Welcome

by DANCERS’ GROUP STAFF

How are you doing? What's 2019 been like for you? Are you ready to leave this decade behind?

Do you hope for significant changes in 2020? There will be changes, there's always changes; bring on the changes; we're ready for some changes.

As this year and decade draws to a conclusion Dancers’ Group staff has been asking ourselves a variety of questions—including those about change. Other questions we’re asking are: how are we doing? what opportunities do we imagine will take place over the next year or so?

Wayne Hazzard—Sharing with you has been fun. Sharing is a creative act and this input creates opportunities to fulfill desires. 2019 has affirmed my belief in the power of participating through meetings, attending presentations, and advocating for more resources for dance. These deeply engaging activities enable me to further reflect on how our creative impulses reveal limitless responses. Each inform how we can continue to be open, and share more. I'm looking forward to sharing more in 2020.

Andréa Spearman—2019 feels like the mark of change. Having experienced an extreme loss this year, I take value in acknowledging all accomplishments, big or small. 2019 has been such a busy year for my fledgling dance company (A. Spearman & Co.) with many performances and workshops and I’ve been saying that I’m “happily exhausted” all year. What makes you happily exhausted? Has what the year brought to you that made you run and hustle and compartmentalize and keel over in joy? And how can you keep that joy going in 2020? Set that coffee date with an old friend. Schedule a meeting with your mentor. Take that class that challenges your body and scrambles your brain. 2020 is the chance to renew friendships and relationships that bring you joy and keep you “happily exhausted”.

Katie Taylor—it seems that every year lasts forever and is paradoxically gone in the blink of an eye, and 2019 was no different. “Transformation” and “gratitude” are the words that best represent my 2019. I started the year trying to survive a toxic work environment and struggling to see what my professional future could be. In the spring I decided to leave that job without a clear plan (a scary but very worthwhile choice that I highly recommend). My teaching practice made that change possible. I had classes and students to keep me focused and to help pay bills during the transition. In the summer, I started working with Dancers’ Group, getting to focus my professional energy toward dance. I am grateful to have found a place to work that supports and celebrates the time I dedicate to teaching and dancing. This professional shift has given me a sense of returning and recentering, connecting the various parts of my life back to dance, the thing I love to do the most. I started the year under stress and full of worry, and I am grateful to be ending the year with a sense of ease and joy.

How are you doing?
Artistic Director Mariana Sobral and Assistant Director and Company Manager Susannah Faulkner discussed their company eMotion Arts with Dancers’ Group. eMotion Arts is a contemporary ballet company in their second season with a mission of spreading a message of Oneness through dance. The company’s goal is to create and showcase a substantive body of work that highlights and celebrates Oneness by bringing together dancers, artists, and their unique styles.

How did dance enter your life? (when, where)
Mariana: For me, it was a typical start. When I was five years old in Argentina I saw Baryshnikov’s Nutcracker on TV, and I fell in love. I wanted to do what I saw on the screen, but I didn’t start dance classes for six more years. Eventually my mother was able to figure out how to make dance classes work financially, and I started movement classes first. I didn’t start ballet classes until I was 11 years old. I have tried every artistic expression you can imagine, and I think dance stuck because it was the way I was most authentically able to express myself.

Susannah: It was similar for me. On my first birthday I went to see The Nutcracker in my hometown, Erie, Pennsylvania, and I haven’t stopped dancing since. I started creative movement classes when I was four years old.

Please share any stories about your relationship to dance.
Mariana: Mariana has a background in social psychology, and I have a background in public policy and advocacy (specifically youth mental health advocacy). Dance gives expression beyond the other parts of our lives. Having different abilities and capabilities are not always embraced in ballet, but everyone at eMotion Arts comes together around the belief that everything we do can relate to dance. That’s really our collective relationship to dance as a company.

Mariana: I believe that dance can be a refuge, and when I’m dancing I can be me, but when I was getting started I felt like I had to choose between ballet or modern (I couldn’t do both). When I started I had a typical ballerina look (you could even tell I was a ballet dancer when I was walking). Because of that I was hard to break into modern—teachers would tell me that I looked too much like a ballet dancer. Again, Mikhail Baryshnikov was a big inspiration for me when he started doing more modern dance. He showed that it was ok for ballet dancers to do modern, and it was ok for modern dancers to have ballet training. Dance was a way to find what acceptance truly meant at a young age and that inspired the creation of eMotion Arts.

What do you do outside/beyond dance (how do you spend other parts of your life)?
Mariana: I have two Marianas: the social psychologist and dancer and the bookkeeper and HR professional. I work in tech and aerospace and I’ve always taught dance. I teach every day. I think of myself as an artist who does bookkeeping, an artist that does HR. I am not a bookkeeper who dances. Everything I do is part of who I am, but my way of thinking and how I approach things is rooted in a creative way. I try to bring all aspects of myself together as much as I can.

Susannah: For all of my 20s I was trying to make myself into a public policy advocate and researcher and let dance become a hobby. I was always teaching, doing gigs and freelance work, but I could never quite let dance become a hobby. Now I say I’m an artist and an advocate. I find a way to bring dance into whatever I’m doing. I’ve learned that there are some things that you can’t escape because it’s so fundamental to who you are, and for me dance is fundamental to who I am. Now I’m trying to integrate it all together.

Describe eMotion Arts’ work or choreographic style.
Mariana: I call our style contemporary ballet because it has such a strong ballet influence. We use the language of ballet to explore new themes that ballet has not traditionally worked as. I strongly believe that we need to bring ballet into 2019, especially through the themes being explored. eMotion Arts works on topics like immigration, mental health, acceptance, and oneness. We’re trying to break from ballet’s demand for uniformity into oneness where we can all dance together without losing ourselves by trying to look exactly the same as the dancers around us. I think of this idea in the same way as English speakers don’t just keep writing Lord Byron and Shakespeare. We can be current. In exploring these tough themes we can give the audience seeds of ideas and provoke conversations.
Our work speaks to audiences in different ways, and I want each audience member to be able to see themselves in the work in some way.

What are you currently working on? Mariana: Our December show is the end of our second season. We’re showing some work we’ve been exploring over these last two years and bringing in some friends to perform.

One piece you’ll see at our December show is an excerpt of our full-length work Unfit, which touches on acceptance, compassion, and oneness and the lack of these. We explore how these ideas impact our relationships.

