ceases, even in silence.

**Ashley Hale**, trumpet player (5th year, Seattle) As I look around I can't help but wonder, how did I get here?

**Ben Rempel**, percussionist, (alum, Irvine) has found lots of things but is still looking for himself.

**Ethan Rode**, pianist (3rd year, New Haven) I was looking down at my feet the whole time...Did I trail off? It's a long way to the falls. The sun will be up soon. Yes they're beautiful.

## Faculty and Collaborator Bios

**Janet Bolick**, costume designer (Cleveland) Looking for clues, pieces fall to find the whole.

**Taylor Ovca** lighting designer (4th year, Chicago) Keep in mind that you probably have no idea where you're trying to go, how you're getting there, and where you'll end up.

**Alysia Ramos**, director (Asst. Prof., Oberlin) Each aspen grove looks just like the other. Have we been here before?

**Bryn Weiler**, stage manager (2nd year, Boston) It's easy to get lost when you have blind faith in your ability to do it by yourself.

## Dance Department Faculty

*ANN COOPER ALBRIGHT, Professor of Dance, Dance Department Chair*  
*ROGER COPELAND, Professor of Theater and Dance*  
*HOLLY HANDMAN-LOPEZ, Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance*  
*ALYSIA RAMOS, Assistant Professor of Dance*  
*NUSHA MARTYNUK, Professor of Dance*  
*CARTER MCADAMS, Professor of Dance*  
*ADENIKE SHARPLEY, Artist-in-Residence*  
*DEBORAH VOGEL, Instructor of Dance*  
*ROBERT (BOBBY) WESNER, Visiting Instructor in Dance*

## Central Ticket Service and Publicity

ERIC STEGGALL, Managing Director for Theater, Dance and Opera

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# Immersive Dance Theater

## 3.1 Those With Wings



Role: Creator, Director, Lead Choreographer & Script Editor

**Description:** Based on Terry Tempest Williams' memoir, *When Women Were Birds*, this work *Those With Wings* was an immersive dance theater production that grappled with love, loss, nostalgia, and women's voice through text, live music, and dance. Integrated entirely into Bend-in-the-River, at the Jordan River Park in Salt Lake City, the performers broke down the "fourth wall," including the audience in the performance and incorporating the existing natural and built elements of the space into the story. Each performance only had 25 audience members offering an intimate and personalized experience.

**Credits:** Co-director & lead producer: Liz Ivkovich. Lead cast: Ai Fuji Nelson, Samuel Hanson, Peter Larson, Emma Wilson. Supporting cast: Efren Corado Garcia, Amy Freitas, Liz Ivkovich, Samantha Matsukawa  
Additional choreography by Ashley Anderson Live music by the band Old Soldier

**Venue:** Bend in the River, Salt Lake City, Utah

**Dates:** August 17-20, 2017

**Length:** 60 min

**Video/Teaser Cut:** <https://vimeo.com/243672785/662bb6f241>

**Video/Performance Excerpts:** <https://vimeo.com/245867254/abf4dd94cd>

## SUMMER SERIES

# Those with Wings

Inspired by the Terry Tempest Williams' *When Women Were Birds*, adapted by Alysia Ramos. Direct your own experience by following the different threads of the performance.

## THE TEAM



**LIZ IVKOVICH**  
CREATOR, DIRECTOR, &  
LEAD PRODUCTION

Liz is from Michigan and comes to Utah by way of Omaha where she danced with Maya Taylor Dance, University of Nebraska Omaha's The Moving Company, founded La Fuerza Dance at Omaha South High, and produced work in unconventional venues. She holds an MFA in modern dance from the University of Utah and teaches for Salt Lake Community College and various community groups, as well as working full-time in sustainability.



**ALYSIA RAMOS**  
CREATOR, DIRECTOR, &  
LEAD CHOREOGRAPHY

Alysia Ramos is a Choreographer and Assistant Professor of Dance at Oberlin College in Ohio. Prior, she worked for over a decade with a diverse roster of companies and choreographers in NYC, including her own company, the Mezclado (mixed) Movement Group from 2003-2007. She has studied in Havana, Dakar, and Rio and holds an MFA in dance from the University of Utah (2014).



**ASHLEY ANDERSON**  
CHOREOGRAPHY &  
PRODUCTION SUPPORT

Ashley is a Salt Lake City-based choreographer, and recipient of the 2014 Mayor's Artist Award in the Performing Arts. Her choreography has been presented by the Rio Gallery, the BYU Museum of Art, and the Utah Heritage Foundation, as well as national venues. Ashley directs loveDANCEmore events through Ashley Anderson Dances, a nonprofit organization. She also serves as the dance editor for Utah's visual art magazine, 15 BYTES.



## NARRATIVE CAST

PHOTO: MOTION VIVID

**AI FUJII NELSON**  
Originally from Tokyo, Ai danced professionally with Rise-Woodbury Dance Company between 2000 and 2009. In 2014, she rejoined the company as the Director of Education.

**EMMA WILSON**  
Emma has a BFA in Modern Dance with minors in Environmental Studies and Portuguese at the University of Utah. She is the Salt Lake City Public Library Garden Coordinator, the Performance Director at Vague Space, and a freelance dancer.

**PETER LARSON**  
Peter is a dancer and choreographer based in Salt Lake City. Originally from North Dakota, he has fallen in love with the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains.

**SAMUEL HANSON**  
Born in Salt Lake City, Samuel now lives in New York and dances with Mina Nishimura, Diana Crum, and others. He trained with Hilary Carrier and Chara Huckins.

**MIGATORY CAST:**  
EPREN CORADO GARCIA, AMY FREITAS, LIZ IVKOVICH, &  
SAMANTHA MATSUKAWA  
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Advance Press: <http://sevendancemore.org/events/2017/summer-three>  
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City Weekly:  
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**THOSE WITH WINGS**  
 BY AMY BROWNBERG | AUGUST 1, 2017



A beloved book inspires a place-based dance.  
 When I arrived at Bend-in-the-River Park by the Jordan River, Lila Ivkovich and Ashly Anderson were busy unrolling a huge bolt of white fabric along the Jordan River trail. The two women were deep into a creative process, working out details for an immersive dance experience inspired by Terry Tempest Williams' book *When Women Were Birds*. They had already put in a year of work to raise money, form a creative team and get permits. In less than a month a live audience would come to see the show, titled *Those with Wings*.

"The dancers are going to follow the path," Anderson explained. "The floor gets rolled up while the dance is happening and when it's rolled up the dance is over and it's gone." The disappearing "stage" and fleeting experience relate to themes in Williams' book which is subtitled *Fifty-Four Variations on Voice*.

Ecology and a sense of place are constant themes in Williams' writing, and the "stage" for the dance performance is the whole park. The audience follows the dancers as they travel through the different spaces, sometimes integrating the audience.

Bend-in-the-River was selected as the site because it is what Ivkovich terms an "in-between" space—an uneasy mix of wilderness and urban neglect. Majestic old cottonwood trees grow alongside dilapidated constructions of wood and rocks that might have been intended as artwork. A shabby pavilion labeled "Urban Treehouse" was dedicated for Earth Day 2001, intended as an outdoor classroom. Mallards floated on the brownish river which gave off an un-fresh smell, and insistent blue dragonflies hovered overhead. As we talked, people passed by on the Jordan River trail—kids with skateboards, couples holding hands, moms pushing strollers, people on bikes. Nobody lingered except for one man in filthy clothes who stopped to rifle through the trashcan.

One idea behind *Those with Wings* is to restore a relationship between the website neighborhood and the environmentally damaged Jordan River. The dance performance is a collaboration between Anderson's organization loveDANCEmore and Seven Canyons Trust, a nonprofit with a mission to restore the seven creeks in the Salt Lake City watershed.

"I think that every dance is about ecology," Ivkovich muses. "It's about space. This is going to say something specific about conservation and the wilderness in your own backyard." Anderson concurs, adding that performing outdoors allows unexpected things to happen. "When we did the last show, there was the beautiful dance happening and there was this fridge floating down the river and it was sort of horrible and wonderful and Brian said you mean that it was sublime? Which is totally was."

Ivkovich has done this kind of thing before. Together with Alysia Ramos she created *The Mists*, a magical immersive dance based on the legends of King Arthur, performed in 2015 at Red Butte Garden as part of the Garden After Dark Halloween event. The scale was considerably larger—60 performers with a sum total audience of 7,000 people. "This time we are going to have a super intimate audience—only 25 people per show."

Anderson says her ideal audience wouldn't just see the show and leave; they would be people who live in the neighborhood and have an ongoing relationship with the place. Ivkovich says her ideal audience would be Terry Tempest Williams. "She's a genius. My deepest hope and desire is that she would come to the show." She laughs and admits, "I don't think it will happen."

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# Point Blank

*Those With Wings* interprets a unique memoir through movement.

By Scott Renshaw @scottrenshaw

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Pete Vordenberg

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BEST OF UTAH  
**Arts**

The process of creating art almost always begins with blankness: a clean canvas, a bare stage, a blinking cursor on an empty screen. But when an artist begins the process of adapting an already-existing work to a new medium, you'd expect there to be more of a starting point for filling in that blankness. Perhaps that's why Terry Tempest Williams' *When Women Were Birds* makes for such intriguing source material for loveDANCEmore's new production *Those With Wings*—since the fascinating core of the work is the mystery of its own blank pages.

Williams' 2012 memoir *When Women Were Birds* revolves around the author learning that her terminally ill mother has several volumes of journals—journals Williams never previously knew existed, and which her mother makes her promise not to read until after she dies. When Williams finally opens them, she finds that each one is blank. The book becomes a journey of attempting to understand what story Williams' mother was telling through those empty pages, and how that absence of any written words might have been connected to her role as a woman, a Mormon, a mother.

Liz Izkovich—one of the three co-directors of *Those With Wings*, along with Ashley Anderson and Alysia Ramos—initially discovered the book, and brought it to her collaborators for all of them to read. Thier conversations led them to wonder how they might interpret *When Women Were Birds* as a movement piece—how they could take, according to Izkovich, "ideas that were speaking to all of us ... and imagine that in the context of our own art-making."

Review: <http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/index.php/those-with-wings-an-immersive-dance-experience-along-the-jordan-river/>

Liz Izkovich—one of the three co-directors of *Those With Wings*, along with Ashley Anderson and Alysia Ramos—initially discovered the book, and brought it to her collaborators for all of them to read. Their conversations led them to wonder how they might interpret *When Women Were Birds* as a movement piece—how they could take, according to Izkovich, "ideas that were speaking to all of us ... and imagine that in the context of our own art-making."

The adaptation was less of a leap of faith than it might seem at first glance. "What's really interesting about the book is, it's also a visual piece of art," Izkovich says. "When she talks about her mother passing, and finds [the blank journals], at that point, all the pages in the book are blank. In the hard copy, there's also a bird that starts to fly across the pages. So there's this visual element of it as well."

Though Izkovich, Anderson and Ramos initially reached out to Williams regarding their plans, the author ultimately was not directly involved in the process of creating *Those With Wings*. She did, however, give the project her blessing, according to Izkovich, "and encouraged us to take any and all creative liberties with it. ... It's a very non-literal adaptation, but we still capture the essence of what we took from the book, using snippets from the text and re-imagining it through the body."

