

Performing Arts Marketing Info 2010-2011 Events

Please complete the below, and email to Angela Mattox (amattox@ybca.org) and cc Roko Kawai, (rkawai@ybca.org) no later than **Monday 3/29/10**.

Artist Company Name: *Jess Curtis/Gravity*

Work to be performed: *Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies*

Performance Dates: Feb. 3-6 2011

Venue: Forum

World Premiere: Not Clear yet. Definitely US Premiere. (We are waiting on some international funding that would require the World Premiere there.)

DRAFT MARKETING DESCRIPTION

100- 150 words [250 at the moment]

From surgically sculpted cyborg sex kittens and chemically enhanced superhuman road warriors to genetically engineered/selected wonder children - our bodies more than ever are shaped and marked by the imagination of higher and higher levels (and narrower definitions) of "performance". Is the body obsolete? Who decides which bodies are relevant, beautiful, and desirable? Who is imagining the body of the future and how is its (mass) production already affecting us all?

Jess Curtis/Gravity is in the midst of developing a new interdisciplinary performance work, *Dances for Non-Fictional Bodies*, commissioned by a consortium of international presenters including Yerba Buena Center for Arts where it's set to premiere in 2011. *Dances for Non-Fictional Bodies* is a performance-based project examining the role(s) of imagined societal ideals as a kind of "fictional body" that disables individuals in terms of our ability to see others and to be seen as beautiful, empowered, and autonomous.

For this new work Curtis has gathered an all-star collaborative team from 6 countries including Dramaturge/Provocateur Guillermo Gomez-Peña (SF/Mexico) and Performers Maria Francesca Scaroni (Berlin/Italy), Claire Cunningham (Glasgow), David Toole (UK), and Jörg Müller (France).

DNFB physically and conceptually deconstructs movement vocabulary and ideals of beauty based in socially imagined perfections of form that rarely exist in actual bodies. The work will examine difference as a virtue in and of itself, finding the unique beauty in the idiosyncrasy of each individual performer. The synergistic and esthetic necessity of difference will be highlighted, and thus implicitly propose that the audience re-consider their own definitions and limitations of beauty and empowerment.

ABOUT THE PIECE

Jess Curtis/Gravity is in early rehearsals and development stages of a new interdisciplinary performance work(s) ***Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies***, currently set for a US premiere in February of 2011 at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. co-commissioned by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts along with

Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies will be a multi-component performance-based project examining the role(s) of imagined societal ideals as a kind of “fictional body” that disables individuals in terms of our ability to see others, and be seen, as beautiful, empowered, and autonomous.

Physically and conceptually the work will deconstruct movement vocabulary and ideals of beauty based in socially imagined perfections of form that rarely exist in actual bodies. The work examines difference as a virtue, finding the unique beauty in the idiosyncrasy of each individual performer. In the meetings between performers we will highlight the synergistic and esthetic necessity of difference, and thus implicitly propose that the audience re-consider their own definitions and limitations of beauty and empowerment

Gravity’s Artistic Director, Jess Curtis, will collaborate with celebrated performance artist/author Guillermo Gomez-Peña and an international team of 5 performers, including performers with and without disabilities and a wide range of technical skills. They include: Jörg Müller (FR), dancer, musician and object manipulator; Claire Cunningham (Scotland) Crutch Dancer, Aerialist, Vocalist and Advocate/Speaker on arts and disability issues; Maria Francesca Scaroni (Italy), Dancer Performer; David Toole (UK) Dancer (ex-DV8, CandoCo), and Composer/Musician Mathias Herrmann (Berlin).

DNFB- Program Notes- From our recent UC davis Residency

Notes from Director/Choreographer Jess Curtis

This piece is undertaking a number of projects.

We have been asking ourselves questions about how our imaginations and our bodies interact? How does the way we imagine our bodies shape and change both their cultural relevance and their material actuality? How do our bodies shape our imaginations? Can re-imagining our bodies and re-embodying our imaginations be useful tools for making society more open, just and satisfying for us all?