In Act of the Dreamer we explore the soul journey of an immigrant. We look at the full journey, from the moment the immigrant decides to leave a place that is known and comfortable and come to a place that is unfamiliar. The piece looks at how you try to adapt to a new environment and society without losing yourself. We ask how much individuality can you keep without ostracizing yourself? These themes are broader than the immigrant experience and are really rooted in transitions and adjustments, so it’s relatable to any audience member.

We’re also showing Tanguera, a piece about shedding stereotypes, and Sombrero, a piece based on the poet Alfonsina Storni who committed suicide by walking into the ocean. These pieces will also be the starting places for our work in our third season next year.

Susannah: Adagio is a new collaboration with Mariana on the organizational side of things. I have a background in grant writing, and our future goal is to secure a grant to put on a full show of Act of the Dreamer. We got to present it for West Wave at Joe Goode Annex and Zoha Performance Series in Palo Alto this year. Act of the Dreamer is such a special piece, and the dancers have taken it to the next level. We’re working to bring together other Bay Area choreographers who are immigrants, refugees, and people of color to have a dance forum on immigration.

Who or what inspires you? Susannah: I work closely with Mariana on the organizational side of things. I have a background in grant writing, and our future goal is to secure a grant to put on a full show of Act of the Dreamer. We got to present it for West Wave at Joe Goode Annex and Zoha Performance Series in Palo Alto this year. Act of the Dreamer is such a special piece, and the dancers have taken it to the next level. We’re working to bring together other Bay Area choreographers who are immigrants, refugees, and people of color to have a dance forum on immigration.

Susannah: The human experience in general. For a long time I was just teaching and wanted to have a company. Joe Landini gave me space to get started. I get inspiration from feelings, from stories, and from music in general and from the dancers in the moment. Act of the Dreamer came about after I spoke with a friend who is a composer who put music to a poem of a DACA student. In the process of creating I allow myself to connect with the music, the moment, the dancers that I have, and what I want to say. It’s the creative human experience.

Susannah: I was at a concert, and one of the performers played a new piece on a violin. After the concert I asked the artist to use her music, and we’re meeting next week to collaborate. I’ve had this piece in my mind about youth climate resistance, and I was waiting for music to breathe. The prescient can be so inspiring. We did a piece with a visual artist all about how ideas come to you, and how as artists we conduct for ideas. I think we have a duty to each other, to humanity, and to the planet to express inspiration when it strikes. I’m so grateful to see people expressing their inspiration.

Susannah: My grandfather used to always remind me to “wait for the right fit and you’ll know.”

Do you have a favorite song or type of music to dance to? Mariana: It depends on my mood. I love tangos, jazz, musicals, and good flamenco style guitar. I have a tendency to prefer music that is soothing. I love to work with Max Richter’s music for choreography.

Susannah: Our warm up playlists are all over the place. Luzio has had a big obsession lately. I love classical covers of alternative rock songs, and I did a piece to Florence and the Machine. As a group it really depends on our mood. We have such a collective group energy at this point, we can usually tell what kind of music is right for the moment.

What’s a piece of advice that you still hold onto? Susannah: Two pieces of advice from my mom that have really stuck with me: “if you don’t have anything nice to say then don’t say it” and “make sure your words are sweet in case you have to swallow them back down.” It makes me take a pause when I want to hit back and remembering this advice helps me not to recycle bad energy. The other advice that I hold onto is that “it’s ok.” It’s ok that we don’t have the same point of view. My experience is not your experience and that’s ok. I’m not you and you are not me and that’s ok. This advice helps me stop trying to control everything in my life. The only thing I can control is how things affect and define me.
Cherie Hill: A Day in the Life

by Lashon A. Daley

As a Black-dance scholar and dancer, I recently became curious about the methods and stamina—or shall I say “hustle”—that is required in order to maintain dance and dance scholarship as a top priority in my life. As a guest dancer in Hill’s newest work, Sho-Vere, I had the opportunity to sit down with her after a recent rehearsal and receive insight into her daily hustle.

This is a day in her life.

Saturday, September 21, 2019

6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.

Cherie spends the first hour of her day meditating. She sits up quietly on her bed after waking, focusing on inner light and sound. She has been practicing these principles of Sufi Shīrāzī Yoga for nearly twenty years. Nearly twenty minutes in, her mind finally begins to rest.

7:30 a.m.

Her cell phone alarm rings and she shifts to turn it off. She prepares herself a green tea, but not today.

7:30 a.m.

Cherie takes a shower and brushes her teeth. She stands in front of her dresser and pulls out comfortable pants to move in, a tank top and a light sweater. She double checks that she has her keys, cell phone, water bottle, and wallet in her backpack. She has two other bags for the family dance classes she will teach today filled with two signs, a stereo, tablet, CDs, pens, the lesson, a small dish of tomatoes, a pitcher, scones, and cookies for props.

8:10 a.m.

She spends the next few minutes reviewing the plans for the day with her partner of twenty-one years, Ithiel. Their 13-year-old son, Urijah, not only needs to be driven to his soccer game but also needs a ride to join his friend for their first big concert tonight at the JB's on Mission. They decide to make him worth it.

8:15 a.m.

Similar to her morning, Cherie is back to packing her bags for the next day's rehearsals and photo shoots. She packs some of the costumes for her dancers, her tablet, her journal full of rehearsal notes, a portable projector, makeup, and lots of hair ties. She tests her dancers to remind them about rehearsal and photo shoots. She then maps out her plans for her second rehearsal at UWF while Ithiel goes to pick up Urijah. Cherie revises in the minutes of alone time and jumps around her house with the last bit of her energy.

10:00 a.m.

Before falling asleep Cherie reminds herself that despite how full the next day will be, she will enjoy the moment, take it one step at a time, be present, and breathe. She feels extremely busy, but the artistic opportunities she's engaged in make it worth it.

Cherie promises Sho-Vere, a multi-media piece inspired by drifting water, land, ancestors, bravery, and eco-feminism, this December is worth it.

2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

With snacks in hand, Cherie and Ithiel prepare for next Saturday's lesson. They debrief about what they experienced with the families and plan the lesson for next week. By the time they pack it up, it is nearly an hour and a half later, and Cherie sends Ithiel a message to let him know she's ready. She responds to emails while she waits.

3:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.