*Those With Wings* also serves as the culmination of a three-production Summer Series created by loveDANCEmore in collaboration with Seven Canyons Trust, celebrating the Jordan River. The venue for the performance is the Bend in the River Park on the Jordan River Trail, providing a unique outdoor component—and an ideal one for adapting a work by an author as closely identified with Utah's natural beauty as Williams.

"It's such a complicated space," Izkovich says of the venue, "used by so many different kinds of people. And there are beavers, and birds, this really amazing cross-section of wildness and urban life. There are these built elements that are a little bit falling apart at this point, then efforts to restore native plants. And I always love that about Terry's work: Combining wildness and social life together, not as separate."

The performance is also unique in using the intimate space for an interactive performance where audience size will be limited to 25 for each of the six scheduled performances. According to Izkovich, audience members will have opportunities to make choices regarding what they want to see and experience, and the performers will interact with them along the way. The lack of conventional seating also means people requiring ability accommodations should contact the company through its website.

"This is part of all of our own creative journey. What is the kind of work we wanted to see?" Izkovich says. "It's where we could have that intimate experience with the audience, where you could be connecting. The smaller the audience, the more we feel we can offer people that intimate experience."

Key to that experience, however, is capturing the emotions inspired by Williams' book as it explores what it means to have a voice, and to try to understand the inner life of a loved one. "It's thinking about silence and emptiness," Izkovich says of *When Women Were Birds*, "what's public and what's private. Dance is about relationships, about how you create that energy between audience and performers, and between the performers and the space, so that there's some kind of emotional resonance. ... This is the human story of us, as women, and what happens to our voices."

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Dance

## Those With Wings: An Immersive Dance Experience Along the Jordan River

BY AMY BRUNVAND ON AUGUST 28, 2017 • ( LEAVE A COMMENT )



Samantha Matsukawa and Efen Corado perform in Those With Wings. Photo by Pete Vordenberg

### EVENTS



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On a warm summer evening, I gathered with a small group of people at Bend-in-the-River park by the Jordan River for a performance of "Those with Wings," billed as an "immersive dance experience" based on Terry Tempest Williams' book *When Women Were Birds*. We were given instructions to go wherever we pleased, to look at whatever we found interesting and to be sure to step off the paved paths. On one side, dancers in black were carving space with dramatic warmup movements, while further along the pathway dancers dressed in red sat cross-legged in meditative stillness on a length of white fabric. As the performance began, those in red arose and began to dance repetitive patterns, moving slowly along the path as the fabric was rolled up behind them; those in black mingled with the spectators and passed through to the front of the group. Then they turned to face the audience and recited lines from Williams' book:

*"If ever there was a story without a shadow, it would be this: that we as women exist in direct sunlight only. When women were birds, we knew otherwise. We knew our greatest freedom was in taking flight at night."*

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I had come to the performance with a bit background. Not only had I read (and recently re-read) Williams' book, but I had also interviewed two of the directors for an article in Catalyst magazine (August 2017 issue). I was familiar with the basic narrative: Williams inherited her deceased mother's personal journals but found that every single page was blank. Williams' book is series of 54 brief personal essays about silence imposed on women's voices, and the event was built on a similar structure as the dancers spoke excerpts from the book and then performed a kinesthetic response. After each "chapter," black-clad dancers led the audience to a new location within the performance space or else scattered so that the audience had to decide which thread to follow. In the first vignette, the body of "mother," danced by Ai Fujii Nelson, was carried away and a red feathered tunic was pulled over her black dress. She joined those dancing slowly down the white path and it became clear that those in black were in the mundane world; those in red occupied an otherworldly realm of birds.

This is an unsettling kind of performance to attend. With movement and music taking place simultaneously, sometimes in disparate locations, it's hard to know where to look. There are unspoken rules: the audience should not interact with each other or interfere with the performance unless invited; participants trust that if they play along they will not be humiliated. The reward is a kind of intimacy that's not available in a stage performance. It's OK to stare at dancers up-close, and proximity allows for subtle actions that wouldn't work onstage. For instance, in one vignette "mother" tore a page from a blank journal and folded an origami bird which she handed to a member of the audience. Faintly, from far away, the musicians were playing a slow waltz in a minor key. The moment was transcendent.

Bend-in-the-River is a two-acre open space shaded by tall cottonwood trees, a restoration of a damaged riparian ecosystem, and so the dance took place in a landscape that is in the process of re-wilding. Loose, soft soil under a large old cottonwood with leafy branches drooping to the ground was the setting for a tango-inspired duet introduced by the words, "*I met a man who understood wildness, and I married him.*" In a black box, this would have seemed merely seductive since the expression of wildness arose from interaction with dirt and fallen leaves and sunlight filtering through the branches. At one juncture the audience was invited to pull slips of paper from a jar and follow whichever dancer was holding the object pictured. I followed Emma Wilson, who was holding an apple. She led us to a structure that looks like masts on a ship where she became a teacher, leading us (in the role of students) in a silly song about whales, an episode from the book that led to Williams being fired for teaching her students about ecology. Likewise, the Jordan river became the site for a bird rookery as dancers incubated "eggs" of stone. With the next gesture, the stones became emotional weight in their hearts.

A lot had to come together to make all of this work: the outdoors setting, the choreography, the skill of the dancers, the source text and narrative, the management of the audience, the live music, the props and costumes. It had to feel like entering into an experience, not just observing one. As the performance progressed, the audience gradually moved in closer, becoming more deeply involved in the story. The performance ended when the dancers crossed a bridge and the musicians stood across the path to prevent the audience from following any further. It was a metaphorically-rich image that arose directly from the configuration of the landscape, but also created a sense of sadness as when you finish a book and can't follow the characters any further.

The dance was conceived in partnership with the Seven Canyons Trust as an event to establish the Jordan River as a vibrant community asset. The choice of a local author, and the themes of human relationship and ecological restoration contributed to a multilayered, emotionally affecting experience. The Bend-in-the-River site tied this experience to an actual place and neighborhood. After the performance I overheard people from the audience comment that they had never been to anything like that before, but it was amazing. And truly it was amazing.



Ai Fujii Nelson in *Those With Wings*. Photo by Pete Vordenberg

"*Those With Wings*" was an immersive dance experience based on Terry Tempest Williams' book, *When Women Were Birds*. Directors: Liz Ivkovich, Alysia Ramos, Ashley Anderson with Ching-I Chang Bigelow. Performers: Ai Fujii Nelson, Peter Larsen, Samuel Hanson, Emma Wilson, Samantha Matsukawa, Efren Corado, Amy Freitas, and music by Old Soldier. The piece was performed six times Aug. 17-19 at Bend-in-the-River along a segment of the Jordan River Trail in Salt Lake City, accompanied by an un-amplified quartet (fiddle, mandolin, 2 guitars). Each one-hour performance allowed a maximum of 25 tickets sold so that the small audience could follow the dancers through an expansive outdoor space.



**Amy Brunvand**

Amy Brunvand is an award-winning poet and an associate librarian at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah.

Categories: **Dance**

SHARE THIS:





## Utahns turn art into activism: 'When we dance, we can't help but feel part of nature'

*Performances • Events taking place between now and early October seek to put focus on climate change, land conservation and respect for nature.*



| Courtesy of Peter Vordenberg When Women Were Birds.



Throughout history, artistic expression has been a catalyst for political activism — using creativity to bring awareness to social ills and sometimes proposing solutions.

This summer, Utah's dancers are taking steps to bring attention to climate change, land conservation and respect for nature. As part of the nation's burgeoning environmental arts movement, three Salt Lake City dance projects highlight sustainability issues through innovative aesthetic experiences in Utah's vast open lands and in urban spaces.

Repertory Dance Theatre's "Dancing the Bears Ears" (premiering in October) is part of a larger initiative, The Sacred Lands/Sacred Water Project, that began in May with a trip to San Juan County, where tensions have risen in recent months over the 1.3 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument. The firestorm over President Donald Trump's executive order to reduce or eliminate the monument, combined with a federal judge's ruling regarding Navajo voter rights, has made the half-Navajo, half-white county the subject of national news.

—

Summer Series • Three ecology-based community dance programs collectively dubbed Summer Series are the brainchild of Salt Lake City resident Liz Ivkovich, who is combining her college degrees in dance and environmental science with her passion for social justice to reconceptualize commonly held definitions of "the environment."

"The environment is anywhere people live, play, work and learn — not just pristine wilderness areas preserved for privileged populations," Ivkovich said. "We need to also be advocating for a healthy environment in everyone's backyards and homes."

To encourage that perspective, she has teamed up with local nonprofits Seven Canyons Trust and loveDANCEmore for a series of community dance programs and activities along the Jordan River.

The first evening in May brought together neighborhood youth programs to dance along the Three Creeks Confluence. On June 24, the coalition will lead a contact improvisation jam to help Seven Canyons Trust celebrate \$1.2 million in grants it received last month to restore natural urban waterways at 1300 South and 900 West near the Jordan River.

The culminating Summer Series performance in August will be an immersive dance theater piece co-directed by Ivkovich, Alysia Ramos, Ching-I Chang Bigelow and Ashley Anderson. The narrative takes its inspiration from Utah-raised Terry Tempest Williams' 2012 novel "When Women Were Birds," based on her mother's diaries. Williams was recently appointed writer-in-residence at the Harvard Divinity School and has written 15 books, including last year's well-received "The Hour of the Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks" and her influential 1991 memoir "Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place." It will be performed at Bend in the River on the Jordan River Parkway Trail.

Ivkovich, who lives in one of the city's west-side neighborhoods and works at the University of Utah's Sustainability Office and Global Change & Sustainability Center, said she takes the long view on art and sustainability.

She delineates political art from environmental social justice work, describing "social justice as a much longer, ongoing process," clarifying that political work might choose a topic to make a dance about, whereas environmental justice art is work driven by the larger ecology/environmental movement.

"My choreography is always about the same subject, yet hopefully evolves through stages reflecting my understanding of the issues and my engagement with communities," she said.

Ivkovich fosters the belief that the environment is something we are composed of, not something outside us: "There is a constant interchange between us and nature when we are breathing, and dancing heightens awareness of our breath. So when we dance we can't help but feel part of nature."

---

## 3.2 The Mists



Role: Creator, Co-Director & Co-Choreographer

**Description:** *The Mists*, was an original immersive dance theater work performed throughout the Red Butte Botanical Gardens during the annual Halloween event Garden After Dark. Inspired by the plot and characters from Marion Zimmer Bradley's acclaimed book, *The Mists of Avalon*, this production invited audience members to follow legendary characters including Morgaine le Fey, King Arthur, Lady Gwendhwyfar, Lancelot and the Lady of the Lake on a wordless journey into the mythological land of Avalon at the sunset of its reign. Following the successful model pioneered by Punchdrunk's, "Sleep No More," in New York City, *The Mists* was an interactive story that integrated dance theater, live music and lighting design into the living landscapes of the Garden itself. Unlike conventional theater and dance productions, *The Mists* rejected a passive audience and instead enticed them to dance, race, play, and interact with the performers and unexpected sites. Lead cast and ensemble members circulated the gardens throughout the 3-hour event performing cyclical scenes that, when witnessed by each audience member, constructed unique narratives.