Our laboratory is a meeting of diverse bodies and performance practices. The range of sizes, shapes and styles of training that make up our bodies is broader than in many “dance” based companies. Our differences force us to question the ways we imagine ourselves and each other and to imagine and negotiate new ways of dancing and playing together, not just in spite of, but actually in celebration of those differences.

At the same time this Project is an experiment in collaborative process. What kind of non-hierarchical and decentralized structures can we use to create a performance work that mobilizes the full imaginative capacities of a diverse creative team? Can this type of decentralized collaborative process be satisfying to all the members of the artistic team and create a satisfying experience for an audience? How can we meaningfully invite you, the audience and your very real bodies into the collaboration of sensing and making sense that is the work and play of performance?

We hope to answer some of these questions.

Notes from Guillermo Gómez-Peña, dramaturge/provocateur.

“Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies exists in a border zone in which dance, performance/installation, process art and Ensemble Theater overlap. It embraces (unapologetically) the acute crisis of genre, representation and authorship currently afflicting all forms of live art including postmodern dance.

The piece is comprised of five individual journeys in search of a shared system, a structure and an order that Curtis does not wish to construct by himself. At times these performance journeys converge in surprising and often duets, trios or group “moments,” which change in every performance.

The amazing material being developed during this process raises all kinds of questions: How to develop a more horizontal and decentered collaborative model that embraces difference in a non-condescending way? How to contest the problematic notions of physical perfection and virtuosity which are at the core of dance culture? How to challenge the audience's expectations for spectacle and invite them to be 'active spectators,' and behave in a more embodied and responsible way?

The ultimate question is: Is it possible to translate this dangerous process within the conventions of a theater? You are up for a big surprise. Enjoy.”

Guillermo Gomez-Peña

Funding

Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies is being made possible through the generous support of the National Dance Project (NEFA), The Wattis Foundation, The Doris Duke Foundation and the

San Francisco Arts Commission Cultural Equity Fund; The Wallace Alexander Gerbode/Hewlett Foundation California Choreographer Collaboration Award and the The National Performance Network Creation Fund.

Dances for Non/Fictional Bodies is being co-commissioned by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), DaDaFest International (Liverpool, UK), Fabrik Potsdam (Potsdam, Germany) and TigerTail Productions/Florida Dance Association (Miami).

Video Trailer Web Link

<http://vimeo.com/9674479>

ABOUT THE ARTIST/COMPANY

Company background, lead artist bios. We will post on our website.

About Gravity

"... THE KIND OF INTELLIGENT, EVOCATIVE DANCE-THEATRE ... THAT DELIGHTS YOU AT THE TIME OF WATCHING, THEN LINGERS ON TO MAKE YOU THINK AFRESH ... "

- MARY BRENNAN, GLASGOW HERALD

After 15 years of making dance in the Bay Area as an independent choreographer, Jess Curtis founded Gravity in 2000 as a research and development vehicle for very live performance. Gravity aspires to the creation of exceptionally engaging body-based art that explores and addresses issues and ideas of substance and relevance to a broad popular public. Since its inception, Curtis and Gravity collaborators have created six full-length works and a number of shorter pieces; collaborated with numerous theaters and co-producers in the U.S. and Europe; and performed at home in San Francisco and on tour in over 50 cities in 14 countries. Called "the kind of intelligent, evocative dance-theatre ... that delights you at the time of watching, then lingers on to make you think afresh..." by Mary Brennan of the Glasgow Herald, Gravity's work has been recognized with several Isadora Duncan Dance (IZZIE) Awards – the most prestigious honor offered for dance in the Bay Area – most recently winning "Best Choreography," "Best Company Performance," and sharing the award for "Best Music/Text/Sound," for its 2007 production "Under the Radar." The company also received a prestigious 'Fringe First' award at the 2002 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Gravity's work *Symmetry Study #7* was included in three San Francisco critics' Top Ten lists for 2008.