As they head home, they drive near the crowds heading towards the Coliseum. Cherie imagines Urijah flying in the midst of the crowd—her young son amongst those young adults. She remembers him in the car earlier and reminisces about the clothes he had on and the confidence he was wearing. A rush of sentiment comes over her as she realizes the gratitude of the moment—her son is growing up and she is grateful to be able to witness it.

4:15 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Cherie and Ithiel settle into home-life. After meditating for twenty minutes to wash away the day's stresses, Cherie heads to the kitchen to make herself a late lunch—a vegan cheese quesadilla with avocado. She relaxes while watching a few episodes of Caribbean Life and daydreams about one day opening up a bed and breakfast/artist residency on a Caribbean island somewhere.

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Cherie begins preparing for Sho-Vere’s rehearsal the next morning. They have a show-in-progress on Wednesday, and Cherie needs to solidify the work's sections and order. She calls Iman, the piece’s video artist, about video edits. She texts back and forth with Braion about the music for the piece. Moving around her living room, she shifts between marking the choreography and taking notes. She is unsure about the section transitions but mentally maps out what she thinks will work for Wednesday’s showing.

8:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

Ithiel tells Cherie that dinner is ready and they can eat the two of them. After dinner, they tidy up various parts of the house, mixed in with resting and daydreaming.

9:15 p.m. to 10:45 p.m.

Similar to her morning, Cherie is back to packing her bags for the next day's rehearsals and photo shoots. She packs some of the costumes for her dancers, her tablet, her journal full of rehearsal notes, a portable projector, makeup, and lots of hair ties. She tests her dancers to remind them about rehearsal and photo shoots. She then maps out her plans for her second rehearsal at UWF while Ithiel goes to pick up Urijah. Cherie revises in the few moments of alone time and jumps around her house with the last bit of her energy.

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Discovering the Power and Ability to Take Action
by MEGAN LOWE

I AM DEEPLY IMMERSED in contact improvisation and site-specific dance—exploring the possibilities/capabilities of my body in relationship to other bodies and in relationship to space/architecture. I crave the feeling of earth in my core, sensing the ground through my dance partner’s core, and feeling the gravitational center of an object. Even now, as I write this, I get little butterflies in my stomach, alluding to that connection of center to move and to be moved, and respond to and exist as a response; to be thrilled by surprise, yet ready for anything. Clashing, falling, and folding into and out of floors, walls, windows, stairs, ledges, edges, and bodies, I test the laws of physics diligently. I am on a never-ending search for new discoveries through proficient movement generation, tackling unfamiliar physical situations and coming up with compelling solutions. It feels strange writing about this thing I love so much, instead of just doing it. When I get up and dance. But as I sit here, I am reminded that I am constantly moving and connecting—my dance practice informs everything I do and how I interact with the world.

The way my body makes slight adjustments to stay standing on a train that jerks to start and stop. The instinct that kicks in for me to counterbalance, gaining a little more length to obtain something that was just out of reach. The recruiting of my entire body to lift heavy objects in a safe and sustainable way. The ability I have to fall with little impact, working with gravity instead of against it. I recall a time when I was traveling fast on my bike and the front tire got stuck in a grate, flipping the bike in the air and launching me off it. Amazingly, I was able to land safely, with my backpack still on, and everything intact. Often in these moments, I find myself thinking, “Wow! Good thing I’m a dancer.” Never did I imagine that I would need to call upon my skills as a dancer during a life-threatening assault.

Potentially Triggering Story:
At 4 a.m. on December 30, 2018, my partner and I were woken by a woman screaming for help next door. We opened our window, and saw her and another stranger being assaulted. We yelled at the man attacking them to stop, but the violence continued. As my partner called the police, I ran to the front door. When I opened it, I noticed the attacker had started bludgeoning the male victim with a fire extinguisher—it was clear to me in this moment that he was trying to kill them, that these victims were just trying to get away, and that there was no time to wait for the police to arrive—so I made a split-second decision and urged the victims to come into our home for protection.

It was like a horror movie—the victims hobbled down the sidewalk while their attacker slowly walked behind them, knowing he could easily catch up. I remember thinking there was no way they were going to make it up the stairs before their attacker did, but the victims made it into our home and slammed and locked the door behind them. The male victim was bleeding profusely from his head, face, and leg, and he had been stabbed multiple times. While my partner was on the phone with the police, our roommate and I looked for things to stop the bleeding. Then the attacker started breaking down our door. My partner went to hold the door while the victims hid in the bathroom. We tried to reason with the attacker, but to no avail. No human words came from him, just screaming, growling, and roaring. Then the enraged man broke our window with the fire extinguisher. There was glass everywhere.

The Ability to Take Action: Feet firmly planted, knees bent, hands tightly gripping a table near the broken window, I harnessed the power of the ground and felt its connection to my core and my connection to the object’s center, and I threw the large, heavy table up in one fell swoop to block the window.

The Ability to Take Action: As the door started coming of the hinges, I ran to help my partner hold the door. Firmly planting my feet into the floor again, I channelled that power through my legs, my torso, my arms, and pressed my entire being into the one thing between us and this unsee, but very much felt and heard attacker.

The Ability to Take Action: Through the cracks of the door, the attacker unloaded the contents of the fire extinguisher into our home. The chemicals made it hard to breathe and see. All I could do at that point was sense through my skin, muscle, and bone, trying to maintain functionality. The door completely detached from the frame and became a floating shield. I could feel the floor through my partner’s core via the door. Coordination become a necessity, as I could not press too hard or too little at the wrong moment, or the door would flip. I also had to react accordingly to the volatile entity off the other side with no way to visually predict what he was going to do next. This was a feat of deeply physical listening to my ally, and to my enemy, through a large object.

The Ability to Take Action: The attacker’s hands and legs started lousing their way as he kept slamming the door and ended up successfully pushing through, bursting his way into our home. I was the first point of contact; his hands grabbed at my face, and ripped at the insides of my mouth. All I could think of was getting this intruder out of our home, and that I needed to continue to push back without being overaken—a harsh negotiation of balance. Our roommate pulled the attacker off me. Then my partner pulled the attacker off our roommate, and towards the gaping exit. I rushed to get a tall stool, using its weight, density, and length to help push the intruder out. No longer able to use the stool in our narrow entryway, I threw it aside and went to rush the attacker.