**Credits:** Co-director: Liz Ivkovich, Rehearsal Director: Emma Wilson, Creative Consultant: Alberto Denis, Costume Design: Carly Schaub, Lead Cast: Samantha Matsukawa, Emma Sergeant, Emma Wilson, Peter Larsen, Micah Patrick-Burkhardt and Carly Schaub plus 50 additional supporting performers.

**Venue:** Garden After Dark, Red Butte Botanic Garden, Salt Lake City, UT

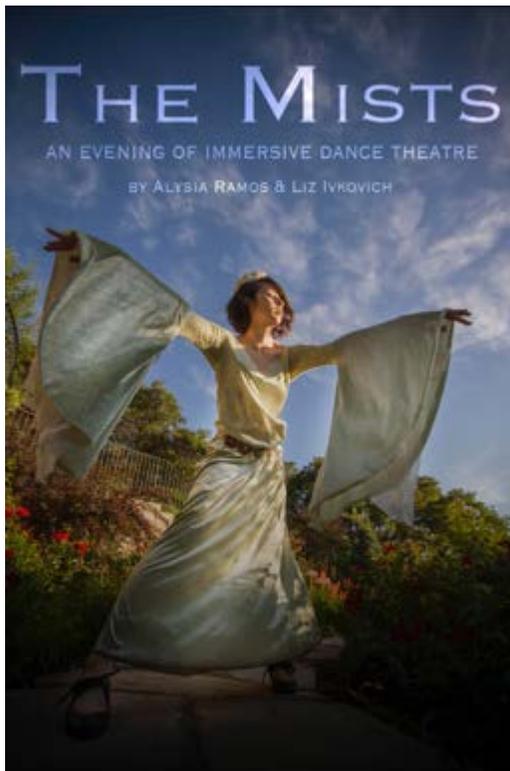
**Dates:** Oct. 21-24, 29-30, 2015

**Video/trailer:** <https://vimeo.com/140531800><https://vimeo.com/140531800>

**Video/performance excerpts:** <https://vimeo.com/181577372/01296542e5>

**Performance Review:** <http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/index.php/garden-after-dark-immersive-dance-experience-at-red-butte-gardens-legends-of-camelot/>

*Alysia Ramos* Address: 206 Shipherd Circle Oberlin, OH 44074 Email: [aramos@oberlin.edu](mailto:aramos@oberlin.edu) Phone: (646)942-8729



BASED ON THE FEMALE RETELLING  
OF ARTHURIAN LEGENDS,  
**THE MISTS OF AVALON**  
BY MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup> 23<sup>RD</sup> 24<sup>TH</sup> 29<sup>TH</sup> & 30<sup>TH</sup>  
6-9PM  
**RED BUTTE GARDEN**  
300 WAKARA WAY, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84108

**STARRING**  
MICAH BURKHARDT AMY FREITAS PETER LARSEN  
SAMANTHA MATSAKAWA EMMA SARGENT  
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Dance

## Garden After Dark: Immersive Dance Experience at Red Butte Garden's Legends of Camelot

BY SHAWN ROSSITER ON OCTOBER 23, 2015 • ( 3 COMMENTS )



If this Halloween season you're looking for something with a touch more art and a lot fewer chainsaws, Red Butte Garden's *Garden After Dark: Legends of Camelot* is the place to go to become enchanted. For the last two weeks of October, the gardens on Salt Lake's east bench have been transformed into a place where legend comes alive as visitors wind their way through the grounds on an Arthurian-themed quest. At stations along the way, little ones (and large ones) have the chance to decorate a protective shield with heraldic symbols, obtain a glowing magic potion, collect healing herbs and make an oak-leaf crown, all the while looking for scenes from the Arthurian legend: the lady of the lake, the sword in the stone, the knights of the round table.

It's part nature stroll, part Renaissance festival, with a good dose of Halloween atmosphere. There's nothing really scary, but plenty of eerie ambience, including blue-light effects, dry ice mist and a cast of performers that gives the entire space a sense of magic and mystery.

You'll be tempted to go early in the evening, when it's warmer, but it's worth putting on an extra layer and waiting until it's properly dark to enjoy the full effect — that way you'll be able to see the light projections on the hills on either side of Red Butte, be startled by the sudden appearance of a wandering Merlin, and enjoy the enchanted forest in all its phosphorescent glory.

### EVENTS



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Throughout, parents and children will be beguiled by "The Mists," an immersive dance theater experience that happens in the gardens and features professionals from Utah's dance community. "The Mists" evokes the story of Avalon, the magic-infused realm that preceded Camelot. You won't have to get out your Geoffrey of Monmouth or Chretien de Troyes to enjoy the experience, but you may need to pause for a moment to absorb it. There are no timed performances, so what you see may depend on when you arrive, and taking a second lap along the quest trail may provoke new surprises and an expanded understanding of the story (a short guide available just inside the entrance will help).

The performances are part of a mythical realm that for these few nights in October seems to break through a fairy veil to become part of our mundane, if briefly festive, world. While the anthropomorphic herd of wild stags near Guinevere's Meadow may prance up to you and encourage a rub or scratch with the tilt of their head and shrug of their shoulders, the denizens of the enchanted forest likely will ignore you as they play their flutes from a tree branch, bang their drums or chase after glow-in-the-dark bubbles. As you leave the magic show (which alternates nights with a raptor encounter), you may catch a glimpse of an intense, raven-like Morgan stalking the fair Guinevere, or while you're sitting at a table enjoying a cup of hot chocolate, the Priestesses of Avalon, dressed in their long black cloaks, may swarm past you like a band of grackles, to perch on a stone wall, encircle a young tree, or puff and chant around a stone cauldron, all the while ignoring the young girl in her Snow White costume, trying to get their attention. The performances are concrete and compelling, enough to infuse the carnival-like experience of children teasing siblings or asking for another candied apple with a slightly unsettling air of awe and dread.

It will help make big changes in Utah's art community.

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**Red Butte Garden's Garden After Dark: Legends of Camelot** is Oct. 22, 23, 24 & 29 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Oct. 30 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. 300 Wakara Way, Salt Lake City, UT 84108. Price: \$6 for Garden members, \$12 for the general public and free for children 2 and under.

While not required, costumes are certainly welcome.



**Shawn Rossiter**

The founder of Artists of Utah and editor of its online magazine, 15 Bytes, Shawn Rossiter has undergraduate degrees in English, French and Italian Literature and studied Comparative Literature in graduate school before pursuing a career in art.

Categories: **Dance**

3 replies

**Ann Poore**

October 23, 2015 at 10:20 pm

REPLY

I read this, borrowed a small child, and headed up to Red Butte directly. It was as magical an experience as described — moonlit night, dancers in the trees, mute priestesses in flowing black gowns, fabulous. I could have lingered for another hour. There's so much to experience that going back through a second time is good counsel, if you have the stamina. I may go back, if I can find another kid willing to put up with me!

**M. Wilson**

October 25, 2015 at 11:59 am

REPLY

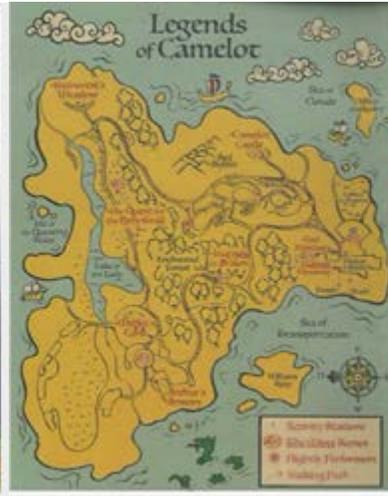
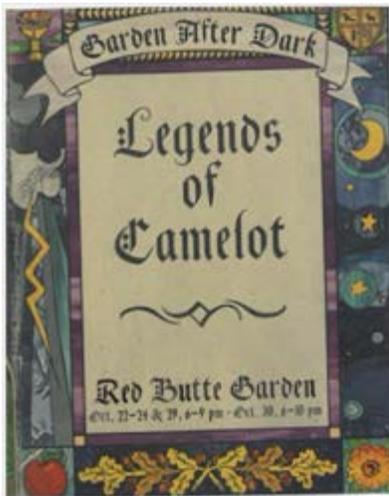
See it Thursday and Friday (October 29th and 30th)! Red Butte Garden is the perfect setting for The Mists, which tells the story, through dance and live music, of Avalon and Camelot, fairies, wizards and stags. There is a combat on an open lawn between the King Stag and Arthur, Merlin rows across the lake toward Morgaine, a fairy wood where the Fairy Queen and her fairy court live, and many other scenes and dances showing what happens to the Lady of the Lake, Guinevere, Morgaine, Lancelot and Arthur. It finishes with a coronation where all the characters dance and invite the public to join them.

**Aleta**

November 5, 2015 at 11:57 am

REPLY

Are they doing this again at midsummer's eve? I would LOVE to see it then!



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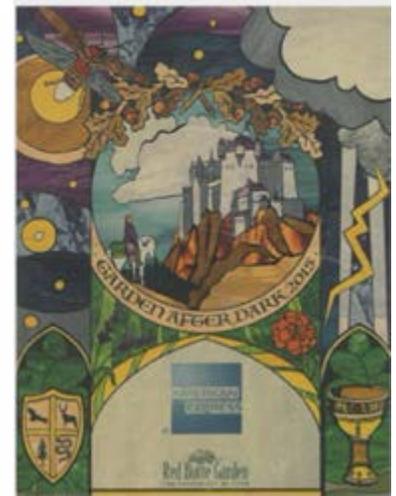
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**Y**ou're going on a quest! King Arthur has asked you, one of his brave Knights of the Round Table, to join him on his quest for the Holy Grail. Before you embark on your journey be sure to collect items to aid in your adventure. What type of reward will you receive if you're successful?



**Photo Op Stops**  
ENROUGE/ROUGE GARDEN

Get your camera ready! During your quest you may come across icons from the legends of Camelot. Can you find all three during your evening explorations?

- The Lady of the Lake & the Sword Excalibur, WINDY PAVILION
- The Sword in the Stone, CHILDREN'S GARDEN
- The Round Table, ORANGE/ROUGE

**The Mists**  
IMMERSIVE DANCE-THEATER  
ENROUGE/ROUGE GARDEN

**R**ed Butte Garden is proud to host **The Mists**, a special immersive dance-theater performance. Before the Round Table, before Excalibur, before Arthur was king... there was Avalon. As you make your way around the Garden participate in different scenes from the story of Avalon as interpreted by our cast of dancers wearing glowing red buttons.

Listed below are some of the major scenes you may encounter. You may find yourself at the beginning, middle, or end of the story. Who and what will you discover along the way?

**Scenes**

- Sacred Well**, COUNTRYSIDE GARDEN  
Priestesses of Avalon lead you into Arthur's story.
- Land of the Fey**, SECRET PINE  
The Fey laugh and play raucously.
- Convent**, ROSE GARDEN  
Followers of the convent pray with Guinevere.
- Countryside**, LOWER GARDEN LAWN  
The wild stags and Derlin welcome you.
- Arthur's Court**, ORANGE/ROUGE  
Members of the court celebrate.