www.jesscurtisgravity.org

COMPANY BIOGRAPHIES

JESS CURTIS (Concept/Director/Performer) living and working in both San Francisco and Berlin, has created a body of work ranging from the underground extremes of Mission District warehouses with Contraband and CORE (1985-1998) to the formal refinement and exuberance of European State Theatres

and Circus Tents with Compagnie Cahin-Caha and Jess Curtis/Gravity (1998-present). Curtis has collaborated with the renowned fabrikCompagnie in Potsdam, Germany to create the award-winning fallen, and has been commissioned to create works for companies such as Artblau in Germany, ContactArt in Italy, Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company in the UK, and Croi Glan Integrated Dance in Ireland. Curtis has twice been recognized by the James Irvine Foundation/ Dance USA California Dance Initiatives, having been awarded a California Dancemakers Fellowship (2001) and a Dance: Creation to Performance Award (2005). He also teaches Dance, Contact Improv and Interdisciplinary Performance throughout the US and Europe, and has been a visiting professor at UC Berkeley, and the University of the Arts in Berlin. He is currently pursuing an MFA in choreography and a PhD in Performance Studies at UC Davis.

GUILLERMO GOMEZ-PEÑA (Dramaturge, Provocateur) is a performance artist/writer and the director of the art collective La Pocha Nostra. He was born in Mexico City and came to the United States in 1978. Since then he has been exploring cross-cultural issues with the use of performance, multilingual poetry, journalism, video, radio, and installation art. His performance work and eight books have contributed to the debates on cultural diversity, identity, and US- Mexico relations. His artwork has been presented at over seven hundred venues across the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Russia and Australia. A MacArthur Fellow and American Book Award winner, he is a regular contributor to National Public Radio, a writer for newspapers and magazines in the US, Mexico, and Europe and a contributing editor to The Drama Review (NYU-MIT).

MATTHIAS HERMANN (Musical Director/Composer/Performer) studied cello with Rudolf Mandalka at the Robert Schumann Hochschule, Düsseldorf, Germany. He has created numerous award-winning scores for the productions of international dance theatre companies including Do Theater St. Petersburg, Russia), Fabrik Company (Potsdam, Germany), Howard Katz (Berlin/New York) and Jess Curtis/Gravity (San Francisco/Berlin). As a founding member of PostHolocaustPop, a collaborative Art-Band with Howard Katz and Ansgar Tappert, he is touring internationally and has released numerous CDs. Most recently he created soundscapes for video installations, music for short film, and also composed the score for a theatrical reading of the LiteraturWERKstatt Berlin in 2004. He is also involved in other artistic collaborations with Paul Beiersdorf, Stephanie Maher and Kathleen Hermesdorf, FormVollEndeT, Mangrove Kipling, and various musical formations including Die Krassnajas and MoarkoVentent.

CLAIRE CUNNINGHAM (Performer/Collaborator) is a multi-disciplinary performer and choreographer based in Glasgow. Originally a classically-trained singer, she began to work in dance in 2005, after working with Jess Curtis, who kindled her interest in movement and specifically in her own potential for movement work. This led to her pursuing her own training with various practitioners, including a mentorship with Bill Shannon (aka The Crutchmaster) and training in elements of his own Shannon technique. Over the following years she has developed her own movement vocabulary based on the use of crutches, and with a resulting interest in realizing her own choreographic ideas – often rooted in the use/misuse, study and distortion of crutches. Her recent work includes a critically acclaimed run of her show *ME (Mobile/Evolution)* at the 2009 Edinburgh Festival Fringe which earned Cunningham a Herald Angel Award. (*ME* is a double bill of two solo works – combining dance, text, aerial and visual art.)
www.clairecunningham.co.uk