The Ability to Take Action: We got the intruder out of our home, but as we did, he grabbed my head and attempted to throw me down the flight of stairs. While my partner was trying to get him off me, I counterbalanced against the attacker, pressing away from the railing with my left hand and sending my pelvis weight in the opposite direction of him, while holding his arm in place with my right hand so my hair did not completely rip out of my head. (Throughout my career as a dancer, I am constantly grateful for my understanding of how to use counterbalancing to aid my everyday life, but never more so than during this instance.) It felt like it took forever for the police to arrive, but they made it in this moment. They had to tase the attacker multiple times to get him to stop. Even after they fully restrained him, we could see that he kept fighting and trying to come back. I have never seen someone so enraged and out of control. Once the attacker was apprehended, the police questioned us outside in the cold, with nothing on but our torn, blood-smeared pajamas. We were then released to return to our broken home that was filled with glass, wood shards, chemical residue, hair, and blood—to figure out what to do next all on our own.

This is the most traumatic event that has occurred in my life. I never thought that saving two strangers would have resulted in such a brutal attack on our household. As a result, our door and window were destroyed, and our flooring had to be completely ripped out due to blood contamination. We were out of our home for three weeks while repairs were being made. We had to replace much of our furniture and belongings. We continue needing to take time off work, have meetings, manage paperwork and bills, and attend medical appointments. However, the psychological impact of this event has been the most difficult to deal with. At least I can take solace in the fact that everyone is alive; a couple months later I received a letter from one of the victims:

Megan was a complete stranger who saved her own life to save two random people in her home. She didn’t even know us and saw us as people to help us, but out of the kindness of her heart she did. There were plenty of other neighbors who could have come outside during all of the commotion, but Megan and her roommates were the only people who tried to help. I have no doubt in my mind that if she would have waited any longer, or just stood and watched like the other people around, I wouldn’t be the one to take out what was the scariest thing that has ever happened to me.

Continued on pg 9

Photo by Sebastian Arrua
Photo by John Constrant

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Epiphany Dance Theater

Z Space, SF
Rock & Mortar explores the links between people and place. An all-women cast will lead audiences on a path in and around Z Space. The ensemble includes Heather Amett, Alurga Baustista, Huriya Bowers, Shaghayegh Cyrus, Kim Epifane, Jina Jackson, Inessa Kalen, Zee Klein, Jenny McAllister, Lucretia Palandrani and Kayumay Paz Suarez. Wed-Sat, Dec 4-7, 6:30pm and 8:30pm, Sun, Dec 8, 4pm, $30.
epiphanydance.org

Cherie Hill IrieDance and Gabriel Christian & Chibueze Crouch

Counterpulse, SF
Join CounterPulse for new community-driven, multimedia dance works by Cherie Hill IrieDance and Gabriel Christian/Chibueze Crouch that examine ecofeminism and religion through the lens of African diasporic narratives. Thu-Sat, Dec 5-7 and 14-16, 8pm, $20-35, and pay-what-you-can Thursday.
counterpulse.org

San Francisco State University

McKenna Theater SFSU, SF
PASSION FOOTPRINTS: New Moves Student Choreography Showcase presents the works of the advanced choreography students, focusing on the themes that are close to their hearts and inflame their creative processes. Thu-Sat, Dec 5-7, 7pm; Sun, Dec 8, 2pm, $10.
theatredance.sfsu.edu

Scott Wells & Dancers

Dance Mission Theater, SF
Presenting three new works: In Muscle Memory, a deep dive into physical puzzles while treading on the surface of shared ancestry. Quick Twitch, an ensemble work exploring social forces and human catastrophes; features Mira Barakat, Megan Lowe, Kristen Radford, Scott Wells, Shira Yafi, and surprise guest appearances. Thu-Sat, Dec 5-7, 8pm; Sun, Dec 8, 7pm, $20-35.
scottwellsdance.com

Emotion Arts

SAFEhouse for the Performing Arts, SF
This performance marks the culmination of Emotion Arts’ second season, directed by Mariana Sobral. The concert combines diverse voices to deepen our stories and ask the audience to reflect on current events and how our reactions to them can define us as individuals and as a society. Fri-Sat, Dec 6-7, 8pm, $15-20.
safehousearts.org

ODC Pilot Program

ODC Dance Commons, SF
ODC presents Pilot 22: Matchstick, an evening of new works by six emerging Bay Area choreographers. Sat, Dec 7, 8pm; Sun, Dec 8, 4pm and 8pm, $15.
ods.dance

Cairo Cabaret

El Valenciano Restaurant & Bar, SF
Cairo Cabaret includes live Arabic music, dance performances by Paray Dance, Abigail Kayes Dance, Janelle Rodriguez, Rachel Duff, Tina Venessa, Kayla Belly Dance, and special guest dancers, and Middle Eastern food and drinks. Thu, Dec 12, 8pm, $10-15.
caire-cabaret.square.site

Rhea Speights and STEAMROLLER Dance Company

SAFEhouse for the Performing Arts, SF
Dances for Ironing is Rhea Speights’ latest work that elevates the supposedly insignificant with a series of small, overlapping dances. STEAMROLLER’s latest work and Extraordinary is an immersive, interactive dance theater performance. Fri-Sat, Dec 13-14, 8pm, $15-25.
safehousearts.org

Ultimate Alliance Dance Company and Strong Pulse Dance Crew

City College of San Francisco Wellness Center
eventbrite.com

LINES Ballet | Training Program

Dance Mission Theater, SF
This versatile evening will feature a collection of new works by nine Bay Area dance companies. The evening will include: FullWell Ensemble, Rising Rhythm, Velvet, Desert Jewels, George Washington High, and Skorpio. Fri-Sat, Dec 13-14, 8pm, $20.
linesballet.org

Mborgui Square Festival

Various locations
Organized by Kiandanda Dance Theater, the Mbongui Square Festival is an interdiscipli- nary arts and multicultural community project that gathers dance, music, visual arts and spoken word artists of varied styles, from the Bay Area and across the world. The Festival reflects the community’s desire to strengthen the concept of Community through the arts. Dec 15-21, 6mua and more.
bmonguisquare.org
**Holiday Treats**