**Journey to Avalon**  
SECRET PINE/ PEAR, PEAR ARBORS

**E**xplore the mythical island of Avalon, a mysterious & otherworldly location in King Arthur's realm. Known as the Island of Apples, can you find any magical apples during your journey?



**Arthur's Armory**  
ROSE HOUSE

**E**very knight needs a shield to protect him & every shield has a coat of arms, often featuring plants or animals local to the knight's home. Create your own shield & coat of arms with plants & animals found in the Garden.



**Derlin's Cave**  
WEDDING LAWN

**V**isit the wise wizard Derlin as he brews up a special potion to aid your quest. Many potions used in medieval times relied on a knowledge of herbology. Derlin's potion is also fluorescent, a characteristic of some of Utah's arachnids!



**The Quest for the Holy Grail**  
LOWER GARDEN LAWN

**Y**ou're ready to attempt your quest! Battle weather and physical obstacles similar to those Sir Galahad faced on his quest for the Holy Grail as you learn about their relevance to Utah's landscapes.



**Guinevere's Meadow**  
WILDFLOWER MEADOW

**G**ain some respite after your quest as you relax in Guinevere's meadow. Use the herbs she's collected to create your own sachet to help you recover from your injuries & fortify your courage.



**Camelot Castle**  
SPRING HOUSE

**Y**ou've completed your quest & regained your strength, now it's time to collect your reward! Visit the castle of Camelot to fashion your own oak leaf crown composed of colored autumn leaves.



**Face Painting**  
ORANGE/ROUGE COURTYARD

**B**ecome a part of the legend! Our talented volunteers will adorn your face with plants or animals from your coat of arms, an apple of Avalon, or even an oak leaf from your newly awarded crown!

**Daffodil Giveaway**  
ORANGE/ROUGE

**O**n your way out be sure to pick up a Narcissus 'Dimnow' daffodil bulb to continue your garden adventures into the spring. A few lucky guests may find a special Narcissus 'Camelot' daffodil bulb as well as a free pass to return to the Garden and see the 500,000 flowering bulbs next spring!

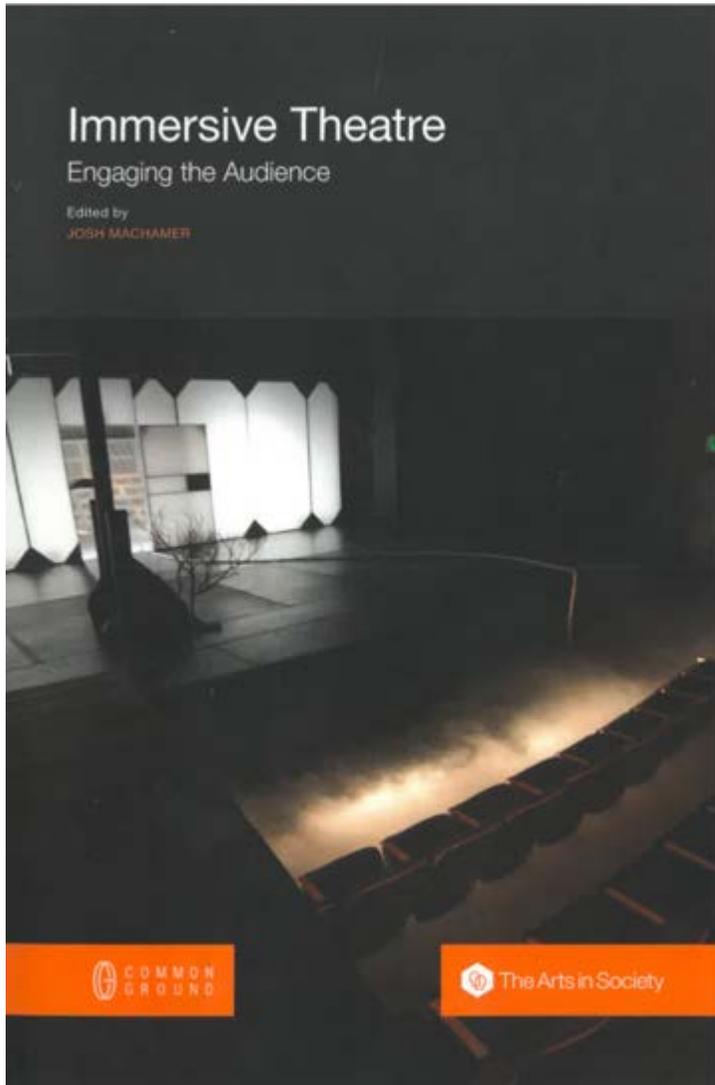
**Nightly Performers**

**The Rocky Mountain Wizard**  
PINEAPPLE GARDEN/PAVILION - OCT. 22 & 30

**D**erlin's not the only wizard in town! Experience magic in action with Gheron Dillo. With amazing slight of hand and entrancing tricks, both adults and children will be sure to enjoy this stage performance.

**Raptor Encounter**  
PINEAPPLE GARDEN/PAVILION - OCT. 23, 24, & 29

**E**alconry was common in medieval times and Utah is home to a number of birds of prey. Visit our friends from HawkWatch International to find out more about the raptors in your neighborhood and meet a new feathered friend.



**Book Chapter:** “The Mists” co-authored with Liz Ivkovich, *Immersive Theatre: Engaging the Audience (vol.1)* edited by Josh Machamer. Common Ground Publishing, Champaign, IL. 2017

**Abstract:** Every October the Red Butte Garden in Salt Lake City, Utah fills its sprawling 18 acre grounds with light displays, crafts and activities for a much beloved Halloween event. In 2015, these patrons were in for a surprise when upon entering the courtyard they encountered priestesses of the mythical isle of Avalon conjuring visions at the sacred well. They had unknowingly stumbled upon Salt Lake’s premiere immersive dance theater work, *The Mists*, created and directed by Alysia Ramos and Liz Ivkovich. Inspired by tales from Arthurian legend, *The Mists* was performed for a nightly audience of 1,500 people and featured an unprecedented 60 person cast comprised of professional performers and university and high school students. Salt Lake City is an unusual backdrop for immersive dance theater given the city’s traditional support for professional dance companies who perform exclusively in formal proscenium settings. The development of *The Mists* in the context of this well-established community event offers a new take on how we can redefine dancing as part of a larger outdoor environment. Creating this immersive dance theatre outside of the usual theatrical venues allowed us to create work on a larger scale and for a multi-generational audience. Taking dance beyond the proscenium and into the Gardens facilitated a more intimate relationship between performer, audience and landscape. The spectators saw other bodies move as they navigated the pathways and open spaces highlighted through the choreography, giving the audience an opportunity to consider how bodies both transform and are transformed by the living contours of the environment. Red Butte Gardens, a space that is at once constructed and ‘natural,’ offers a fitting backdrop for a work that raises many questions about the place of our bodies on the earth, particularly in the context of Salt Lake City’s prominent role in public lands discourses. This chapter is a conversation between the creative collaborators as well as an analysis of audience response taken from questionnaires and focus groups. It explores how *The Mists* redefined the theatrical event in order to forge a more intimate relationship between performer, audience and environment and build a strong community of engaged art-makers and enthusiasts.

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*the Night*, of course, takes place in the Diamond Horseshoe—ironically the only site of the three to make reference to the site's original cultural or public use. Where the production shuns textuality in favor of spectacle, that spectacle requires Billy Rose's ghost for its aesthetic and commercial foundation.

Beginning this discussion, I noted the definitional and generic confusion of labeling *immersive* theatre in relation to other associated theatrical forms. In doing so, I quoted Josephine Machon, and her criterion for such events in relation to the "otherworldly world" of the immersive theatre. In a subheading entitled "Total Immersion," Machon writes that, "Where total immersion occurs, there is always the experience of formalistic transformation in that the audience—participant is able to fashion her own 'narrative' and journey." This statement has been considerable scrutiny in the duration of this chapter, with site and site-use coming under fire for formalistic transformations that eliminate, or simply neglect, the social, political, and public in exchange for the sensual and experiential. Troublingly, the novelty of such experiences often trumps the critical examination of their inception and direction. With immersive, space itself appears to tumble into a rabbit-hole that disengages from the transformation of the social environment of New York City, but has the potential to explore the anxious interplay of technology and site, time and space, real and virtual.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Mists

#### *Liz Ivkovich and Alysia Ramos*

When it opened in October 2015, *The Mists* was a three-hour immersive dance theatre show. Featuring Morgaine Le Fey, Guinevere, the Lady of the Lake, Arthur, Lancelot, the King Stag, and the Queen of the Fey, *The Mists* had seven overlapping storylines. An eclectic ensemble of priestesses, fairies, stags, nuns, musicians, and a court supported the main characters. The production was fully integrated into Red Butte Garden's *Garden After Dark* event and was seen by an audience of nearly 7000 Salt Lake City residents.

(Liz) It is opening night. All 60(ish) of our performers are in place. The Garden twists, paths weaving trees and flower beds, steep and flat by turns, bending just out of sight. I am walking up a long hill, barely lit by the rope lights attached to the railing under my right hand. A booming "Night falls!" floats to me over the noise of the crowds. The battle between Arthur and the anthropomorphic stag beasts is starting. Merlin narrating the action in his deep bass. I consider retooling my trajectory to catch the battle but continue up the hill instead. I stumble into a small family party; several kids and parents—all dressed as skiers. "This is my favorite part!" the daughter shouts. Pulling her mother's hand, she runs ahead. Lancelot stumbles out of a wayside into our path. Following him, Guinevere. Catching his shirt with her hand, she pulls him back in. Lancelot makes eye contact with the mother of this family party and flashes a cheeky grin. They are drawn into the wayside where Lance and Gwen arrange and rearrange furniture, flirtatiously molding their arms together. Laughing, they continue to play house until Lance takes a serious turn. Bending on one knee he looks up longingly at Gwen, she reaches as if to take his hand. On second thought—she saps it away. Running ahead, she disappears up the path. We follow behind.

The invitation of *The Mists* was to come and experience something: stop and stay for a while, to let time stand still—to get lost. Getting lost is not the same as not knowing where you are, explains Rebecca Solnit in her book on the subject, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. It is instead a consciously chosen state of "voluptuous surrender" and an experience of being fully present within uncertainty and mystery (Solnit 6) To get lost in a work of art is to enter a space of possibility and transformation. *The Mists* was such a space; an epic tale with multiple points of departure and exit, a wild place beyond the theatre, and an extended hand to the audience to join us into this journey into the unknown, redefining the theatrical experience as one of active and intimate engagement between performer, landscape and audience.