JÖRG MÜLLER (Performer/Collaborator) Jörg Müller, jongleur, graduated in 1994 from the Centre National des Arts du Cirque in Châlons en Champagne, France. While there he created « mobile » a movement/manipulation work utilizing suspended resonant tubes. In 2005 he started « gravity reference drawings » while balancing a broom. With Jess Curtis he created « Performance Research Experiment #1 », a performance between circus and dance and « Under the Radar » in 2008. In 2008 he created his latest tube

work « noustube », an invitation for several artists to create their performance in a 9 ft. tall glass tube filled with water. As a circus artist he has toured extensively with Cirque Plume, Compagnie Cahin-Caha in « chiencrU », and is touring with Martin Schwietzke in « Passage Désamboité » and Compagnie Anomalie's « Mister Monster » in 2010. His path has equally included work with a number of choreographers. Notably in the works of Pierre Doussaint, Francois Verret, Haim Adri, Kitsou Dubois, Julie Nioche, Jess Curtis and Mark Tompkins. Since 2006 he is a Feldenkrais Practitioner. www.mullerj.org.

Maria Francesca Scaroni (Performer/Collaborator) is an Italian choreographer and performer, currently living and working in Berlin. After dancing in Italian TV productions (Canale 5, Rai 2), she trained and worked with Manuela Bondavalli Danza (1998/2004), a collaboration that rooted her dance practice in Release Technique and Contact Improvisation. Scaroni trained independently, studying as a freelancer in Europe and in the United States. She has been collaborating with Jess Curtis/Gravity since 2004 (Berlin/San Francisco) as performer, teacher and choreographer. Since 2006 Scaroni has also performed in works by San Francisco choreographer-master-pioneer Sara Shelton Mann. In Berlin she works as collaborator/performer with Julia Reinartz, Friederike Plafki and the gallery-based collective Bridge on a Wall, and is part of an improvisation-based group that was instigated by Meg Stuart and Jeremy Wade. Scaroni holds a Masters degree in Contemporary Literature, with a focus on Media and Communication and a thesis on education and dance. She is lately very intrigued with the topics of presence, physical states, mediation and transmission.

DAVID TOOLE (Performer/Collaborator) came into dance through workshops with CandoCo Dance Company in 1992. While working with them, he studied for a year at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance, receiving a Professional Diploma in Community Dance. Six years of national and international touring with CandoCo followed into 1999. In 1995, David had his first taste of theatre playing the part of Puck in Benjamin Britten's opera of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A year later he appeared in the Sally Potter film *The Tango Lesson*, as a designer. David has also performed with Graeae Theatre Company (2000-01) portraying Edgar in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and Deflores in *The Changeling*. Summer 2000 he worked with DV8 creating and performing the piece *Can We Afford This* for the Sydney Arts Festival -- a prelude for the 2000 Olympics. This show was revived in 2003 as *The Cost of Living* and also led to a film version. Since then, David has done more theatre work, notably with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2007, and most recently with the Leeds based company Slung Low. David, now a freelance dancer, actor and workshop leader, is presently working on developing a new piece with dancer Lucy Hind to tour in 2010.

Assorted Informational Web Links

About Claire Cunningham

<http://www.clairecunningham.co.uk/>

About Guillermo Gomez-Peña

<http://www.pochanostra.com/>

About Jörg Müller

www.mullerj.org

About David Toole

<http://www.dtoole.co.uk/>

Assorted Video Links

Claire Cunningham interviewed about her work on Scottish TV.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAoQgmQekxc>

Jess Curtis interviewed on KQED

<http://kqed02.streamguys.us/anon.kqed/spark/gravity.m4v>

Maria Francesca Scaroni and Jess Curtis in Gravity's Symmetry Study #14

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMaRy8h2AFw>

David Toole Dancing

<http://www.youtube.com/user/newnimproved#p/a/u/2/mLe9ZSwU4aQ>