

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: WAKING DARKNESS. WAITING LIGHT.

Matthew Reeves, Master of Fine Arts, 2017

Thesis Directed By: Assistant Professor, Miriam Phillips, School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies

Waking Darkness. Waiting Light. was an evening-length dance/multimedia event performed October 7-9, 2016 at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Conceived and created collaboratively with Colette Krogol in partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, the work evolved from individual research that wove together into one seamless performance. Using the choreographic elements of weight, time, light, and darkness, the work explored the action of transformation and intersections of dance, dream, and mythology. This thesis documents the research and creative process to make *Waking Darkness. Waiting Light.* The Monomyth Theory of comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell played a pivotal role in the research, laying a foundation for new methods of listening for universal mythic elements within a personal journey. Additionally this paper explores perspectives on how mythmaking and dance-making are similar in process, and the influence this perspective has on choreography.

WAKING DARKNESS. WAITING LIGHT.

by

Matthew Reeves

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
2017

Advisory Committee:
Professor Miriam Phillips, Chair
Professor Sara Pearson
Professor Patrik Widrig

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Preface

I must acknowledge that this thesis was a collaboration of exceptional circumstance between myself, and my wife/artistic soulmate Colette Krogol, as we both were completing our thesis project. Rarely do two thesis candidates who have over a decade of professional experience together choreographing and producing work for their professional company have the time and opportunity to collaborate together on a thesis performance and would do so from two seemingly disparate departure points. It is also uncommon that these two artists also be married and that the intimacies of their being and relationship be such an integral part of the work and creative process. The importance and value of these circumstances is not lost on me as I reflect on in these pages, the performance that we created for our thesis concert.

The artistic process of creation is at its best always messy and murky, especially as artists look to explore the difficult to describe realms of human experience. This thesis process was beautiful, messy, and at many times unclear. Yet as the performance is now over and the murky waters of the process have stopped churning, there is indeed some slowly arriving clarity of what transpired. This paper is an attempt to reveal some of the themes that were brought to light as well as knowledge gained from the creative process and performance of *Waking Darkness*. *Waiting Light*.

Dedication

My Family.

La Familia.

To all those who may have an ocean to cross.

To all those treading water looking for a distant shore.

Acknowledgements

The growth I have experienced during my tenure here at the University of Maryland has been tremendous. The gracious faculty here has transformed the way I create, research, discuss, and ultimately share my art. The notion of transformation is so important to me and indeed it was the primary seed of my thesis, so it is first that I must acknowledge the incredible people that have transformed me over the past three years. My thesis chair Miriam Phillips has so generously asked me the hard to answer questions and has guided me delicately through the dense foliage of my ever-evolving dance research and writing process. Alongside Miriam, Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig have served as invaluable members of my thesis committee sparking me to grow during this process, providing the soft guiding hand when necessary to see the transformation through, and offering crucial feedback at critical junctures. Guest artist Christopher K. Morgan also gave special attention and consideration to my work as it was being developed for the thesis proposal and throughout the creative process. Additionally I was fortunate to lean heavy on the wisdom and guidance of Karen Bradley, Paul Jackson, Adriane Fang, and Alvin Mayes.

The production support for this thesis was profound and noble. I would like to especially thank Cary Gillett, Tarythe Albrecht, Connor Dreibelbis, Mark Costello, Jeffrey Dorfman, Dylan Glatthorn, Robert Croghan, Ryan Andrus, and Jared Mezzocchi. These artists went above and beyond in their support of this awesome collaboration and they have taught me valuable lessons that will stay with me as my work continues.

There is no dance without the dancers. Jonathan Hsu and Robin Neveu Brown are two of the most exceptional dancers with which I have had the privilege to work. The final performance exceeded my expectations because of their unique abilities as dancers. They do not just perform material but they live the dance. There are few people that I have danced with like this and that I have trusted so much. This dance was somewhat about surviving the performance together and I feel grateful to have survived it with them.

Furthermore I must recognize the heartwarming sacrifices made by my family. They have supported the long hours and the time away from home necessary to create meaningful and impactful art. I am privileged to have a family and resources that not only support the work I do but also embrace alongside me the opportunities I have to do it.

My final acknowledgement is to my wife and artistic soulmate Colette Krogol. Not only did she put up with the ugliest and darkest moments of this creative process with me, but she danced through these moments with me on stage as well. She graciously let her story and her family's journey across the ocean become the backbone for this transformative process and collaborating alongside her for this thesis concert has changed me. Her story has become my story.

*He venido a decirte
que te sigo queriendo.*

*He venido a decirte
que te sigo amando.*

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Chapter 1: Sensing The Performance



Section 'Wall Duets.' Dancers: Colette Krogol, Jonathan Hsu, Robin Neveu Brown, Matthew Reeves
Photo taken by C. Stanley

Falling Into The Abyss

Drip...drip...drip...

This journey takes place in the Kogod Theatre which functions as a blackbox theatre space. Stripped down to the bare maroon-painted brick walls, the space is lit with dim, flat and uninspiring white light as the audience enters. A metal loading dock garage door along with conduit poles, cable boxes, and thin metal mounting grooves mutely accent the walls of the space. The audience can see a dark doorway in the far left corner; beside it there is a small puddle of water forming from a drip in the ceiling, which is easier heard than seen at the beginning of the show. To the right of the doorway a dirty wooden ladder leans against the wall. Close to the audience in the

house right corner of the space with it's back wheel set on top of a peculiarly carved piece of drift wood rests an old rusty bicycle; an island of intrigue in the middle of a sparse and un-majestic setting.

Without warning the space goes dark. A circle of light falls over the bicycle in the darkness and it correlates to the sound of a deep and distorted well drop. "P...ong! P...ong! P...ong! P...ong!" The space flashes with lightning and the sound crackles and bellows as a storm of projections takes over the three walls surrounding the space and the audience. In a single flash the space goes dark again with only a low rumbling of thunder to be heard from underneath the audiences seats. Darkness. Fifteen seconds go by and the audience is left to sit in the dark, waiting.

The wall to house left abruptly cracks apart and a small but intense shaft of light enters the space causing the audience to squint as they look across to their left. A gentle humming, not quite celestial, accompanies the light leaking into the room. Steadily the wall continues to open and the shaft of light grows larger now the size of a tall and narrow doorway. Ten seconds go by and the audience is left to sit in the light and the hum, waiting.

A shadow appears, first in blurry silhouette, it is a person walking steadily through the light filled passageway. Their feet roll slowly across the floor with a sustained energy that is thick but never stops. A solid metal object is resting on their shoulder concealing their face from the audience. As they walk in a straight line from the doorway towards the bicycle the shadow of the performer provides momentary relief as it passes the audiences eyes. Five seconds go by and another person appears now walking in line, six paces behind the first. Again a solid metal object rests upon

their shoulders concealing their face. Six paces more and another performer appears. Six paces more another. As the fourth and final person enters the space, the four performers stop midstride. Their bodies are profile and the objects in front of their faces can now be made out as large tin cans that have been riveted together to form larger objects. Each person's object has a distinct shape like a triangle, bridge, or arch, while the overall size of the prop is relatively the same.