(Alysia) It is spring 2014. I have just finished graduate school in modern dance at the University of Utah, and am breathing a sigh of relief that leaves me with the weight and force of the ocean receding at the change of tides. Liz still has two years to go, but is already struggling with the weight of the rising water. My son (six) and Liz's daughter (three) are keeping one another entertained arranging and rearranging chairs on the grassy lawn of the cafe as part of some elaborate game that has just been invented, while Liz and I occasionally look on and sip lattes. "When was the last time we were so enraptured in our work?" we wondered aloud to one another? Our graduate school experience flashed across our memories—countless images of studios, theaters, studio theaters, sitting in darkened audiences, standing beneath blinding lights—awaiting magic, not finding it, empty seats, obligatory applause, genuine applause, congratulatory praise, ruthless critique, missing something, trying to find it. Starting over in the same way—studios, theaters, studio theaters. The goal was to find something—a voice, a style, a novel concept, a new idea, but it felt like a child constructing a sand castle too close to the water's edge, watching it continuously washed away, but carrying on just the same—with the sand and the shells and the water and the hope that this time it will be finished before the wave comes. Why not go somewhere new? Why not get lost?

Getting lost is a difficult proposition in Salt Lake City. The city is rich in ostensibly modern dance. Salt Lake City had once been at the forefront of the field. Repertory Dance Theater was the first full time modern dance company established outside of New York City by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1966. Another modern repertory company, Rife-Woodbury Dance Company, began in 1964 at the University of Utah and shifted into full-time status with a grant from the Utah Arts Council in 1970. Additionally, there is a nationally recognized Children's Dance Theatre Company founded by Virginia Tanner that has been in existence since 1949. Utah's dance culture and community, like so many others, benefited greatly from the growth of national and local funding for the arts that occurred between the late 60s and early 80s. But unlike many other companies that were established during that time, Utah's early pioneering modern dance companies still exist (Habel 7–15).

All these companies have regular seasons on the proscenium stage with a large repertoire of classic works. Salt Lake is a place you can still see works by Isadora Duncan and Alwin Nikolais performed live, a treat for someone studying dance history, but offering very little that feels fresh. Even the newer commissions by current choreographers somehow come off feeling like relics of a modernism gone by; attractive if not entirely uniform, bodies performing a range of movements that include vocabulary from ballet and Doug Varone, gestures, no narrative, perhaps some humor, a lot of blank stares, a heavy dose of "ferceness," the arrangement of bodies against a white scrim. Yet, this is what modern dance is in Utah. It was birthed and nourished here and there is an audience cultivated by the decade long investment in what's become, in other cities, traditional modern. And while there's something intriguing about this living history, something lovely and nostalgic we could appreciate as dancers who came into the profession in the late nineties, we must admit we were bored by dance in Salt Lake.

The question became—what if we made the work we longed to see? It seems like an obvious question but not one we often asked ourselves. Mostly we thought about what we wanted to "say" or "do" with our dances, not what we wanted to experience. We reflected on works we'd seen in which we found ourselves utterly rapt: Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*—an immersive theatre production, Christopher Williams's *Wolf-in-Skins*—a narrative dance opera, and Ellen Bromberg's site specific, abstract *Glyph* at the Utah Natural History Museum. These works framed their spaces and narratives, conversed with them, dived off ideas and offered them up fresh and vital. These were works in which one could lose themselves as deeply as our children lost themselves in play. Three aspects burbled to the top as markers of the work we intended to make: immersive theatre, narrative, and ecological dance. Our path forward was unknown but our terrain became clear.

#### GARDEN AFTER DARK: STUMBLING INTO A STORY AND A SPACE

(Liz) I find myself, finally, at the Marriage to the Land. Morgaine Le Fey and Arthur sit on opposite sides of the large tree, framed by a circle of cement planters. This is the pivotal scene from *The Mists of Avalon*. Marion Zimmer Bradley's feminist retelling of Arthurian legend that inspired our script. From here begins the spiral of events that will lead to Arthur's betrayal of his half-sister Morgaine, and Avalon, her mystical home. But for now—they are in love. Arthur and Morgaine slowly circle the tree, drawn relentlessly towards each other, unaware of impending tragedy. A sudden onslaught of strollers explode through the space, lines of people loaded down by bags, coats and glow sticks, jarring me out of my reverie. The Lady of Lake and her Greek chorus of priestesses continue their single note hum, eyes focused on the scene. The swarm of people fades. A few of us are left in the scene—maybe twenty-five or thirty. A stillness settles, entranced. When the scene ends, the audience exhales—then claps. Though there are over one thousand people at *Garden After Dark* this evening, there were just the few of us here at that exact moment. Some who have begun to follow a favorite character through the story and some who have stumbled unexpectedly upon this scene. Hundreds of others roam the garden, some witnessing similar moments of our tale, many carrying on obliviously.

*The Mists* is a new addition to *Garden After Dark*, a well-established event that normally features the garden illuminated with decorative lighting, the paths dotted with craft stations, the occasional entertainer and an entryway hosting food trucks and vendors. When we approached Red Butte Garden about creating in their space, they asked us to partner with them on this event—a dream come true. Because of this ambitious and unprecedented partnership, *The Mists* reached a multigenerational audience of viewers who might not ordinarily see dance.

Like other cities, Salt Lake faces dwindling audiences for proscenium dance, aging patrons and supporters, decreases in government and foundation support and increased competition for viewership. Local solutions to these challenges fixate on "audience development" through better marketing or more education for existing programming. There are few conversations that imagine a radical restructuring of the existing models. What if the old dance formats just aren't working anymore? Could new programming attract new audiences?

Our built-in patrons at *Garden After Dark* ostensibly solved the audience question for us. The event gave us bodies but did not, however, assure us their attention, transforming a problem of attendance to a problem of engagement. Could we convince a group of unsuspecting theatergoers to get lost with us? The answer was a resounding yes and no. Our personal observations, a post event survey put out by Red Butte Garden and focus groups taken of staff, and cast reveal a complex picture. *The Mists* is alternately received as a delightful surprise, a secret discovery, an irritating disruption or a curious oddity by the unexpected [sic] audience.

As dance-makers, we were used to sending dance into the front of house void. In the past, we'd heard criticisms, questions, compliments, but nothing like the raw reactions provoked by *The Mists*. From the delight of a child viewing a dancer close up for the first time, to a mother hurrying her family away from the "satanic rituals" of our priestess performers, we were shocked by the range of responses. While we loved to hear about how magical our work was, the vehemently critical feedback about the show was equally informative. It's only in retrospect, through this feedback, that we begin to understand how *The Mists* disrupted the event for attendees, challenging their deeply held conceptions about the natural world.

#### RED BUTTE GARDENS, A LANDSCAPE

(Liz) I'm standing at the highest point of Red Butte Garden, in the middle of a grassy knoll, the Wasatch front looming behind me. If I walk downhill to the parking lot the Great Salt Lake shimmer in the sun, framed by cars proudly wearing *Protect Wild Utah* bumper stickers. With a stretch of my imagination, I can just glimpse the red rocks of Arches National Park and the deep rifts of Canyonlands to the distant south. Truly, this feels like a protected and beautiful space. It's a relief to be under the heavy Utah sun.

At our first rehearsals, we had to use a map to find our way around the Garden; it's easy to get lost in this sprawling arboretum, a beautiful 'living landscape.' (<http://www.redbuttegarden.org/about-us>). Conjuring images of rolling hills and oil paintings, 'landscape' evokes idyllic notions of the pastoral intended for enjoyment. The Garden, like other landscapes, is designed to exclude the human from the space (Malpas 6). The natural world is framed and presented for consumption from its paved paths and benches, fixing visitors firmly in the seat of spectator to nature's sensibilities. The Garden seems to offer the natural world while actually fixing the viewer outside of it (Chaudhuri 19), replicating the effect of a landscape painting, or fittingly, the proscenium (21).

Utahns are passionate about preserving the natural world for human enjoyment. The state is host to five national parks, forty-five state parks, innumerable wild areas and epic views. We are a hub for environmentalists, conservationists, naturalists, ski racers and rock climbers who all share a love of Wild Utah. This passion for wilderness contributes to a generally uncontested understanding of the environment as pristine, natural and separate from human influence (Cronon 110). Environment depends on being not-human, something out there and away from us. This concept of the environment is not unique to Utah, but rooted in a Western modern worldview that places nature and culture in opposition, marking the natural world separate from and below, the human realm (Allinson 7,18; Prielan 385). This dominant

environmental discourse, with its separation of nature and culture, had a palpable presence in the show. During the focus groups, we were especially aware of this discourse, such as the following clip of a conversation between two staff members.

"...[In *The Mists*] there's a lot of natural magic happening. And the deer and the Lady of the Lake...it's not like the Jetsons. It's...the natural world, I don't know how to describe it, but I think that tied into the Garden."

"Yeah, [because outside was where the deer were and inside were the people...]" (Focus Group, 12/4/15).

People fit in the indoor parts of the garden, while the deer (animals) should be outdoors. The effect of this conceptual binary that equates inside with human and outside with nature was a certain kind of protectionism of the garden by the staff and volunteers. Even as we were invited in—to make the show, we were cautioned to stay out—of the natural parts of the garden. In deference to their wishes, we choreographed the entire show on grassy lawns and built features of the garden: planters, paths, and benches. Still, in spite of our many admonitions to our performers to "avoid the plants!," someone accidentally stepped on the edge of a flower bed during dress rehearsal. After that, several of the long-established volunteers became concerned about the dancers, notifying us each day with a list of any places where the dancers accidentally transgressed the path. The landscape became a specter hovering over our heads. One dancer commented, "It's odd. Though we are dancing 'in the garden,' we aren't allowed to touch the plants!"

After months of navigating the tensions between our performers' desire to get their hands dirty in the Garden, and the staff's need for them to be away from the plants, we had imagined a tense relationship between the performers and the space. We were a bit surprised by the focus groups, which revealed affinity and a hint of ownership. The performers affectionately described the Gardens, "It's like we know the space more than anyone else," one stated. Another describing a scene where he canoeed through the small lake, spoke as if the lake had been designed just for his needs, stating "That little alcove in the rocks that I found—that was nice. And it was just enough space to turn a canoe around—that was convenient." A third performer spoke about how she was grateful to be able to work within the limitations and rules of the space presented by the Garden staff. For her, this helped her to exist in a land instead of having to create her own land the way that she does in a proscenium work (Focus Group, 12/15/15)

The dancers' sense of the space lingered in their bodies after the show was over. They equated being in the Garden with being their characters, describing how much they missed their characters and the space interchangeably. One character, who played a stag, stated, "If I go [to Red Butte Garden] again, I'll probably want to be in character and be a stag again...I'll probably start to imagine the scenes that I was in..." Later this same artist stated: "...I was so invested [in *The Mists*], I would get lost and forget I was in character...I would make stag noises after we were done when I was just hanging out with my friends" (Focus Group, 12/15/15) The character and the garden melded together in their memory of the event.

One useful frame for this kinesthetic reaction is Phenomenologist Edward Casey's theory of the body as a being-in-place (Casey 413). For Casey, the body and place exist in a dynamic tension in which they continually impact and are impacted by each other. The body goes into place and impacts this place by its presence (414), and the place makes a lasting and permanent impact on the body, causing the sense of the place to persist in the body (415). This persisting sense of place was evidenced by the residual remnants of the character in this performer after the show was over.