**Smuin Contemporary Ballet**

Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts

The Christmas Ballet features two acts with both classical ballet and festive contemporary numbers, including time-honored favorites and brand-new surprises set to holiday tunes and incorporating ballet, tap, jazz, and swing. Special addition: This year, Smuin will present an extra LGBT+ performance in San Francisco only, with special guest Lady Camden in the role of “Santa Baby.” Thu-Sun, Dec 12–23, various times, $25–97. smuinballet.org

**Ballet Folklórico México Danza**

San Leandro Performing Arts Center

This holiday season experience Ballet Folklórico México Danza’s 8th annual Nutcracker Pájaro, a tradition infused with Mexican folklore. Nutcracker Pájaro takes Clara on a journey to different regions in México where she discovers beautiful dances and exciting celebrations. Sun, Dec 1, 3pm, $15-$45. mexicoofolanza.com

**ODC/Dance**

YBCA Theater, SF

Told through music, dance, and a powerful narrative, The Velveteen Rabbit celebrates the unique relationship between a little boy and his stuffed rabbit, and the enduring power of love. Thu-Fri, Dec 5-6, 2pm; Sat, Dec 7, 7pm and 9pm; Sun, Dec 8, 1pm & 3pm, $15-$40. odcdance.org

**Mark Foehring Dance Project/SF**

Cowell Theatre, SF

Mark Foehring’s Nutcracker Sweats is a 60-minute version of the Nutcracker specifically designed for families with young children. The production features a 5-piece chamber orchestra, with music direction by Michael Morgan. Sat-Sun, Dec 7-8, 11am and 1pm, $12-$30. sfopqsf.com

**“Black Diamond Ballet”**

Creative Arts Building, Pittsburg

Black Diamond Ballet returns for the 8th year with Sharon Sobel idu’s version of The Nutcracker, the only full-length version in Contra Costa County that features professional dancers, students and community performers. Sat, Dec 7-7pm; Sun, Dec 8-3pm, $20–$40. blackdiamondballet.org

**Stapleton Ballet**

Marin Veteran’s Memorial Auditorium, San Rafael

Now in its 12th year, Stapleton Ballet’s Nutcracker production features inspired dancing, exquisite costumes and lavish sets, with over 350 dancers from the Stapleton School of Performing Arts. complimentary meet-and-greet with costumed characters after 1pm matinees. Sat, Dec 7, 3pm and 5pm, $26-33. stapletonschool.org

**San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band**

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater, SF

Dance-Along Nutcracker® started in 1985 as a fundraiser for the LGBT+ community and has evolved into the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band’s signature annual event. Dance-Along Nutcracker blends Tchaikovsky’s The Nutcracker with contemporary music in a new show each year, encouraging the audience to become part of the show whenever the “Dance-Along” sign illuminates. Accessible to families of any configuration. Sat, Dec 1, 3pm and 7pm, Sun, Dec 2, 11am and 3pm, $35–92. dancealognutcracker.org

**San Francisco Ballet**

San Francisco War Memorial Opera House

Helen Tomasson’s Nutcracker returns to the SF Opera House. A special 75th anniversary commemorative book will be made free of charge to all guests. Passport Performances offer an enhanced Nutcracker experience at extra cost, treating guests to plush toy prizes, costumed character greetings, a keepsake mini passport, free treats at intermissions, and carriers in the lobby, all within the price of admission. Wed-Sun, Dec 11-23, various showtimes, $25-299. sfballet.com

**Sminu Contemporary Ballet**

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater, SF

The Christmas Ballet features two acts with both classical ballet and festive contemporary numbers, including time-honored favorites and brand-new surprises set to holiday tunes and incorporating ballet, tap, jazz, and swing. Special addition: This year, Smuin will present an extra LGBT+ performance in San Francisco only, with special guest Lady Camden in the role of “Santa Baby.” Thu-Sun, Dec 12–23, various times, $25–97. smuinballet.org

**The New Ballet**

Hammer Theatre Center, San Jose

Presented in partnership with History San Jose, The San Jose Nutcracker tells the well-loved story of Clara and the Nutcracker, while featuring historical references to the heritage that has made Santa Clara Valley the center of innovation. The New Ballet Orchestra, led by Thomas Rhoobottom, accompanies the performances. Fri, Dec 13, 7-9pm, $39-$101.50. newballet.com

**Menlowe Ballet**

Molin–Atherton Performing Arts Center, Atherton

It’s a Wonderful Nutcracker combines the magic and awe of a traditional Nutcracker with inspiration from Frank Capra’s iconic 1946 film, It’s a Wonderful Life. An international cast features a roster of ballet artists and ballroom dancers. Fri, Dec 13, 7pm, Sat, Dec 14, 9pm and 7pm, Sun, Dec 15, 2:30pm, Sat, Dec 21, 1pm and 5pm, Sun, Dec 22, 2:30pm, $29–62. menloweballet.org

**Sacred Heart Men’s Club**

Sacred Heart Church, Saratoga

Kerry Irish Productions Presents An Irish Christmas taking you on a magical journey through Christmas in Ireland with super-dancing, singing and traditional Irish music celebrating the international spirit of the holiday season. Sat, Dec 14, 7–10pm, $40–910. Sacredheartsaratoga.tix.com

**Academy of Classical Ballet—CA**

Campbell Heritage Theatre

The Academy of Classical Ballet® celebrates the longest night of the year with A Winter Wonderland, which celebrates the season as well as the holiday spirit. Sat, Dec 14, 3pm, Sun, Dec 15, 1pm, $85–105. acadballet.com

**Marin Ballet**

Marin Veteran’s Memorial Auditorium, San Rafael

Lavalh victorian costumes and sets frame choreography by Julia Adam and a cast of over 150 local dancers in Marin Ballet’s Nutcracker. Most costumed characters are immediately follow- ing 1pm performances. Sat, Dec 14, 12pm and 1pm, $25–845. marinballet.org

**Berkeley Ballet Theater**

Holy Names University, Oakland

Robbie Nichols and Sally Nations’ The Nutcracker features BWW’s bestision dancers as well as guest artists from around the Bay Area. Sugar Plum Fairy Parties available after select performances. Fri, Dec 20, 7pm, Sat, Dec 21, 11am, 3pm and 7pm, Sun, Dec 22, 11am and 3pm. UpSwing Aerial Dance Company