Slowly the four performers reach back with their right hands to hold their cans steady as they adjust their bodies to face the audience. As the quartet faces front the metal objects are slowly and carefully placed on the floor in unison, revealing the performers faces. The audience can now see two women and two men. Their clothes are worn faded tones of sand, rust, and olive drab. Once the cans have been placed in a row in front of the performers they step back and look out steady towards the audience. The man closest to the light emitting doorway fades backward out of the light and begins pulling a long chain that drops the metal loading dock door down; sealing the audience and the performers into the space; the shaft of light slowly disappears sealing the audience and performers into the dark.

And so the journey begins...

This Paper Is Not The Dance

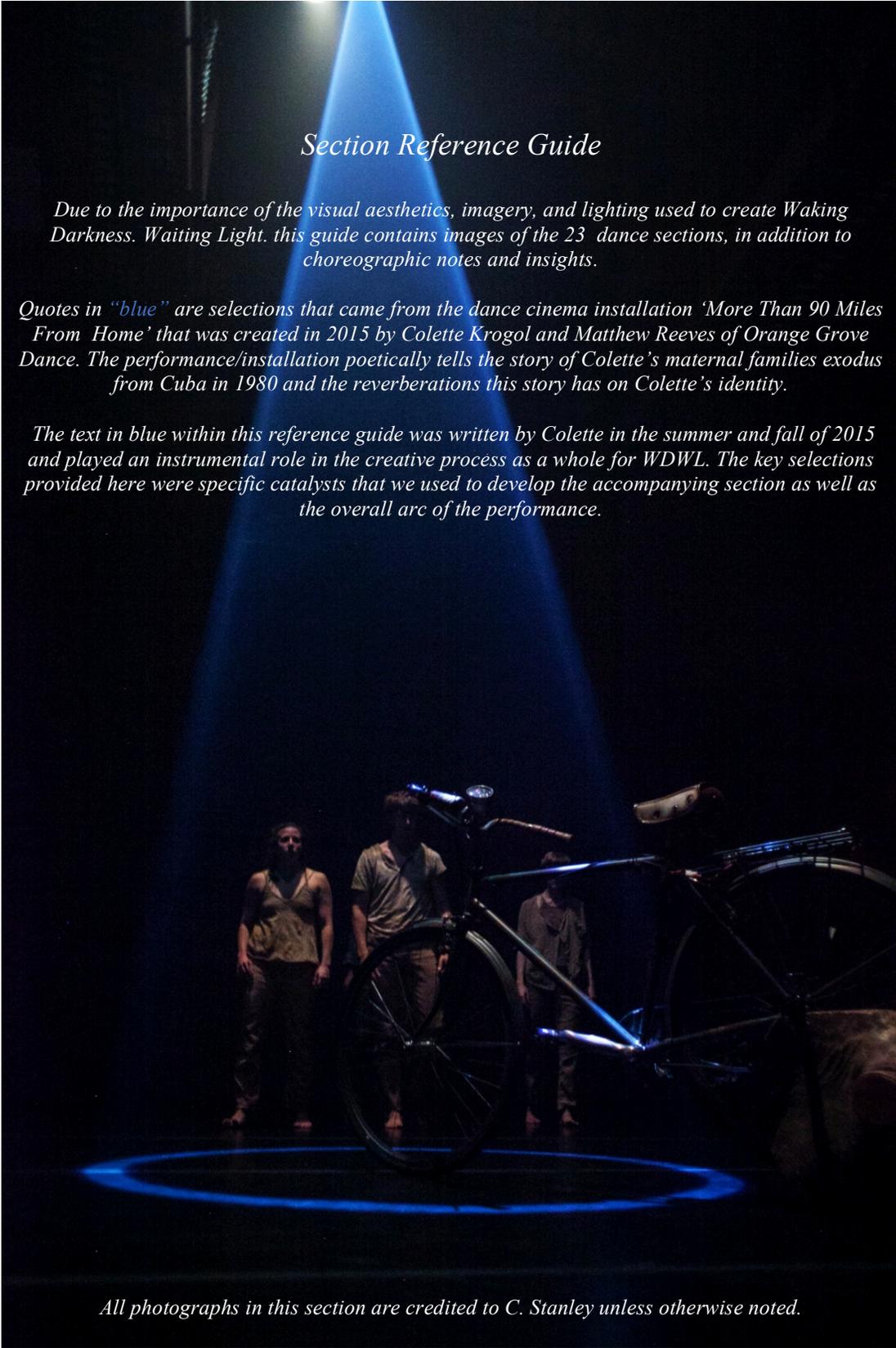
Movement and writing about movement are not the same thing. This paper and the experience of the performance are not equivalent. This opening description of the piece seals you the reader, into the document, with me the writer, just as I was sealed into the space with the audience during the performance. But our spaces are

not the same and what I am able to reveal to you is different. Whereas no amount of writing will be able to accurately convey the visceral exhausting dynamics of *Waking Darkness. Waiting Light.* (WDWL) this paper offers insights into what the dance was about and why it was created. The following section emboldens the description you just read of ‘Falling Into The Abyss’ and takes you further through the journey of the work. However this time, instead of looking at the performance written from the audience’s perspective, images and choreography notes are provided as new seedlings to help you grow a picture of the creative process behind the work.

*Images & Sections From The Choreographer/ Performer Perspective*¹

The purpose of this section is to act as a reference guide allowing the reader into the mind space of the choreographers and performers. The section uses the same headings as the choreographers referred to during the rehearsal and design process. WDWL journeyed through twenty-three sections in total, which were distinct in their tone and intention, but to observers seamlessly flowed from one to another. In order to efficiently move back and forth through the work during the rehearsal and design processes, all collaborators involved used this specific language to speak with each other. This section sketches the twenty-three sections using a storyboard type approach by including a photo characteristic of the mood/quality of the section, along with some written description. An additional attachment is provided in the Appendix that shows the actual working spreadsheet we developed to keep choreographers and designers digitally on the same page as the work developed.

¹ This guide was built collaboratively with Colette Krogol. A similar version exists in her paper: *Journeying Through Exodus, Displacement, And My Cuban American Identity: The Odyssey Of Making And Becoming Waking Darkness. Waiting Light.*



Section Reference Guide

Due to the importance of the visual aesthetics, imagery, and lighting used to create Waking Darkness. Waiting Light. this guide contains images of the 23 dance sections, in addition to choreographic notes and insights.

Quotes in “blue” are selections that came from the dance cinema installation ‘More Than 90 Miles From Home’ that was created in 2015 by Colette Krogol and Matthew Reeves of Orange Grove Dance. The performance/installation poetically tells the story of Colette’s maternal families exodus from Cuba in 1980 and the reverberations this story has on Colette’s identity.

The text in blue within this reference guide was written by Colette in the summer and fall of 2015 and played an instrumental role in the creative process as a whole for WDWL. The key selections provided here were specific catalysts that we used to develop the accompanying section as well as the overall arc of the performance.

All photographs in this section are credited to C. Stanley unless otherwise noted.

1. Establishing Neutral (Preshow)

A neutral starting point was necessary in order to transform the space for the audience and the performance. We created a baseline of experience that would appear mundane and unimpressive. The space needed to feel ordinary and almost forgotten. Key props were already in the space.

- *A ladder left in the space.*
- *A can catching water dripping from the ceiling.*
- *A rusty bike appearing to grow out of a stump. This would be more interesting but the unshaped lighting of the space makes it appear flat and ordinary.*



Photos are stills from video by Paul Jackson

2. Calling Of The Bike

Like a droplet of water, light drops and circles the bicycle. The first pools of movement are seen here in the still waters of the mind. This leads to a hurricane of clouds, light, and movement, tracing and filling the space. This idea builds until it is vacuumed out of the space in a bright flash of light leaving everything black.