The arrival of the audience on opening night was a very dramatic eruption of the human into the landscape, shattering the illusion of Red Butte Garden as an untouched natural place. After opening night, the dancers' relationship to the space expanded to include the audience members. One performer explains: "...when we were rehearsing it was like 'how can I use the space?' and highlight things; my body in the space, the space in my body. But then, when there were lots of audience members, [the space] kind of became a secondary concern for me. It became 'who's here?' and how can I weave through them?" Like, [awareness of the space] was still a part of the performance, but then the audience was... a huge factor... I would use the plants to hide behind and peer at audience members, but it wasn't like "look at the leaves." (Focus Group, 12/15/15) This dancer went from a focus on a kind of dwelling in space and the usual concerns of ecological and site specific work, to bring the presence of the audience into her awareness.

Another performer, returning to the lake he loved, explained why it was so cool to be in that space, saying: "I found that place behind the reeds where I could canoe...hiding behind those reeds but having it so my canoe barely stuck out. And it was interesting to see people be like 'is there someone out there?' and I felt like a lot of the time it was just a little kid and the parents ignoring them, and [the kid] being like 'No, I really think someone's out there! That was fun.'" (Focus Group, 12/15/15) The presence of the kids in the space were part of what gave that place its beauty and resonance for this performer. Though turning the canoe around in that spot was fun and he enjoyed "looking up at the moon," singing and generally doing what his character would do in the water, the presence of the human in the scenery that what caused him to light up when remembering the place.

Like a landscape painting, Red Butte Garden is a place that crosses the worlds of nature, meaning and society (Cresswell 4). The same space filled with natural elements has been constructed by humans, and filled with human built elements; paths, sculptures, benches. This space, a composite of categories of nature and culture, demonstrates that the subject of the landscape—the nature—is not free from cultural coding (Chandhuri 12). The inclusion of the audience in the performers' understandings of the space caused them to intimately experience a deconstruction of the binary between nature/culture. They experienced the space and knew it intimately, and at the same time they were able to expand their conception of natural space to include the people who populated it during the event.

#### BUT—WHERE DO I STAND? ON PARENTS, PLAY AND PLACE

(Alysia) I invented immersive theater when I was seven years old. Rounding up a cast of brothers, cousins and pets, I invited an intimate audience of relatives on an interactive and ambulatory dance retelling of *Peter Pan* that traveled through the

wilds of my yard, jungle gym, and bedroom (aka secret hideout). As a child, spaces and objects easily transformed to the contours of my imagination; a thicker of sticks became a native hut, a small creek a crocodile infested swamp, a clothesline with sheets the soaring sails of a ship. Oh, I know, I wasn't the first to invent it, children have been doing it for centuries, it's just that we called it "play." Sometimes we did it for an audience and sometimes just for ourselves. The concepts of "site specific," "immersive," "interactive," did not occur to us as novel or groundbreaking forms of theater but simply the way it was done. But as soon as children engage in any kind of formal training, they learn that art happens in boxes. Theater sized boxes and museum sized boxes, television sized boxes and movie screen boxes. I made my first dances in yards, woods, jungle gyms and basements intuitively because it was available, but I learned not to consider these venues once exposed to the opportunity of the stage. Once professional, I spent over a decade making work for the stage and seeing work on stages, coveting specific stages and imagining bigger and bigger stages. Though I saw the occasional site-specific dance or museum piece they failed to grip me and still upheld a formal separation of audience and performer. Even nice site-specific works didn't hold the power or magic of the proscenium stage, appearing as dancers dancing in a small loft, or a gallery with other people's art behind them or frolicking outside.

*Garden After Dark* attendees follow a consistent pattern each year at the event. Traveling in a counterclockwise route, visitors walk the Garden to see the lights, make some crafts, and depart for home. This annual routine connects visitors to Red Butte Garden in a way that reinforces the Garden as a kind of box for nature; a living landscape to be viewed and enjoyed from a distance. Viewers most readily engaged in the parts of *The Mists* that emphasized and echoed established practices of consuming art from a distance. Our "mini shows" (Focus Group, 12/4/15) that we developed for proscenium style viewing from the paths made it easy for adults to answer their instinctive question of "What do we do—do we stand and watch?" (Focus Group, 12/4/15). These mini-shows were accessible and surprisingly long lasting in people's memories. Those interviewed in our focus group could describe in detail each of these shows that they had seen, even several months after the performance.

The mini-shows fit into the Garden not only because of the way that the Garden was built, but also because of the practiced meanings of *Garden After Dark*. The event route, with its sense of flushing people quickly through the space, was an equal factor with the terrain in determining what was possible in the place. 'Place' is conceptually distinct from 'space' across the arts, humanities and social sciences, indicating not just the topography but also the layers of subjective experience associated with a specific space (see Cachelin and Kloetzel). Places are about experiential, emotional, and ecological connections (Cachelin 6). The meanings (and physical structure) of the place are shaped by the individual and social practices in that place (Cresswell 2, 7). The connections between people and place inform how people act in the space as well as the value that a space holds for people (2).

Staff members considered the event wildly successful, and very challenging for audience members' paradigms. How much an audience member could interact with *The Mists* "depends on how open people are to an experience like that" (Focus Group, 12/4/15) one staff member commented. Another explained, "I think a lot of people who come are repeat visitors, year after year, and it seems like if you were to do something like [*The Mists*] year after year people get more into it." (Focus Group,

12/4/15). This staff member indicates that *The Mists*, a practice which disrupts the established meanings of the Garden could, over time, change the connection that people feel with that place (see Cachelin, Cresswell, Casey).

We thought we were making an adult show at the kid's event, since *The Mists* addresses such adult themes. In actuality, we realized that we were making a kid's show at an adult's event. The hesitance of the adults to engage with *The Mists* caused them to continually hurry their children through the space, while it was the children who were most receptive to the new form when *The Mists* premiered. Always quick to detect the unspoken rules of a new game the kids instinctively followed the performers' lead and began filling in the story. "Follow the evil queen," they piped up at first sight of a severe looking Morgaine La Fey storming away from the mystic Avalon past Guinevere's convent. "She's dead!" they cried when Arthur triumphed over the King Stag. "They're in love," "They broke up," "Over here!" they joined in the action, often as their parents looked bewildered, bothered or impassive. Parents arrived to find the usual path of *Garden After Dark* disrupted. The "real world" of the vendors and food trucks was there, but not as it had been. Overlaying the familiar was the fantastical—pagan priestesses weaving spells into tapestries around trees beckoning the audience to join them, wild stags peering out from behind bushes then extending a hoof awaiting a caress.

(L12) This morning I woke up with a vision of Dance Team Stags. You know how a really good dance team moves in total unison, down to the placement of their hands? Well, I imagined our stags doing that up and down one of the long pathways. I loved being on a dance team at my alma mater. After years of pre-professional ballet training, the brazen sexuality of our dances was totally liberating. I finally felt powerful and no longer a little girl waiting for a correction from her teacher. This was a Catholic college so we had to hide the sex a little bit. Actually, maybe the sex was in plain sight. During a game with a rival Baptist college, whose students signed a contract saying they wouldn't dance, we performed a hip swinging 80s heavy rock medley. In the middle of Jon Bon Jovi's crescendo, a student heckler actually shouted "Sluts!" at us. When I brought the idea of Dance Team Stags to rehearsal, it was sort of tongue-in-cheek and abashedly. Dance team is not high art, after all! That's just a four-year blank space on my dance CV filled with the male gaze! However, after years of abstract improvisations, the dancers were delighted by its vulgarity. We morphed Dance Team Stags into a traveling phrase, which became the beginning of an entire movement vocabulary for the characters.

Initially, an afterthought built for a battle scene, the stag cast took their bit part and annexed the Garden paths. Cute and uncanny by turn, these elk/deer/wolf being disrupted the practiced landscape of the Garden with their wild howls. Their presence delighted most children and disturbed some parents. A staff member explained, "A lot of people, especially I heard a family—a mom had two girls with her, they loved interacting with the deer. One of the deer made a sound at her and she made it back and they kind of had this back and forth thing going on. But then I also heard, and this was mostly from adults, 'they wouldn't leave me alone' or 'I didn't want to interact...'" (Focus Group, 12/4/15). The uncanny presence of these performers incited some audience members to threats of violence, albeit jokingly. One performer estimated that about a third of the adult audience members made a hunting joke or reference in response to them (Focus Group, 12/15/15). These raw reactions created a

strange intimacy between the performer and the audience member. One of the dancers explains, "There's a whole spectrum of...the hunting families and the liberal, vegetarian families...[and] the ones who were totally encouraging of their kids pretending to shoot us. That's a huge part of [audience] identity that you don't normally find out, especially if it's a proscenium work." (Focus Group, 12/15/15) Not only were the performers in physical proximity to the viewers, they were dancing with the cultural identities of the audience.

This immediate and shocking feedback presented an exciting challenge. Because of the intimacy of the audience, performers became passionate about remaining in character, determined to offer each of the guests an experience, if they were open to it. Describing conviction, adaptability, and malleability, the performers spoke compassionately about the audience, saying, "I have to remain really ok with whatever is going to come my way good, bad, or otherwise...understanding that some people just see things differently and some people like different things, and if they don't like it, it's ok." (Focus Group, 12/15/15).

#### CAMELOT : DANCING TOGETHER

(L12) Towering gold headpieces and bright red leggings. The eight court dancers in a long line, the mandolin cries overhead. The pace picks up and they stamp and jig in time to the beat. Grabbing the audience by the hand they pull them into the circle and dance. The stags show up at the door with [Le] Fey and priestesses. There must be 100 people crammed into this room dancing right now! Kids, adults, cast. The dance party goes on and on, into the following song and beyond, until I finally run out of courtly music and switch to Beyoncé. Now there's only a few audience members (mostly my thesis committee and their families) and even the cast members themselves trickle away to change into street clothes and remove their makeup.

This was really the only way that *The Mists* could finally end—by totally breaking down the boundaries between performer/audience, inside/outside, high art/low art, human/stag. Even before this evening, audience members would usually stop and stay at Camelot with the courts people, the last stop in the Gardens before exiting the event, for extended stretches of time. After their long journey through *Garden After Dark*, this pause was a surrender to the magic of *The Mists*. Camelot became a liminal place, affording the attendees a chance to transition from the mystical realms of Avalon back to the inside of their Subaru Foresters.

Whether the audience paused at one mini-show, took a moment to get a stage, or experienced nothing at all, the production afforded a labyrinth in which one might get lost, a rare opportunity. Rebecca Solsnit says, "The question then is how to get lost. Never to get lost is not to live, not to know how to get lost brings you to, destruction and to the terra incognita in between lies the life of discovery." (14) It was not just the audience members who got chance lost in *The Mists*, but we, the cast and choreographers, as well. For those of us inside of the production *The Mists* became our own field guide to getting lost; a chance to find anew the curiosity and playfulness for dance that a disruption and expansion of the landscape, an intimate experience of discovery was a surprising and violent audience, and a radically redefined theatrical event in Salt Lake City.