**Oakland Ballet Company**

Paramount Theatre, Oakland

The spirit of the holidays is brought to life with Oakland Ballet’s The Nutcracker presentation. Cheer on Marie and her soldiers as she rescues the Nutcracker Prince from the evil Rat King and then soar with dancing snowflakes to the Land of Sweets where luscious treats await. The Oakland Symphony along with the Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir bring Tchaikovsky’s magnificent score to life. Sat, Sun, Dec 21-22, 1pm and 5pm; Sun, Dec 22, 5pm, $42–99. oaklandballet.org

**Sminu Contemporary Ballet**

Sunset Center, Carmel By the Sea

The Christmas Ballet features two acts with both classical ballet and festive contemporary numbers, including time-honored favorites and brand-new surprises set to holiday tunes and incorporating ballet, tap, jazz, and swing. Fri, Dec 14, 7, 3pm, Sat, Dec 15, 9pm, $30. dandeliondancetheater.org

**Dandelion Dancetheater**

Dandelion Theater Studio, Oakland

Come find joy and community connection during a celebration of the Winter Solstice, the beginning of Hanukkah, and any other things that need some celebration with good food, inclusive community, and Ecstatic Jewish Dancing for all bodies led by Dandelion’s Bruce Berman. The Ecstatic Jewish dance will transform into an open-ended dance-party and music jam, Dandelion style. Wheelchair Accessible East Bay Venue (address shared with RSVP). Sat, Dec 21, 6pm. FREE. dandeliondancetheater.org
10 Tips to Consider When Working with a Lighting Designer

by ALLEN WILLNER

1. Communicating About Lighting for Dance

Lighting can be hard to communicate about since it’s such an abstract element. A great way to communicate about your lighting design needs is through photos, abstract images and descriptive words. Words like warm, cool, colorful, moody and stark are simple examples.

2. Get money and time out of the way

Be upfront about budget, scale of production, timeline/ dates and the amount of time you’d like the lighting designer to be in rehearsals with you.

Lighting designers tend to be flexible and will usually try to work within your budget, but it’s important to address the details early in the project rather than later. In the case that a designer is unable to work on the project they can also be a great resource for recommending other designers who might fit your project.

3. A First Meeting

If you’re working with a lighting designer for the first time, plan a phone or face to face meeting to talk about perspectives on light and to develop a language to communicate about light.

4. The Whole Picture

Include your lighting designer in conversations regarding set, visual design and projections. All of these elements will have an effect on the lighting design, and the lighting designer will probably have helpful thoughts as related to lighting/time/venue etc.

5. Plan for a Design Run

This is an important time for the designer to prepare their plot and cues for your show. Try to have as many elements present, represented for the run. This can include sets/ props, sound design, musicians, video and costumes (a sample of cues is fine).

6. Rehearsals and Sound Design

If you’d like your designer to come to rehearsals make sure that the sound design is accurate. It isn’t really useful to have a lighting designer see a run with no audio or with a different audio than the one you intend. Changes in sound design will likely impact/change the lighting designer’s design and plan.

7. Tech

In planning your technical rehearsals assume that the lighting designer will need to have time for the following (all of these will vary depending on venue and scale of show):
• lighting hang
• focus
• pre-record of cues
• cueing

The Lighting Designer can help with scheduling how time is allotted and what time is needed for your show.

8. Lighting Materials Budget

Plan a materials budget for lighting. This can range from $100 for gels to upwards of a few thousand dollars for rental items. The lighting designer can also help with planning financial projections in advance.

9. A Touring Package

Let your lighting designer know ahead of time if you have plans to tour the show. This will require a touring package which the designer can provide. A touring package usually comes with an added fee and would include the following:
• a lighting plot
• cues
• a board recording of the lighting cues from the show.
• a tech rider or audio with lighting requirements

10. Let your Designer Design

Having a good idea about what you want in a lighting design or even details around specific cues is great, but you should also allow the lighting designer some space to create. If you’re investing in a lighting design, it’s a good idea to let them do what you hired them for. Be mindful that they aren’t just a board operator or a technician.

ALLEN WILLNER is a lighting designer for Theater, Dance and Opera. He has lived and worked in San Francisco and New York as a Lighting Designer for 10 years. Locally he has designed for many Bay Area Dance companies including Erika Chang Shuch Performance Project,ubbyb, Gamlett Moulin Productions, Deborah Slater Dance Theater, Katie Faulkner’s Little Ceramic Dance Company, Kristin Damrow and Company, ABD Productions, Moving Ground, and Elypian Dance Theater.

Regional designs include The Arizona Theater Company, The Guthrie Theater, The Chicago MOMA, REDCAT, The Cleveland Public Theater, SFJazz Street Theater, Playmakers Repertory, Co, Brown University and The Philadelphia Theater Company. International designs include Dock 11, Potdalin Fabrique, PleiDeferg Berlin, Groping Opera House, Seoul Korea, and Berkeley Street Theater, Toronto, ON. Awards and nominations include: San Francisco TBA Award, Lighting Design Awards. WW-Player’s BoxOffice, Shotgun Players Eurydice, Theater of Euphoria’s This Lingerence Life, SF Playhouse’s The Obligation, Bay Area Critics Circle Lighting Design Nominations for The Shotgun Players Eurydice and Godli- Graf, Broadway World Lighting and Set Design Nomination for Symposium Theater’s Oration. She is a foundation festival semi-finalist, she’s now exploring the worlds of stage directing and lighting design.

2019 Stage Lighting Tech Fellows

For several years Black Choreographers Festival, Dance Mission, and Afro Urban Society have been working to expand opportu- nities for women and people of color in stage production. The Stage Lighting Tech Fellowship emerged from this work. The two-month fellowship is committed to creating accessible, profes- sional, and relevant skill sets for the fellows. They are mentored by Dance Mission Theater’s Technical Director Harry Rubick in introductory and intermediate basics of stage lighting. In its second year the number of participants doubled and the new cohort of fellows are:

Tyler Nuggincre is a futurist and activist who believes that all that is beautiful in this world is illuminated.

Saorsa Weaver is a 23 year old from San Francisco with a background in Art and Design. In her spare time she likes to read & make jewelry.

Tracy Baxter is an Oakland-based writer who will sing, dance, or act at the drop of a hat. She’s performed with Theater of Others and Ninjas of Drama in San Francisco.

A new playwright whose very first work, KLOOZ_D 2012, was a 2018 Bay Area Playwrights Foundation festival semi-finalist, she’s now exploring the worlds of stage directing and lighting design.