The water came crashing in.



Photos are stills from video by Geoff Sheil

3. Falling Into The Abyss

Setting the tone for what won't be seen, as well as what will be seen. It was very important to plunge the audience into darkness so that the next moment of light would feel intense and blinding. High contrast was a specific lighting goal of the piece, and just like establishing the neutrality of the space during the preshow, it was important to set the ranges of dark and light at the beginning of the show.

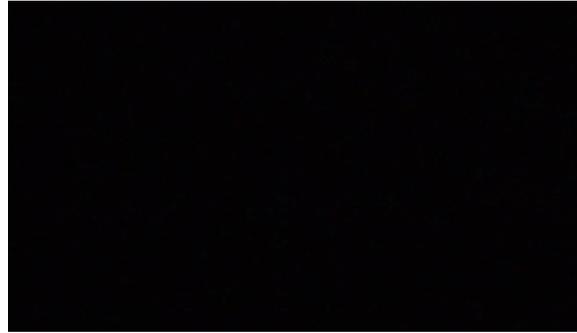


Photo is a still from video by Geoff Sheil

4. Assembly

(AKA The Entrance and Emerging From The Light.)

Once the space was dark for a minimum of 15 seconds, the door was then opened and light poured through. This is the first entrance of the performers. First Robin, then Jonathan, then Colette, and finally Matt (myself). Once we all entered and set down our cans, Matt went and pulled the chain down on the Elephant Door closing it vertically as the Sound Door closed horizontally. Sealed into the space the performers begin the slow assembly phrase to the upstage right corner of the space.



Photo is a still from video by Geoff Sheil

5. Kicking Up The Dust

First Sounds of Ticking.

Tick...Tick...Tick...

This is a key moment where performers transform the space. Pedestrian movements now grow into dynamic dancing. The dancing feels like a conjuring up of the past. The movement is repetitive and shifts from side to side as the space fills with haze. The hazing of the space added particles to the air, which makes this once empty space, feel charged with energy and possibilities that were not apparent before.



6. The Storm

(AKA Hurricane/Flood)

This section is derived from Colette's poetry and her story of waking up when a window broke in her grandparents' bedroom during a hurricane. We used projections of waves and interrupted movement phrases to wash and toss our bodies through the space. Water washes over the dancers transforming them into the "four recurring dreams that awaken" the show from sleep.



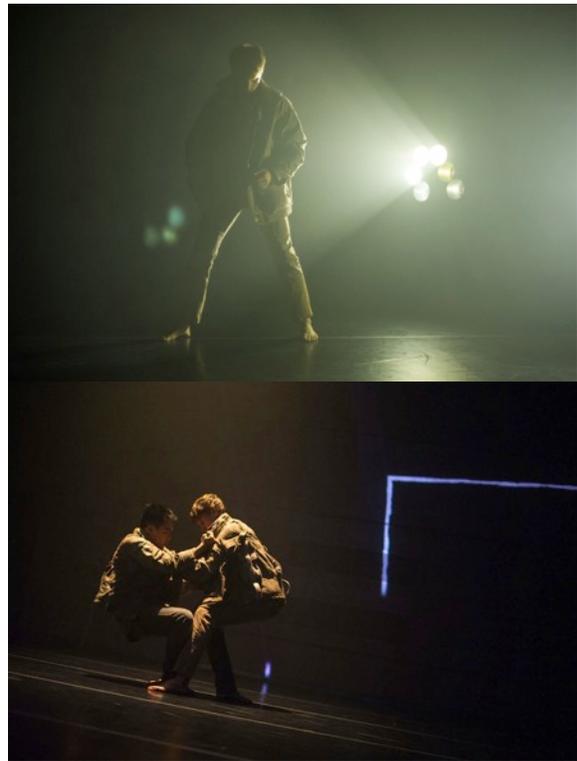
Photo is a still from video by Geoff Sheil

7. Ito Reunion (Brothers Pulled Apart)

*ITO Reunion/ Two Generations Of Exiles
(Matt & Jonathan Duet)*

Ito is Colette's great uncle that went to retrieve the family from Cuba during the Mariel Boatlift. He was actually left behind trying to retrieve family members and had to reunite with the family days later. As the can-lights ominously approached, this section started with a Matt solo that evolved into a duet. Matt crashes, falls, surrenders, and reaches out into the dark. Finally another body steps out of the dark and they embrace like brothers that haven't seen each other for many years.

This duet's physical actions represented moments of reuniting and being pulled apart. It focused on the struggle of holding on and moving with and through each other. The coats on the dancers become vital in this section as they were pulled upon to hold the dancers' weight.

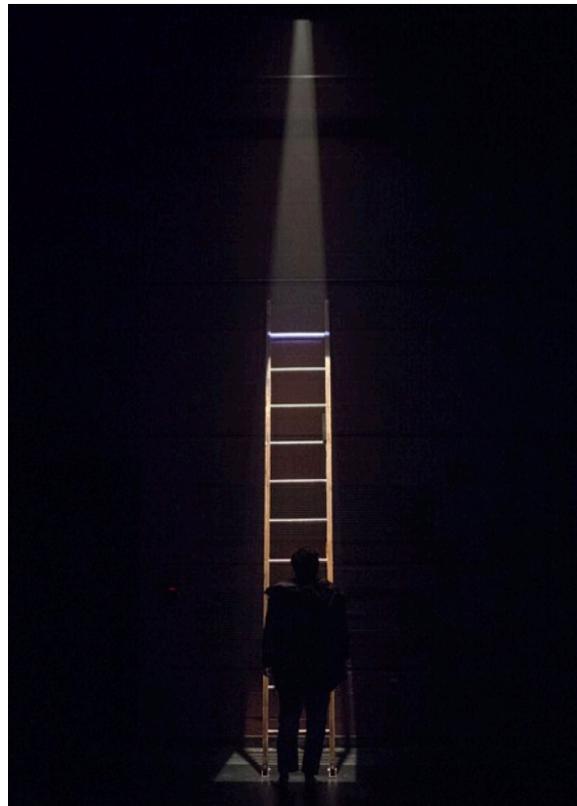


8. Calling Of The Ladder (A Window Home)

"The Ladder is our bridge to the stories that we have been told since we were young and the places we've still never touched."

This is quoted from Colette's poetry and story. Instead of using the word dream, we made the ladder the dream that would be our bridge.

This image starts in darkness. A single rung of the ladder is illuminated calling Colette to climb up and touch it. As she touches it a memory is released into the space. The ocean waves...a woman on the shore.



9. Pulling The Sons Of Cuba Home/ Bodies Rolling

"The beach waits to say goodbye to more of her children only to see some wash back ashore."

When Colette releases the ladder rung the memory/video of the space starts to slowly decay. Jonathan and Matt start rolling. Robin and Colette start reeling the bodies back home. It's the image of mothers pulling their sons' bodies back home.



10. Wall Duets (The Pressure of Living)

The pressure of living.

Matt and Jonathan push Colette and Robin upward and they walk across the wall and back down. Tableaus of longing, love, and loss take place as the wall continues to finally decay/ dissolve away.