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## CHAPTER 4 Game/Play: The Five Conceptual Planes of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*

Sara Thiel

[G]ame spaces evoke narratives because the player is making sense of them in order to engage with them. Through a comprehension of signs and interaction with them, the player generates new meaning.<sup>51</sup>

In 2011, Punchdrunk and Emersive transformed three Chelsea, Manhattan warehouses into what Ben Brantley calls a "1930s pleasure palace."<sup>52</sup> This "pleasure palace," otherwise known as the McKittrick Hotel, is the home of *Sleep No More*, an interactive promenade performance directed by Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle. Punchdrunk's commercially and critically successful production invites audiences to discover the history of a mysterious hotel through the lens of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.<sup>53</sup> *Sleep No More* was initially set to run in New York from February to May 2011; the run has been extended several times with no end in sight, due to high public demand.<sup>54</sup> If adaptations of Shakespeare's works are a "cultural barometer for the historically contingent process of adaptation," as Julie Sanders argues, what can the popularity of this intertextual riff on Shakespeare's ill-fated Scottish King tell us about contemporary American audiences?<sup>55</sup> What can *Sleep No More*'s success help us understand about why interactive performance appeals to audiences steeped in digital entertainment? The overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to Punchdrunk's distinctive mode of adapting Shakespeare's work and engaging spectators reveals the need to re-examine the ways in which contemporary theatre audiences desire to take in live performance.

In this chapter, I argue the popularity of *Sleep No More* stems from the success of a similar phenomenon: dynamic story-based video games. According to a 2015 report by the Entertainment Software Association, 42% of Americans play video games

<sup>51</sup> Michael Nitzsche, *Video Game Space: Image, Play, and Structure in 3D Game Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ben Brantley, "Shakespeare Sleep Here, Albeit Finally," *The New York Times*, 13 April 2011. Accessed 21 December 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/14/theater/reviews/sleep-no-more-is-a-macbeth-in-a-hotel-review.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/14/theater/reviews/sleep-no-more-is-a-macbeth-in-a-hotel-review.html?_r=0).

<sup>53</sup> *Sleep No More*'s awards include a Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience and a Special Citation for Design and Choreography at the Obie Awards, both in 2011.

<sup>54</sup> "Current Shows: Sleep No More-NYC." Punchdrunk, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://punchdrunk.com/current-shows>.

<sup>55</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.

# Short Works

## 4.1 The Obliterated Place



Role: Choreographer & Performer

**Description:** A contemporary solo exploring the Portuguese concept of *saudade*, or bittersweet longing through a choreographic study of absence. The choreography integrates multiple movement vocabularies, including contemporary floorwork, samba structures and rhythms, as well as using the back wall for support. It is based on a series of contradictory energies, a sense of struggle and release.

**Credits:** Performed by Alysia Ramos with live music by Carson Fratus. Lighting by Cleveland Dance Festival

**Venue:** Cleveland Dance Festival, Pilgrim Church, Cleveland, Ohio

**Date:** November 9, 2018

**Length:** 8.5 min

**Video/Promo:** <https://vimeo.com/443166332/ba6539ac80>

**Video/Performance:** <https://vimeo.com/442385336/b097187d10>

## 4.2 Time Certainties Peace



Role: Co-Choreographer & Performer

**Description:** This work, inspired by Paolo Coelho's text "The Good Fight," was made in collaboration with Ghanaian dancer Mustapha Braimah. Through dance and text, the work addresses the challenge of enduring in the fight for one's dreams in spite of obstacles both without and within. Created as a cross-cultural conversation, the work is a dynamic meeting of movement vocabularies and rhythmic dialogue that both showcases and bridges our different dance experiences. Oberlin Conservatory students composed and performed musical accompaniment for the piece.

**Credits:** Creators and performers Alysia Ramos & Mustapha Braimah. Music originally by Aliya Ultan (cello) and Patrick Graney (percussion), Carson Fratus (percussion) for Canadian performance.

**Venues/Dates:** Premiered in Warner Main, Oberlin, OH Nov. 13, 2016 Ohio Dance Festival, BalletMet, Columbus, Ohio April 29, 2017 World Dance Alliance Global Summit, Newfoundland, Canada July 25, 2017

**Length:** 11 min

**Video/Canada:** <https://vimeo.com/227404190/7733098fb0>

**Video/Oberlin:** <https://vimeo.com/191661190/b6f7bb82ad>



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Row 2: Dancing Wheels Company; Sheri Williams;  
Row 3: Alysia Ramos & Mustapha Braimah photo by Daniel James;  
Row 4: Ohio State University Department of Dance, Katina Jennings

The OhioDance Performance supports and recognizes professional choreographers and companies.

Funding Sources: Greater Columbus Arts Council, Ohio Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Cleveland Foundation, Columbus Foundation, Larry Trittschuh, Synchrony Financial and Puffin Foundation West, Ltd.



## OhioDance Performance

Evening Performance April 29, 2017

### Time Certainties Peace

**Choreographer:** Alysia Ramos & Mustapha Braimah  
**Performers:** Alysia Ramos & Mustapha Braimah  
**Music:** Original Music by Aliya Ulitan & Patrick Graney

This piece is an on-going conversation between its makers on what it means to endure and hold onto one's dreams over time. It was inspired by and incorporates text from "The Good Fight" from Paolo Coelho's book *The Pilgrimage*.

### Intermission

#### The Clock Strikes 12

**Choreographers:** Katina M. Jennings and Ricky Moore  
**Performers:** Mayela Aguirre-Sanchez, Lynette Cashaw-Davis\*, Iman Clark, Ingrid M. Diehl\*, Kyra Hanes, Gina L. Jackson, Katina M. Jennings\*, Lawrence T. Lemon, Ricky Moore\*, V. Miracle Murphy, Cherryl M. Nappier\*, E. Lynn Smallwood-Ray, Maggie Weinman  
**Original Artwork:** (Scene V) by Beverly Whiteside\*, Colored Section Art  
**Visual presentation:** by Sherman E. Burks, Jr.  
\*Former dance students of Bettye Brown Robinson  
**Music:** "Remembering" by The Uptown String Quartet (Arranged by Bill Lee)

On January 1, 2012 Bettye Brown Robinson passed away peacefully in her sleep knowing that her job on earth was done.

Scene I – Bettye's Angels: Dedicated to Deceased Students  
Scene II – Help Always Comes  
Scene III – Aunt Bettye's class  
Scene IV – DTH Master class  
Scene V – Bettye's Legacy

### Elegy

**Choreography:** Gladys Bailin  
**Performer:** Ani Javian  
**Music:** Edward Grieg Opus 47, number 7 played by Eva Knardahl

Excerpted from a suite of 5 lyric pieces, *Elegy* is the last section of a work in tribute to the passing of her husband first performed in 1995.

## OhioDance Performance

Evening Performance April 29, 2017

### Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder

**Choreographers:** Donald McKayle  
**Performers:** Devin Baker, Michael Green, Robert Pulido, Jarrett Rashad, Quentin Apollo Vaughn Sledge, Matthew Talley, Countess V. Winfrey  
**Men on the Chain Gang:** Devin Baker, Michael Green, Robert Pulido, Jarrett Rashad, Quentin Apollo Vaughn Sledge and Matthew J. Talley  
**Solo I:** Quentin Apollo Vaughn Sledge  
**Solo II:** Michael Green  
**Sweetheart Mother Wife:** Countess Winfrey  
**Traditional music:** arranged by Robert DeCormier and Milton Okun  
From the Collection of John and Allen Lomax  
**Costume design:** Domingo A. Rodriguez

"Rainbow" tells the story of men linked together on a chain gang in the American South. A woman appears in their dreams. To each prisoner, she is sweetheart, mother or wife. Yearning for freedom, two men escape, only to die in their quest. This dance mirrors the lost hope and frustration of the men.

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## The Choreographers



**Gladys Ballin**, After performing in the NYC companies of Alwin Nikolais, Murray Louis and Don Redlich during the 50's and 60's, Gladys Ballin focused on teaching. She was on the faculty of the NYU School of the Arts, then relocated to the Ohio University, Athens, OH in the early 70's where she became the Director of the School of Dance from 1983-1995 and was named Distinguished Professor of Dance in 1986. Though formerly retired in 2000, she remains active at the University still enjoying teaching a class in choreography.



**Mustapha Braimah** is a scholar artist from Ghana, West Africa. He is a choreographer, dancer, musician, percussionist and actor currently completing his MFA at the University of Maryland College Park. Prior to coming to the United States, he trained as a contemporary African dancer and performer with Noyam Dance Institute in Accra under Prof. F. Nii Yartey and performed with the National Dance Company of Ghana.



**Ann Sofie Clemmensen** was born and raised in Denmark. She completed her Bachelor of Fine Art at the Norwegian College of Dance, received a first-class honor post-graduate degree from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (LUX) and completed her MFA in Dance at OSU. Ms. Clemmensen is currently holding a Visiting Assistant Professor position in the Department of Dance, sharing her choreographic and pedagogic interests in movement and its realization through patterns.



**Katina M. Jennings**, a native of Columbus, Ohio, is a graduate of East High School and The Ohio State University. As a student of Bettye Robinson's School of Dance, she came to love the story ballet and learned the foundation of dance productions. In the spring of 1989, Jennings founded SELAH as an outreach providing individuals the platform to pursue their dreams and goals for the ministry arts.



**Donald McKay** has choreographed more than 90 works for dance companies across the world. He has received dozens of honors and awards for his contributions to modern dance and musical theatre including five Tony nominations, recognition at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. as a Master of African American Choreography, and a 2016 Bessie Award for the Outstanding Revival of his 1959 work "Rainbow Round My Shoulder." His autobiography, "Transcending Boundaries: My Dancing Life," was awarded with a special dance scholarship, and McKay's life and work was the subject of television documentary, "Heartbeats of a Dance Maker," which aired on PBS stations throughout the U.S.

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## Companies & Schools

**The Dancing Wheels Company**, founded in 1980 by Mary Verdi-Fletcher, is America's first physically integrated company, and the World Center for Integrated Dance & Arts Access. With a composition of professional stand up and sit down dancers, the company tours globally presenting innovative works from nationally acclaimed choreographers. Each season, the company accomplishes whirlwind tours of more than 50 cities presenting to audiences of 50,000+. The School of Dancing Wheels embraces inclusive arts programming, reaching over 7,000 children and adults with disabilities and economic challenges each year. For more information, visit [www.dancingwheels.org](http://www.dancingwheels.org).

For nearly 50 years, the internationally-renowned Dayton Contemporary Dance Company has fostered the growth of diverse, groundbreaking movement artists across the global stage. The company was founded in 1968 by Jeraklyne Blunder, an African American woman who dared to dream that she could build a nationally-recognized dance company in a mid-sized Midwestern city. Today, these cultural roots remain a vital part of the art made at DCDC.

**The Oberlin College Dance Department** functions within the liberal arts tradition. Though many of the students become successful dancers and choreographers, the emphasis in the department is on encouraging students to create, perform, and think about movement in a manner that is consonant with their experience in the other five liberal arts.

All fifteen performers are BFA students of **The Ohio State University, Department of Dance** and they have been selected through an audition process to participate in the study abroad program Dance in Denmark; a 5 1/2 week long performance, teaching and cultural exchange program that is committed to engage with dance as a creative movement practice with many forms of expression. The program aims to inform the participating students how to engage with dance as a physical platform for bridging cultural understanding between different countries and cultures.