Oakland based drummer, dancer and performance artist. Nik Brown loves to explore rhythm through many avenues of creativity and exploration.

Shaunnah Ray is an Oakland native who is committed to applying her passion for the performing arts and expression to perpetuate activism in her communities. As a means to nurture her own creative outlets Shaunnah has found and is pursuing a growing interest in lighting design, a craft that she has been exploring at EastSide Cultural Center through EastSide’s Live Arts and Resistance Theater programming.

Kimberly Harvey-Scott’s passion for eclectic dance began at age eight. Her career started and evolved with Diamano Coura West African Dance Company in 2000. With this, she has been able to spread her message and volunteer her time and talent to Berkeley High students since 2008, as Stage Manager, counselor, and teaching movement and choreography.

Tanika Baptiste is a producer, actor, vocalist and entrepreneur. “The stage is my happy place.”

Destiny Evans is a black, non-binary androgynous femme. Their work is rooted in telling the stories and prioritizing the work/healing of queer and trans black folks.

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MAKE A STATEMENT.

MILLS
Discovering the Power and Ability to Take Action

Continued from pg 5

happened to me and I am forever in debt to Megan’s bravery. It takes a special kind of person to put someone else’s safety above your own, and that is what she did for my boyfriend and me.

This event took some extreme teamwork between my partner, roommate, and me. I attribute having healthy active bodies as a primary reason we were able to make it through this horrific moment without more damage and to help shield those in need from further harm. A deep dance practice centered in contact improvisation and site-specific work has provided me with this potential to take action. And as I continue to heal physically, financially, and emotionally, the process of creating dance with people I love has helped me work through some of this trauma and take steps forward.

In January 2019, I embarked on a dance project with two of my closest friends/collaborators (and phenomenal movers), Shira Yariv and Sonsheeré Giles, which we presented in August 2019. At first, I tried to avoid acknowledging what had happened. I wanted to just focus on making an energetic and virtuosic site-specific dance for Athletic Playground, that artfully activated ladders, planks, bars, mats, blocks, lofts, and walls, and that centered contact improvisation and dynamic partnering. It helped to draw my attention to something productive and positive. But at some point, I realized this incident was informing everything I was doing and that it was impossible to ignore. I was processing this traumatic event through the creation of this dance with two of the people I trust most. Why hide it? But also, how would I share this story without overwhelming viewers? What hopeful aspects could I highlight? How was everyone able to come out alive on the other side? How could this inspire people to move and act? I did not want to focus on narrative or reenactment, though there was one specific investigation we explored.

The Ability to Take Action: I put myself on the side of a large block (24”W x 48”L x 36”H) with the firm goal of pushing it to one side of the room, and asked Shira and Sonsheeré to be on the other side of that block, trying to push it to the opposite side of the room. It was similar to the action of having to hold a floating door between my home and the attacker months before, except this time with a counterbalance of trust instead of violence. Rather than feelings of being disempowered and afraid, I was able to recognize the strength and bravery it took to protect myself, my loved ones, and the lives of others. It was an act of heroism. This theme became a driving exploration in the creation of Action Potential, where we channeled our inner superheroes—climbing, lifting, assisting, jumping, and flying in celebration of movement, trust, strength, resilience, and the power to take action.

MEGAN LOWE is a dancer, performer, choreographer, singer, teacher, and administrator in the San Francisco Bay Area. She creates dance works with an affinity for dynamic/kinetic movement, site-specificity/space interaction, and contact improvisation/partnering. Megan has performed with Flyaway Productions, Scott Wells & Dancers, Lenora Lee Dance, Liz Roman & Dancers, Ephypany Productions, Dance Brigade, and more. She is a Teaching/Choreographing Artist for Joe Goode Performance Group, Bandaloop, and Flyaway, teaches semesterally masterclasses at UC Berkeley, and has taught contact improvisation for wcciJAM, ODC, Finrish Hall, InterKinected, Shawl-Anderson Dance Center, and Athletic Playground. Megan would like to thank Rosemary Hanson and Stephanie Sherman for their generous feedback in the writing of this article. mlowedances.wixsite.com/meganlowe

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A TALE OF LOVE, LOYALTY & HOPE

indance DEC 2019 9
IN MEMORIAM: Frank Shawl

by SIMA BELMAR

Frank Shawl, co-founder with Victor Anderson (1928-1971) of Shawl-Anderson Dance Center, died at home, the evening of October 4, 2019. A dear friend of his and mine, Ann DiFruscia, and devoted caregiver Evelyn Johnson were by his side. I had visited Frank that morning. My husband Antonio and I found him spectral in his bed, mouth agape, eyes open, his cat Booovoo nearby, trees visible through his window, a pile of stuffed camels on a chair. Frank’s apartment was wall-to-wall camels: camel statues, camel paintings, camel drawings, camel engravings.

We told him we loved him and said goodbye, then sat while in his living room with Rebecca Johnson (SADC Executive Director) and Abigail Hoscin (SADC Administrative Director). Rebecca told us that Frank’s last words to SADC Board President Steve Singelman were, “You have such nice teeth.” Abigail told the story of Frank’s encounter with a camel in Egypt. When the camel took off running with Frank on board, he said it was the most exhilarating feeling. And when the camel handler started to admonish the camel, Frank said something like, “Don’t you hurt this camel! He is perceptive. He is perceptive.” Frank went on to say, “When you are in a relationship, you learn to love.”

The last time Frank spoke to me was about three weeks before he died. I walked into his bedroom, he opened his eyes and said, “Simelma.” Frank often called me by this Yiddish diminutive. We used lots of Yiddish words together: That performance was drek! What a pain in the tuchus! I’m gonna plotz! Frank, though, was New Jersey born and raised, was a New Yorker through and through. We like to twerk in New York accents together. Brooklyn and Jersey, togetherself forever.

But Frank was a showman, through and through. Over the years, whenever I’d find Frank and Victor standing together behind the desk, Victor would smile humbly and Frank would grin broadly, Victor stately, Frank slimming. Stately and Slimmy—that about sums up the unlikely pair that built the house of dance so many of us in the Bay Area call home. At the end of the song (“Is that all there is?”), I thought he had fallen asleep but then, he opened his eyes and said, “I love that.” Before I left his room, frantically! flickering mutely on the TV, Frank said, “It’s important that we...” He didn’t finish his thought but in my mind it was complete. The most important thing is “we,” not I, not you. Frank and Victor created a space of we at Shawl-Anderson. They always say, a community that trains together, stays together. I know—nobody says that, but that doesn’t make it less true.