These duets deal with pressure and time. It takes pressure to keep Robin and Colette's bodies firmly grounded to the wall. The pressure can crush you or you can use it to walk up and over the space.

The projections emphasize time. They are actually distorted video recordings of the dancers performing the duets, which means the dancers are dancing with a past version of themselves doing the same material. This creates a sense of chasing or leading memories as the dancers move just out of sync with themselves.



11. Calling Of The Bike 2

The island of the bike calls the performers to it. This is a glimpse of the exit and climax later to come. Repeating this element gives a sense of the performers' fate.

Performers walking slowly downstage towards the bike. A small memory of the final quartet affects their progression downstage. Slowly they arrive at the cone of light surrounding the bike. Just when it seems like they might cross into the light, it disappears.



12. Searchlight

"Waiting patiently and impatiently. Waiting for the light to pass. Oscuridad. Darkness. Now.

Swimming and Swimming... Leaving the shore. Swimming and Swimming.... Leaving her behind. Swimming and Swimming.... A fin rises up beside him, me. Swimming and Swimming side by side with the revolution. Nadando y Nadando.

Swimming and Swimming... If it's a shark I'm dead. If it's a dolphin it means no sharks.

Swimming and Swimming... The fin stays with me till the end. No sharks tonight except the searchlights that pulled me back home.

Manolo fue capturado y fue a la carcel.

Manolo fue capturado y fue a la carcel.

Manolo was captured and sent to prison."

This section starts with a rigorous, driving, contained march that the quartet eventually breaks out of, and then they are cast into survival mode as their bodies flash in the dire presence of the searchlights flashing in the space.



13. Calling Of The Ladder 2 (Diving Into The Still Water)

All rungs of the ladder light up. Colette goes behind the ladder. Four rungs remain lit. As Colette grabs each rung a body falls into the water (back wall projection).



Colette climbs the ladder again for a final rung. This time the ladder rung activates projection searchlights emanating from the bodies on the ground. Colette climbs down the ladder and begins pulling Robin's body by her jacket. Robin and Colette ascend back up the ladder.



14. Calling Of The Bike 3

Fate interrupts again. The calling of what is to come interrupts this memory and moment of reflection. The well drop sound and the circle of light call out in the darkness.



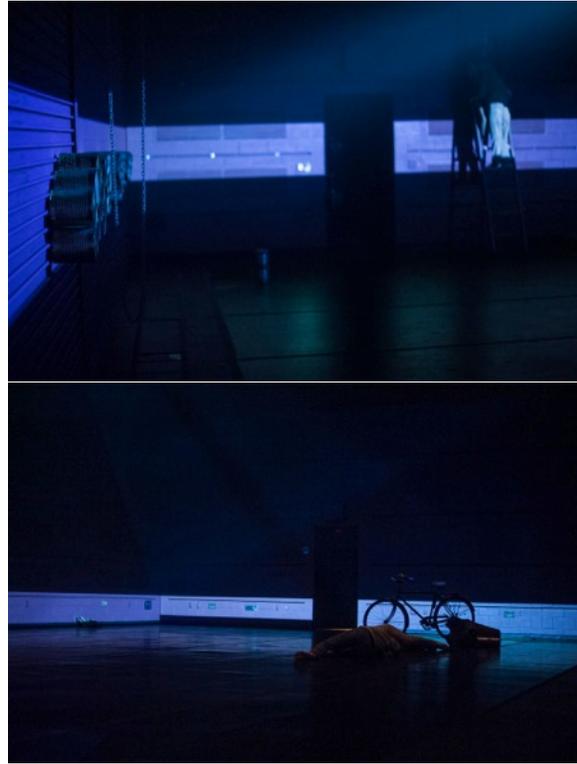
Photo is a still from video by Paul Jackson

15. Waiting...

"Waiting patiently and impatiently. Waiting for the light to pass."

Waiting is a main theme of WDWL that was revealed in different moments. This particular section forced performer and audience to wait for the light to pass. A light bar slowly revealed itself from the ceiling and scanned the space at a consistent pace over the course of 3 minutes. It was accompanied by the sound of a slow ticking watch whose space between ticks grew slightly longer over the course of the 3 minutes.

Goals here were to make the audience wait...so many thoughts and questions can arrive in this slowed down space of the mind with seemingly so little happening. Robin and Colette are eventually revealed holding on to each other on the ladder in the dark. Holding. Waiting.



16. Lifted Out Of The Waves. Waves Into The Light.

Robin and Colette descend the ladder and begin a slow migration to stage-right.

Jonathan slowly rises out of the waves and collects Matt's body so they can both stand together. Gestures and a walking pattern are then performed in unison; recollecting moments from Matt's earlier solo within the 'Ito Reunion/ Brothers Pulled Apart' section that was performed in front of the can-lights.

All four dancers slowly make their way into a line to the far stage-right wall, each with a can-light facing back at them from the wall.



Photo is a still from video by Geoff Sheil

17. Assembly 2

*"Yo me recuerdo...I remember...
Yo me recuerdo...I remember...
Yo me recuerdo...I remember..."*

The ticking motif from the beginning of the show reemerges.

This section repeats the earlier walking phrase from the 'Assembly' section at the beginning of the show but this time the audience is exposed to the material from the profile view of the dancers. Instead of calling the audience to come with them, they are gesturing solely to the light to come with them.

The dancers break their assembled formation leaving Colette behind to start the phrase material from 'Kicking Up The Dust,' this time alone.

Matt, Jonathan, and Robin begin removing can-lights from the wall and walking backwards across the space leaving Colette behind.



18. Colette Solo/Searchlight Solo

Colette reprises 'Kicking Up The Dust' into a series of phrases that were created with 55 gestures in response to her mother's experience of the 55 years since the Cuban Revolution. Jonathan, Robin, and Matt create a moving landscape of light with the three can-lights. Colette is exposed from different angles by the three lights and as she moves she is often momentarily cast into darkness.

The final moment finds Colette backlit by three can-lights and caught up in intense ticking/banging music.

The flashes of the memories are overwhelming her. A brief moment of heavy celebration and the difficulty of trying to remember while still moving to the pulse of life. This is felt in the small shifts of hips and salsa rhythms found in Colette's movement.



19. He Venido. A Love Letter To Cuba

Last Love Letter To Cuba. One Story Becomes Two.

The words of the song He Venido, performed by Los Zafiros, ring true in this moment.

SPANISH

*He venido a decirte
que te sigo queriendo.
He venido a decirte
que te sigo amando.*

ENGLISH

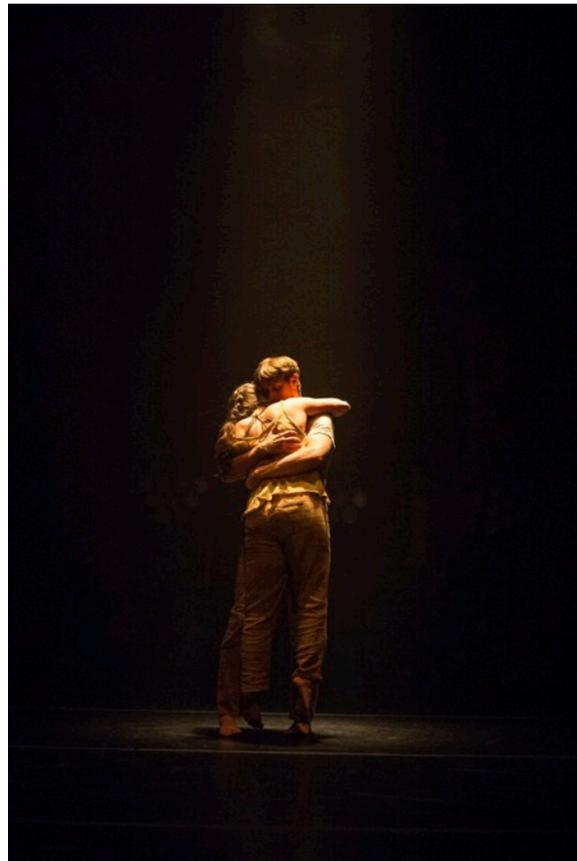
*I have come to tell you.
That I continue to want you.
I have come to tell you.
That I continue to love you.*

The slow crashing of Colette's hands into Matt's head is a moment of taking her story and embracing it as his own.