**SELAH**, The Special Events League AH-lelah, represents various segments within the Columbus dance community - dance companies, academies, ministries as well as individual artists - who come together for a special purpose. Their performances are historical, inspirational, international, and culturally and socially relevant.

### Maggie Patton Scholarship Adjudicators

**Sarah Morrison** founded MorrisonDance in 1997, and has led the company to become an integral part of the Northeast Ohio arts community - always experimenting with using the beauty of dance to showcase alternative disciplines such as science, technology, nature, and visual arts. She has cultivated partnerships with some of the area's most fascinating artists and scientific leaders including projects with NASA and BrainMaster. Morrison earned her BA in Theater Arts and her MA in Psychology from Case Western Reserve University. She currently teaches dance at Cuyahoga Community College and Psychology at Baldwin Wallace. She has been a recipient of the Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, and the Rauschenberg SEED grant (NYC).

**Gabrielle Stefura** (dancer/teacher/choreographer) graduated in 2007 from The Ohio State University with her BFA in dance education. She began her formal dance training with Ballet Theatre Ohio under the direction of Jill and Christopher Neils. She is a co-founder and member of Columbus Moving Company and a member of the dual-city company, Kristina Isabelle Dance Co. In addition to performing, Gabrielle is the dance teacher at Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School and is pursuing a masters degree in Educational Administration from OSU.

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## The Choreographers



**Catherine Meredith** is the rehearsal director and resident choreographer for the Dancing Wheels Company. Her choreography has also been commissioned by Ohio Northern University, Verb Ballets, & The University of Akron and presented at the American Dance Festival, White Wave D.U.M.B.O. Dance Festival (NYC), Jennifer Muller's HATCH series, Cleveland City Hall, The Museum of Natural History, Cleveland Public Theater, E.J. Thomas Hall, Cain Park, and the Freed Center. Most recently, Ms. Meredith will present her newest solo at AIAWVA Dance Festival in India. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BFA in dance from The University of Akron, and received her MFA in dance from the ADF/Hollins University.



**Crystal Michelle**, choreographer and multimedia artist, is DCDC's Associate Artistic Director and an APAP Leadership Fellow. In 2014, she was recognized by the Ohio Arts Council for artistic merit in her body of work in which she often explores the cultural identity of black bodies in performance.



**Ricky Moore** received his dance training from notable teachers such as Bettye Brown Robinson, Barbara Simons, Dino Anderson, and Shir Lee Wu. Mr. Moore has helped establish several dance ministries and has served as choreographer for many church and community events, including Black Nativity, Nis Performing Arts, from 2007-2009.



**Alycia Ramos** is an Assistant Professor of Dance at Oberlin College. Prior, she worked as a dancer, choreographer and teaching artist in NYC for over a decade. Her work focuses on hybrid, intercultural and transnational contemporary movement practices. She holds an MFA in Dance from the University of Utah.

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# Research with Student Partners

## 5.1 Xenia



Role: Creator in collaboration with DANC 237 at Oberlin College

**Description:** *Xenia*, the title, taken from the ancient Greek word for hospitality, reimagines the Odysseus myth set in the 1970's with Odysseus returning home after Vietnam. The immersive dance comedy/drama unfolds as the audience, playing the part of the uninvited suitors in our production arrives at an abandoned house on campus repurposed for the show. Entering from either the front or back doors the audience enters into the world of Penelope, Telemachus and the maids (sisters in our production) turned upside down by the cultural revolution and Odysseus' long absence. Each audience member has a unique journey through the show, seeing different scenes and in different orders as they share in the lives of Penelope, Telemachus & his sisters as they wonder whether Odysseus will ever return and if their lives will ever be the same again. **Length:** 60 min

**Credits:** Performers, Zach Arfa, Sofia Atterbery, Micaela Birzio Piroli, Lynn Jiao, Georgiana Johnson, Louisa Lee, Bailey McWilliams Woods, Celia Morris, Sarah Nathanson, Kierra Nguyen, Anne Pinkerton, Louise Wurzelbacher, Carolyn Zhao. Lighting, Max Robinson.

**Venue:** Big Blue, abandoned house, 148 South Professor Street, Oberlin, Ohio.

**Dates:** December 9 & 14, 2018

*Alysia Ramos* Address: 206 Shipherd Circle Oberlin, OH 44074 Email: [aramos@oberlin.edu](mailto:aramos@oberlin.edu) Phone: (646)942-8729

Cover photograph by Kierra Nguyen  
Program design by Sarah Nathanson

# Xenia

148 South Professor Street  
December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018



**OBERLIN**  
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

## Xenia

Written and Directed by Alysia Ramos  
Light Designed by Max Robinson

CONCEIVED, CHOREOGRAPHED, AND PERFORMED BY:

Zach Arfa  
Sophia Attebery  
Lynn Jiao  
Georgie Johnson  
Louisa Lee  
Bailey McWilliams-Woods  
Celia Morris  
Sarah Nathanson  
Kierra Nguyen  
Anne Pinkerton  
Micaela Pirzio-Biroli  
Louise Wurzelbacher  
Carolyn Zhao

### Special Thanks to:

Laurel Kirtz  
Kate Harvey  
Joshua Trowbridge  
Adrian Bautista  
Meredith Raimondo  
The Oberlin College Safety & Security Staff  
The Oberlin College Dance Department  
Daniel R. James  
Alberto Denis  
Myles Reilly  
Kirk Ormand





## 5.2 Limbo



Role: Choreographer & Teacher

**Description:** *Limbo* was created in 2006 after a research trip to Dakar where I studied the Senegalese dance Sabar and how it had become untethered from its historical connection to the ancient spiritual practice N'dep. The work imagined an ancestral spirit unable to return to the terrestrial realm since the silencing of the drum. The choreography places the highly percussive dance to a spacious, melodic score sung by Baaba Maal. Originally a solo, in the restaging of this work I shared with students my choreography and approach to creative research. I also, took advantage of the larger cast to reimagine the concept across multiple bodies resulting in markedly different piece.

**Credits:** Performed by 12 Contemporary III students

**Venue:** End of Semester showing, Warner Main, Oberlin, Ohio

**Date:** Dec. 3, 2017.

**Length:** 6 min

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/276794520/3713409bcd>

## 5.3 such is me



Role: Choreographer & Teacher

**Description:** The original version of this work was a solo that integrated many distinct dance idioms into a playful idiosyncratic portrait of my movement background. When it was restaged with the students, I expanded on the original choreography to include their distinct movement signatures – enlarging the portrait to encompass our class’ collective moving identity.

**Credits:** Performed by 12 Contemporary III students.

**Venue:** End of Semester Showing, Warner Main, Oberlin, Ohio

**Date:** Dec. 3, 2017

**Length:** 6min

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/276910230/e045631fbc>

## 5.4 Samba



Role: Choreographer & sometimes performer

**Description:** I have made numerous Samba choreographies over the years. The above picture is of the Oberlin Samba School Student Club after a performance at Cleveland Carnival at Shooters in 2018. I have also made Samba choreographies for the Cleveland based group SambAmor and for The Oberlin Samba School to perform at Big Parade, The FireFish Festival, Cleveland Carnival, Brazilian Night at the Sco, The Student Dance Showcase, the Afro-Brazilian Cultural Initiative and numerous end-of-the semester showings. In all my samba choreography I seek to faithfully represent the tradition of samba by showcasing excellent technique and joyful celebration. In addition, my work in samba boldly embraces the possibilities of the samba ethos, to create a community that promotes excellence in dance and music, intercultural understanding, radical inclusivity, body positivity, social critique and empowered sexual expression.

I include two samples below.

**Video/Vermilion Concert:** <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2190528191195017>

**Video/Student Dance Showcase:** <https://vimeo.com/manage/276644263/general>



OBERLIN SAMBA SCHOOL

*Grupo*  
**Oberlinho**

*Live from Cleveland*  
**PAULO COSIA TRIO**

*música popular brasileira*  
**NOITE BRASILEIRA**  
*choro bossa nova*

sat. may 5 at 10pm  
at the *Seo*

*música popular brasileira*  
*choro bossa nova*

**FIREFISH** FESTIVAL 2018

SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup> & 22<sup>ND</sup>

LORAIN, OHIO



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## 5.5 River that Never Rests



Role: Choreographer & Performer

**Description:** River That Never Rests was made as a creative response to my research trip to Brazil in January 2017. It was a dance travelogue, a collection of found movements, sensations, and structures as well as specific social and spiritual dances. It is an homage to the restless, rich and continually evolving cultural movement of Afro-Brazilian creative expression. This piece was the first investigation into the movement vocabulary that would be part of my film *Becoming Oxum*.

**Credits:** Performed by Alysia Ramos, Akane Little and David Rafael Zager. Music by Omar Sosa. Lighting by Daniel James

**Venue(s):** Spring Back Concert in Warner Main, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio

**Dates:** April 6-9, 2017

**Length:** 6 min

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/221296457/457b13b01b>

## 5.6 Interplay



Role: Conductor & Performer

**Description:** Inspired by the late Butch Morris' method for conducting orchestras, Interplay utilized a language of gestures to spontaneously compose dances in real time. Skilled improvisers create original dance works with the silently guiding hands of a conductor. This performance featured 12 undergraduate students and took place at

**Credits:** 12 undergraduate students from Oberlin College, Music by Patrick Graney and Carson Fratus

**Venue(s):** The Firefish Festival in Lorain, Ohio

**Dates:** September 17, 2016

**Length:** 25min

**Video/Firefish excerpt:** <https://vimeo.com/229169861/560673581e>

## 5.7 But a Drop



Role: Choreographer & Teacher

**Description:** "but a drop" was about seeking peace within our turbulent and unpredictable lives. The movement draws on practices such as yoga, meditation, dance, and improvisation that cultivate attunement both within the self and with the wide world. The piece was created in collaboration with the 23 dancers of Contemporary 3 as a reflection of their work. It is itself a practice, an attempt and an offering. It is "but a drop" in the ocean of our experience, but one which has been consciously invoked through our collective action and presence.

**Credits:** 23 Students from Contemporary 3, Music by Terrence Blanchard and Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah

**Venue(s):** Spring Back, Warner Main, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH

**Dates:** April 7-9, 2016

**Length:** 7min 50sec

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/163117476/25c9a66bba>

## 5.8 Violets Like Castanets



Role: Choreographer & Teacher

**Description:** This piece follows a solo dancer on a journey through different worlds - witnessing from the shadows, following in footsteps and echoing the essences of those met along the way. This piece is a compilation of movement exercises and phrases studied in contemporary technique level 2. It was made to offer a performance experience to the technique students and provide them with an example of how one might bring disparate material together to make something new and whole. The movement is a montage of techniques and styles from Latin Dance, West African, Flamenco, modern dance and ballet. Some of the material was learned from flamenco guest artist Nino de los Reyes, solo material was created by the dancers from improvisation scores.

**Credits:** 13 Students from Contemporary 2, Music by Nitin Sawney & Ojos de Brujo

**Venue(s):** Fall Forward Concert, Warner Main, Oberlin College, Oberlin Ohio

**Dates:** Nov. 13-14, 2015

**Length:** 8min 50sec

**Video:** <https://vimeo.com/165189985/9b89c9e017>