Several years ago, Frank quietly stopped coming to the studio. I saw him infrequently—at his apartment in Oakland for his birthday parties every December 27, an occasional sighting at a show or open rehearsal. My image of him was a little lost, faded, sedentary and temporarily eclipsed my memory of him in his full vitality. But two days after he died, I went to dance church as I always do on Sunday mornings—Rander Paufve’s 10am advanced modern class—and Rander talked about how Frank would come upstairs to look on in class every time she taught. She could recognize his footsteps on the stairs. I had forgotten about that. He did the same when I taught class, his erect and open figure occupying the doorway, an eagle-to-car, a smile of couples to the music, then gone.

During our last conversation, I asked him, “Frank, what’s with all the camels?” He looked at me for a little while then whispered, “I love them.” This is quintessential Frank—there’s nothing to analyze here, just love. This is how he related to me and, it seems, to nearly everyone whose life he touched: with love, just because we.

In Dance  |  May 2014  |  dancersgroup.org

We, as dancers, know the value of repetition, and I repeat, your spirit is unifying, strengthening, amplifying. We, as dancers, know the value of repetition, and I repeat, your spirit is unifying, strengthening, amplifying. We, as dancers, know the value of repetition, and I repeat, your spirit is unifying, strengthening, amplifying.
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IN PRACTICE: A Dancer Poet Creature

Conversation with Denise Leto

by SIMA BELMAR AND DENISE LETO

ON JULY 4 OF THIS YEAR, I launched The Villanelle Project. Well, launch is a strong word since all 1 did was announce in my tinyletter that I wanted to launch The Villanelle Project. A villanelle is a late 16th century French poetic form comprised of 19 lines, five stanzas of three lines each, and a final stanz of four lines. What makes it feel like a choreographic score is the way repetition works in the form: line 1 repeats in lines 6 and 12, and line 3 repeats in lines 9, 15, and 19. The form nudged me to come up with the plan to involve 19 artists, a mix of choreographers and poets, to create villanelles and solo dances that adhere to the villanelle structure. The first person to respond to my call was Denise Leto. Denise is a poet who has worked with choreographers and dancers. We met in 2014 at the Society for Dance History Scholars conference where she was presenting with choreographer Cid Pearlman. They discussed the work. Your Body is Not a Shirt, which is both a dance and theater performance (in collaboration with cellist Joan Jeanrenaud) and a book of poetry. They also handed out swag. (I scored a t-shirt.) Denise and I met again at Mary Armentrout’s 2018 summer Federnkurs composition workshop where we made what I call The Shush, a trio with interdisciplinary poet and teaching artist Amber DiPietra in which we sat in a circle holding microphones and shushed every sound we heard in the room. (You probably had to be there, so you’ll have to take my word for it when I say it was profound.) The workshop was not about disability politics but it was bathed in “Denise, Amber and the Shush.” Workshop participants identified as disabled artists, and I was there in the middle of radiation treatment. We spent as much time napping in community as we did making work and it was more fun than summer camp.

When Denise said she was interested in The Villanelle Project, I was ecstatic. I didn’t even worry too much about my paltry poetry knowledge and experience. I asked her to read my poetry. She was very kind with her feedback. (We agreed that it is good to have the word “meatball” in a poem but the jury is still out on “sweet.”) She wrote a villanelle. And with the Villanelle—

This is what interests me. The emergence of touching layers.

And a dance, it’s not about fidlegy or legibility—

D: So how to dance the lines, “what lax star and loss of meaning”—

S: “Sweet fathom in a formless sea”—

D: Or to write the body moving with the line—

D: If we didn’t see it that way—

S: Somehow being able to recognize. I’m inside something that I don’t understand.

D: (Fathom is a measurement too.)

S: What does it mean to have something devoided of its definition? So in the choreography that would be my question. How to make. What’s it about sweet for a dancer? To figure out if normatively we go like this and then this: sweet justice, sweet tea, sweetheart, but sweet fathom? I don’t know. I love that it’s sort of that mixture of things. In the villanelle the word “sweet” gets repeated many times but in another form maybe once. How many times in a row do we want? Or how could a dancer dance a star then fall. Not like that. That wouldn’t. So how to dance the lines, “what lax star and loss of meaning”—

This wordless reach to what is not there in the middle of radiation treatment. I’m inside something that I don’t understand. Somehow being able to recognize the spaces in between. To get all involved and really wonder.

S: If you can see the repeated line—

D: A reaction against and an action toward—

D: To spend hours deciding between two words—

S: Attention to movement choices that—

D: I have no idea why this one moment—

S: To constantly question—

Enter the words as they are real. She made me see the spaces in between. (Less afraid to have everything make less sense.) (The many aspects of a conversation unravel.)

But now, the dancers are walking around with the sheet music. Now they are singing and it was so amazing. I don’t know how to describe it. How am I expressing the sound of these words and what is my body doing? The problem of description. Translation. Because it’s a habitual pattern, doesn’t mean it can’t be there. It’s just: why? How can you get the movement to do something else? What else is going on in the question? How do you fill that space? How do you arrive at ambiguity? As opposed to creating a word to the movement or a movement to the word? Not another forceful breath but attenuation.


BELMAR, SIMA, Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her writing has appeared in The Brooklyn Rail, San Francisco Bay Guardian, The Oakland Tribune, Dance Magazine, TDR, Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices, Performance Matters, Contemporary Theatre Review, and The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies. To keep up with Sima’s writing please subscribe to tinyletter.com/simabelmar

LETO, DENISE is a transdisciplinary poet, writer, editor and experimental dance dramaturge. Recently she collaborated on the dance “Blues m-47” at the University of Santa Cruz. She wrote the multi-genre collaborative dance performance, Your Body is Not a Shirt, centering on feminist disability politics. Her current project involves an ecopoetic exploration of the San Francisco Bay through site-writing and movement practice. Denise is a former member of Olimpias, an international disability performance and poetry collective. Poems are forthcoming in Rogue Agent and Quarterly West. onecontinuouword@wordpress.com