The duet is intimate and is about saying goodbye. Goodbye to Cuba. Goodbye to "tierra de su patria." Saying goodbye to the only home you have ever known and loved.

Time is used as a challenge within the confines of the choreography. Matt and Colette perform a sequence of material with time to embrace and take care of each other. The sequence of dancing is then forced to repeat but this time they are forced to perform it much faster than appears comfortable, which leads to desperate embraces and slipping/falling away from each other.

How do you prepare in twenty minutes to leave your home forever?



20. The Divide

A moment of the great divide; Distancia Infinita.

“90 miles separate the Cuban coast from Key West. Ninety miles of darkness, hope, waiting, and light. In here, those 90 miles could be ninety thousand.

Distancia infinita.

Because that water that is there, separating one from the other is something that if you touch it, it will break your heart, your courage, everything you believe.”



Photo is a still from video by Geoff Sheil

21. 55 Years In 5 Minutes

Matt rides the bike through 55 years in five minutes. This crumbles the world (which is the space of the Kogod Theatre) and breaks it. Colette, Robin, and Jonathan walk slowly from the back to the front of the space.

This is a pinnacle moment of the journey. Leaving, and there is no turning back. The projection and sound design here accumulated media to feel like 55 years had culminated in 5 minutes. It feels fast and slow simultaneously as the projections spiral through a high volume of footage yet the dancers walk slowly in the face of this footage.



22. The Other Side/ Ladder Duet

The world is changed and broken. The performers must find a way to start everything over. The same elements in the room must find a new way to be used as their old potential and purposes are forever changed. The ladder becomes the driving force of this section as it supports and divides the dancers in the center of the space rather than being propped against the wall.

The ladder serves as a shelter, a restraint, a vehicle, a frame, and a foundation.



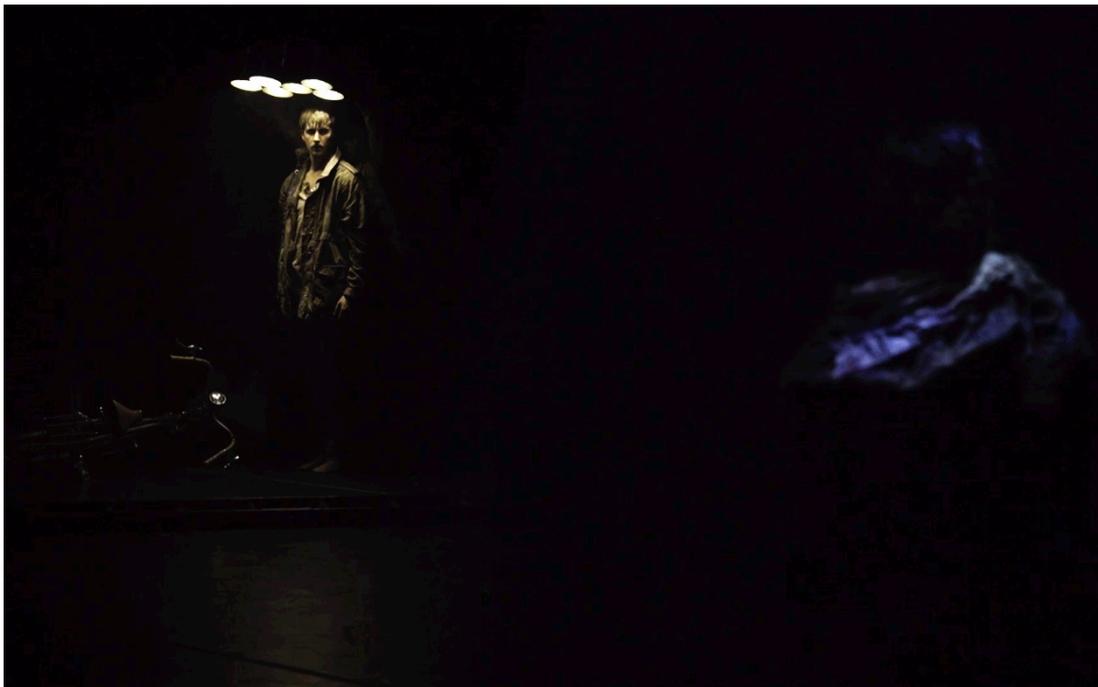
23. Distancia Infinita

*Carrying what you can.
Remembering the island.*

A diagonal quartet takes place, performing phrases referred to as the 'Exodus Phrases.' This moment was alluded to early in the show at the first calling of the bike, but now it is happening in its full effect.

"And with that my family watched the twinkling lights of Cuba fade away in the distance. Only left with each other, the darkness of the night, and the few twinkling stars reflecting off the water."

*What are the things we carry?
Something is lost. Something is left behind.*



Chapter 2: My Research as an Artist

Artist Statement

As an artist, dancer, choreographer and filmmaker, I believe in the power of the human body to inform our shared experience and understanding of life. In dance there are no definite terms, only the common voice of the human body. My hopes and aspirations for my work exist here. The shared experience of the body anchors my work deeply back to the communities in which I create, and dance reflects the extraordinary nature of what seems ordinary. Dance has the ability to transcend and reframe reality, to enlighten our minds to what is lurking behind what we can see, read, or say on the surface. The metaphors that exist inside the human body run along our deepest plains of consciousness and reveal overpowering experiences often left behind in a modern temporal world. It is here, at the precipice of these transcended realities experienced inside the body that I look to take my creative process forward into the unknown and places lost. This deeply rooted approach of letting corporeal imagery lead my dance explorations is what allows my work to spill outside the confines of a stage space and back into the bodies of my audience.

My work appears as dreamlike images that are ripe with athletic visual experiences in which fiction and reality operate synchronously. By applying abstraction to the everyday, I create intense personal moments that feel altogether familiar and foreign at the same time. Nuanced gesture, velocity, abandonment, and task-based work inform my choreography allowing me to break the limitations of my own body structure. Partnering and Contact Improvisation techniques create intimate images of relationship. Dance is my philosophy. It is the way I can assimilate

meaning in existence and it is also the way I can share this meaning with the communities in which I live. I am able to use my process as a quest to understand existence.

Mythology And My Work

As a contemporary choreographer living in the United States, I have for the past four years begun to explore the field of comparative mythology through the work of preeminent scholar and founder of the subject, Joseph Campbell. This work began instinctively with an intuitive interest in general mythology after conducting dance residencies abroad in the countries of Iceland and Finland (2012). As an artist I have always been determined to create art that reflects content of genuine significance to the audience for whom it is made. Opportunities to create work in communities outside of my own country pushed me to explore different ways to connect with audiences and construct dances. In my search to better understand the new communities in which I was interacting, I began to peruse their folklore and mythology. Specifically I began reading interpretations of *The Kalevala* from Finland and *Norse Mythology* from Iceland. It was during this time that I became profoundly interested in the symbolic and metaphoric content of mythology and what resemblances I could see within art and especially dance.

As the spark of mythology grew within me I somewhat naturally stumbled upon the work of Joseph Campbell, particularly *Myths To Live By* (1972). Within my next choreographic pursuit, which would be a dance film derived from Greek mythological archetypes (titled, *THE ARCHETYPES*, 2016), I began to investigate

Campbell's concept of the Monomyth (one story) and how the understanding of metaphor deeply affects how life is lived. The following sections of this paper outline the influence of mythology and Joseph Campbell on the pursuit of my research and will give important context related to my journey to investigate the influence of dream and mythology on my choreographic process.

Metaphoric Misunderstandings

The past century has seen a tremendous shift due to technological and intellectual revolutions that have not only changed the world functionally but have also altered the spiritual fabric of human experience. Whereas human life once revolved around a primal connection to nature, it now, at least for industrial societies, revolves more closely around the Internet connection to a computer. As technology continues to develop exponentially beyond our own comprehension, it seems reasonable to conclude that it may be necessary to develop equally innovative methods for accessing our evolving metaphysical experiences as well. But how does one do this exactly, and how might the fields of dance, dream study, and mythology play a role in this?

The place of mythology in modern society is a contentious subject among academics and neophytes alike. The first problem in the development and understanding of our own transcendental realities, amidst the growing technological jungle of the world, is due in large part to a now common inability to decipher the symbols and metaphors used to convey mythic truths. Joseph Campbell spoke to this problem in his book, *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor* (2001). Here

Campbell reflects on the sharp division between modern day believers and atheists:

“It made me reflect that half the people in the world think that the metaphors of their religious traditions, for example, are facts. And the other half contends that they are not facts at all. As a result we have people who consider themselves believers because they accept metaphors as facts, and we have others who classify themselves as atheists because they think religious metaphors are lies” (Campbell and Kennedy, 2).

It is my belief that this collective misunderstanding of metaphor stands in the way of modern spiritual development and therefore requires a new approach unbound by the conventions of previously employed methods.

As an artist and choreographer I believe strongly that dance is an effective vehicle for accessing the lost allegories of mythic traditions past and present. Dance works powerfully and synergistically with visual symbolism. One does not have to read something literally to process its’ meaning, but must reflect viscerally and psychically to gain meaning from what is seen in the dancers body. In an important sense, dance forces audiences to take on their own private sense of allegory; they must tune into the abstract part of their brains that can derive meaning from non-literal, energetic, and intuitive signals.

Similar Issues In Dance

This problem of metaphoric confusion marks a critical issue that I believe extends beyond the field of mythology and directly into the field of contemporary dance. As mentioned before, dance can be a powerful tool for confronting the literal mind’s assumptions, but it also must confront the same issue itself with audiences

who may take contemporary dances' form strictly from a literal point of view. The ways in which to interpret modern and contemporary dance are as numerous and varied as the number of people who actually make and see the dances. While one audience member may find a dance sparse, abstract, and difficult to connect with, another may be enthusiastically involved in the same dance's delicately suspended sense of time and reality. This variation in interpretation is intriguing and for the artist and audience alike because the focus is not based on right or wrong interpretations but on the individual experiences of each audience member and performer. Yet, why do some performances connect more deeply with an audience or performer than others? What are new ways to address this conversation in dance? What are the subconscious influences of these dance interpretations?

Dream: The Common Root (My New Question)

Intuitively I believe there are profound connections between the fields of dance and mythology but in order to confirm my intuitions I will need to identify a common denominator, a foundation by which to build my inquisition of this theory. This is where the study of dreams and dream interpretation has made its way into my research. American philosopher Susanne K. Langer, speaks to myths' origins in her book, *Philosophy In A New Key: A Study In The Symbolism of Reason, Rite, And Art* (1976). "*Myth begins in fantasy, which may remain tacit for a long time; for the primary form of fantasy is the entirely subjective and private phenomenon of dream*" (Langer 171). She goes on to further explain that story and myths are made of more than just a literal significance and that "*it is made essentially from dream-material*"

(Langer 171). Similarly Joseph Campbell also identifies a deep connection and foundation of dream in myth: *“Myths are public dreams; dreams are private myths. By finding your own dream and following it through, it will lead you to the myth-world in which you live. But just as in dream, the subject and object, though they seem to be separate, are really the same”* (“The Letter ‘U’: Dream Consciousness,” Track 12, 00:00:58-00:01:22).

And so as *“dream-material”* is identified as a root of myth, can the same be identified for dance? In order to delimit this question, as the roots of dance will have many different theories and sources, I will contain my work in this study by speaking about dance from my choreographic perspective.

The active imagination required of me as a choreographer highly reflects the manner by which dreams are defined. A common definition of dream is *“Dreams are successions of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep”* (Wikipedia, “Dream” December 16, 2014). As a choreographer I build my art based off of the successions of images, ideas, emotion and sensations that run through my mind and body during the choreographic process. This has made me start to question lately if what I make as an artist is really dance or if I'm trying to make dreams instead and dance is merely my lens by which to do so.

Chapter 3: Origins of the Work



Inspiration photo found and used during the proposal phases of WDWL
Photo Credit: [Web Link](#) / accessed October 2016

“One thing that comes out in myths, for example, is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light” (Campbell, “The Power of Myth” 39).

Myths Of Darkness And Nothing

At the beginning of my choreographic process I was physically and imaginatively interested in the choreographic play of darkness before light. I was curious about this moment Campbell describes above, the “black moment,” where the real message of transformation comes. To craft this idea initially for WDWL I planned on using physical darkness to lead the way into the experience of this metaphorical darkness. However I did not end up turning off any physical lights to

achieve this goal. Ultimately this process of looking into darkness resulted in taking time to close my eyes, clear my mind, and listen to the images that might arise from the darkness of my mind. I think of this practice as somewhere between conscious thought and dreaming. It was a balance of emptying the mind; letting the mind go, and listening to what images surfaced in the darkness of that space. This was highly inspired by reading Joseph Campbell's book, *Myths of Light* (2012), and his telling of the 'This am I' myth from the Hindu Upanishads.

"So, in the beginning that was no beginning, there was nothing but the Self. And the Self at a moment that was no moment said "I. Aham. Ego." And as soon as it thought "I," it experienced fear. Then it reasoned, though it wasn't very complicated reasoning – this was the very first attempt of reasoning at all– "Since there is nothing else in the world, what do I have to be afraid of?" That eliminated the fear.

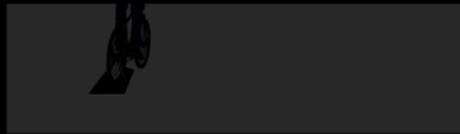
Of course, no sooner was the fear eliminated than it had desire: "I wish there were another." Well, in that state of being, a wish is as good as a fact. The Self swelled and split in half, and voila– there were two. Each united with the other and produced something" (Campbell, 'Myths of Light' 9).

In this myth I am captivated as something comes from nothing. This is what closing my eyes and clearing my mind was meant to do, it was meant to allow something to develop from nothing. Visually I didn't want to premeditate how this work would ultimately appear, I was truly interested in the process of listening to images that would arise from looking into the "black moments" as described by

Campbell. I was interested in this “beginning that was no beginning” and “the moment that was no moment.”

The first image that sunk in from this process of closing my eyes indeed was this idea of one splitting into two. I felt magnetized to this image of the Self splitting into two and indeed this image resonates with many other myths and religious traditions as well, often times manifesting in our sense of the term soulmates. This idea also connected to me on various levels as a choreographer. I have always gravitated toward partnering in dance. I love the complexities of lifting, sharing weight, and ultimately going through a physical experience with someone that is powerfully interdependent. I could also envision in my mind that light and shadow might be useful instruments for revealing this image. I could see a shadowy figure with light emanating from behind. As they bowed and moved their body a second figure would emerge out of the silhouette of the first.

In addition to this first image, I continued to close my eyes and look into the darkness. I am providing visuals from my thesis proposal written in December 2015 that were also initial seeds that I looked to carry out of the darkness of my mind and into the rehearsal studio. It is important for me to acknowledge that I didn't have a rational thought out reason for incorporating these ideas, yet these images are not random. They came from the realms of intuition and dream. I knew these images were calling to me but just like with a dream I couldn't decipher what they meant yet.



BICYCLE PROJECTOR

Made from an ordinary bicycle and converted to be stationary with back wheel platform support.

All black.

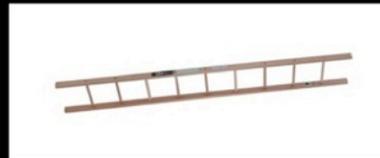
Projector mounted on front.

Isadora software uses a camera to track the motion of the pedals. The more movement of the pedals the greater the visibility of the projections.

PROP IMAGES

All props would be used in the creation of the choreography and would need to support the weight of a dancer. (My weight 175 lbs)

Strong Wooden Ladder:
Ideal length between 8'-12'



Strong Hand Carved Wooden Beam:
Ideal length between 10'-12'
The image across is an image of a yoke and while this is not exactly the right shape it is similar to what I'm imagining.



Heavy Duty Adjustable Strapping:
Tough, military grade. Capable of supporting the weight of a dancer.



The above design plate shows inspiration images and specifications I submitted for my original proposal.

Searching For Myths



Experimenting with lights and projection during the Kogod Theatre Summer Residency.
Photo Credit: Colette Krogol

Imagine lying down in a vast and empty space with no light.

A solitary and dark abyss.

This is the beginning.

There is no shape or form.

There is no duality of experience.

No "this" or "that."

No good or bad.

Only darkness.

This is the moment before...

the moment.

What ever may be supporting this plane of existence is invisible.

And it is this invisible plane of being that is supporting the visible plane of our being.²

² I wrote this poem at the beginning of the thesis process (2015) in an attempt to direct my creative intentions.

During this process I was looking for myths of transformation that I could lean into as material for developing the choreography. However I was not sure what or how to do this, and I was having trouble seeing how this information would coexist with Colette's personal family stories of their exodus from Cuba in which she was so deeply invested.

I utilized a range of approaches in terms of research for WDWL including reading selected works of Joseph Campbell, individual studio time to move on my own, Contact Improvisation with Colette for movement discovery and invention, as well as time spent with collaborators experimenting with the elements of light and dark. The first few months of the project saw the germination of my thesis concept isolated from Colette's thesis concept. We both were trying to give each other space to investigate and dream up our ideas. This was at times difficult as the production process started to unfold and we needed to present a unified vision of concepts to designers. The one anchor that we both were able to dream about together was the space of the performance, the Kogod Theatre. We agreed the space should be raw and exposed; not dressed up like a theatre space to hide entrances and exits. Making the space devoid of obvious theatrical elements such as curtains, wings, and a proscenium was important and envisioning the bare walls of the Kogod Theatre inspired how we would envision the dance elements we wanted to bring together.

Rehearsals during the first four months of this process saw Colette looking for the dance that would speak to the journey of her maternal family's exodus from Cuba to the U.S., as well as tapping into the complex emotions of how her family has been waiting 55 years for change in Cuba. I was looking for ways to create mythic images

through dancing that would transform who I am. I was however a bit lost as to how this could be done. My biggest questions were:

- *How would this dance come into being?*
- *What burden would it carry and how would it transform the performers?*

A big breakthrough came during a two-week summer intensive we spent rehearsing in the Kogod Theatre alongside our designers. Being inside the actual place where the performance would take place was very important. It is the equivalent of being in the correct mind space to find the subconscious images I was looking for and I believe this opportunity to rehearse in the Theatre prior to technical rehearsals was critical to the success of the concert.

During the residency I had been reading Joseph Campbell's books *Myths of Light* and *The Power of Myth*, looking and waiting for moments of inspiration to occur. I think in fact I was looking for one myth or metaphor that would magically unfold the whole show for me, but Campbell's breadth of explanation and his style of constantly comparing stories and myths from around the world made it impossible to grab a hold of just one idea. I instead had many ideas in my head all the time, which really meant I had no specific idea. At best the Greek myths of Atlas and Sisyphus were often vibrating in the back of my mind (perhaps because I was feeling the burden of creating a new work). I felt compelled to create movement and duets that revolved around the feeling of a great burden on someone's shoulders. This was a compelling idea but it only took me so far in terms of choreographing the entire show

and I was not clear how this idea would relate to Colette's personal research and ideas.

Then in a "moment that was no moment," Colette and I started experimenting with the poetry she had written for a past research film installation performance we had created titled: *More Than 90 Miles From Home* (2015). This poetry was Colette's first attempt at investigating her family's personal journey from Cuba and the deep connection she had to these stories. At first we thought maybe Colette reading the poems in Spanish might be part of the sound score but as we worked more and more with the text and the movement of the piece I had a true epiphany. Colette's poetry about her family's journey from Cuba was the mythology I had been looking for! I could see so many moments of the story and how they corresponded to powerful mythic images. There was an exodus, a journey, a transformation, and burdens were being carried. It became apparent to me the more I explored this personal story of Colette's family, the more I would discover the mythic images I had been looking to create. The shift now was to take the story of Colette's family and break it down into its inherent mythic images.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of what I mean, the next chapter on my creative process will break down the meaning we derived as I connected one family's story to larger themes of humanity; transforming personal story to myth and finding the metaphors in Colette's memories and family history.

Chapter 4: The Process of Creation



Colette Krogol and Matt Reeves fall apart during the He Venido section of *Waking Darkness. Waiting Light*.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

“Myths do not belong, properly, to the rational mind. Rather, they bubble up from deep in the wells of what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious” (Campbell, ‘Myths of Light’ xvii.) I see dance this same way. I believe dance also bubbles up from the collective unconscious.

Story To Myth Via The Dance

The process of creation became essentially this:

- Colette used memories and stories of her family’s exodus from Cuba to create a series of poems.
- I interpreted these poems for their mythic images and qualities.
- These images and qualities became the basis by which the movement and journey of the show was based.

It is important to note that converting the stories to poetry and treating them as such was vital. Poetry is the language of mythology. It is poetry not prose that makes up the metaphoric nature of dance and myth. It is also what allowed this personal story to become more than just sentimental to Colette. Poetic language was the key for getting to the transformative and transcendent material that I wanted this dance to possess. Joseph Campbell speaks to why this is important in an interview with Bill Moyers transcribed in *The Power of Myth* (1988).

“The reference of the metaphor in religious traditions is to something transcendent that is not literally any thing. If you think that the metaphor is itself the reference, it would be like going to a restaurant, asking for the menu, seeing beefsteak written there, and starting to eat the menu”(Campbell, ‘The Power of Myth’ 56).

The process we created of abstracting and poeticizing the reality of Colette’s story was the means by which we could begin to find the “beefsteak” to which Campbell is referring. Again however, please keep in mind, the poem and even the dancing, are not the “beefsteaks” themselves. They are the metaphors that point us into these transcendent ideas. For example, the beginning that is no beginning, the moment that is no moment, the sound of one hand clapping.

Another important factor in transforming this material was the use of repetition as movement was made in the studio using this process. Repetition transforms material. By working on a movement, lift, or phrase hundreds of times it starts to become something different and new. The material in my opinion actually

becomes what it is and this use of repetition was essential in terms of letting our mythic dance explorations become themselves.

To provide an example of this story to myth transformation, I have chosen four poetic phrases written by Colette depicting her memories. These selections came from a larger story and poem that Colette and I collaborated on during past research for the dance cinema installation of *More Than 90 Miles From Home*. For clarity Colette's words are written in blue italics and single-spaced. Following each selection, I write my thoughts and interpretations of the poems as seen from the lens of myth.

Waking Darkness. Falling Into The Abyss. The Call To Adventure.

*I have had four recurring dreams since it tore through my home awakening me from my sleep.
Not necessarily nightmares but dreams, vivid ones.
I can always find the taste in my mouth and the smell in my lungs for hours afterwards.
Everyday I wait. Patiently and impatiently...
These dreams are my bridge to the stories that I have been told since I was young and the places I've
still never touched.
I had just turned seven when it happened.
That night I laid in my grandparents' bed, while the adults were all in the garage trying to figure out
how they could keep the door from flying off.
It had already been twelve years since my family had come by boat from Cuba.
Many of our new possessions, especially my grandfathers, were kept in that garage.
As they reinforced the door with some old wooden planks, the large window beside me shattered.
I jumped up startled. I sat there silently watching the water pour in.*

This personal story serves as a bridge for its audience to find itself inside the story. Awakening from sleep is the metaphor of the waking consciousness. Joseph Campbell might also refer to this as 'The Call to Adventure.' Here Colette's story begins in a situation grounded in reality; a vivid moment from her childhood now calls to her as an adult. Using the images of dreams, Colette is able to relay that some special information is being received which now acts as a calling for her to head off into the unknown.

The Goddess- Tierra De Su Patria (The Land Of Colette's Mother, Mother Cuba)

The beach waits to say goodbye to more of her children only to see some wash back ashore.

The beach here is Cuba, and she is referred to as the mother. This mother that has given birth to the children of Cuba is the same mother that must hold the bodies of her children that have passed away. This inspired one of the most important images of the show for me, of Colette and Robin dragging the bodies of Jonathan and myself across the space. The weight of the movement was heavy and waterlogged. This was an important moment to reflect the weight of this image which was essentially a mother pulling in the heavy dead bodies of her children. This image rings loud in the world of mythology. The Pieta is a prime example in Christianity. The Gaia myth of Greek mythology epitomizes the great mother that gave birth to the world and saw many of her children killed in the great primordial battles. The image of the Goddess Kali in India holds death in one hand and life in the other, another symbol of mother earth as the creator and destroyer.

The Impossible Task

*How do you prepare in twenty minutes to leave your home forever?
What do you hold one last time, when you can't take anything with you?*

The impossible task represents the challenges mythic characters must face. For me this ties back into the idea of burden. It is Atlas holding the weight of the sky on his shoulders. It is Sisyphus forever doomed to push the boulder up the hill. It is a moment of weight and gravity. With so little time at hand, time seems to stand still in this moment. This is also in line with Campbell's, "The Hero's Journey," which depicts a phase of crossing the 'threshold' into the unknown and accepting the

journey before you. Here Colette's family faces a great unknown and makes the heavy decision that has so much gravity to it, time seems to stand still.

The Moment of Transformation (The Darkest Moment)

*And with that my family watched the lights of Cuba fade away in the distance. Only left with each other, **la oscuridad** of the night, and the few **stars** reflecting off the water.*

The story of Colette's family leaves us on a boat in the dark with water as far as the eye can see in all directions. This is a key moment of transformation. Lives will never be the same. They are leaving one shore for another distant shore. There is poetry to this reality. This is the same poetry of myth that is born from the revelations, stories, and experiences of our ancestors and our collective unconscious. This story acts as a new genesis story for Colette's family and their new lives in the United States. In this darkness they are formed anew and must reflect on the waters they are traversing across.

This is the Exodus of the Bible and the wandering of the desert. It is being cast out of ones homeland just as Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden. It is the Odyssey, a great journey into the unknown. It is the death of an old life and the birth of a new. This transformation of Colette's family is symbolic of the great transformations we must all go through that change our lives. At some point in our lives we all must cast out into the dark waters leaving everything we know behind, hoping that there is another shore waiting for us at the end of this journey.

Collaboration On A Mythic Journey



Colette Krogol and Matt Reeves in a moment of '*Distancia Infinita*' during *Waking Darkness. Waiting Light*.
Photo Credit: Still Image from Video Geoff Sheil

To say this work was collaboratively ambitious from the start would be an understatement. Aside from the ongoing collaboration of creating the work alongside Colette from our two different departure points, this project engaged two exceptional professional dancers and a host of talented artist/designers. This section outlines the collaborative process experienced with our collaborators while building the dance, sound, projection, lighting, costuming, and carpentry of the work. I also explain the quiet but instrumental contributions of stage management in making this complex collaborative process possible.

Fundamentally Colette and I have found through past experiences that in order to have a successful collaboration we need to spend significant time with our designers, just as we do with our dancers in the studio. In fact it is important to us that we treat the design elements we are working with as if they are dancers themselves

essential to the outcome of the work. This puts heavy demands on our designers but the reward is design that has not been pasted on top of our concepts but design that dances together with our choreography. I feel fortunate that we had a team of designers that were interested in working this way and rose to all the idiosyncratic challenges of the work. Below are accounts of the process with each designer or team of collaborators.

The Journey with Robin and Jonathan (Dancers)



Jonathan Hsu holds up Robin Neveu Brown on the ladder during *'The Other Side/Ladder Duet'* section of *WDWL*.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

My process of choreographing and art making is at its best when I can be deeply personal, raw, and often times vulnerable. The practice I have in the studio with dancers is often times trying out ideas I'm personally curious about but don't know if they will work. It can be very exciting one moment and can completely

defeat you the next. This is often exacerbated by the toll that dancing a complicated idea with your body can take. It can feel like a lot of work for nothing if the idea does not work out. This is a key reason why having the right bodies and minds in the room to support my work, is so essential.

Both Robin Neveu Brown and Jonathan Hsu are of the highest caliber of professional dancers. They are both technically trained in modern dance but also have experience in multiple forms of dance technique, which makes them incredibly adaptable to any choreographic idea. They are also very close friends and collaborators from past projects. They are both people I can trust. This is a big word, trust, and it is a crucial factor inside of my work. This may come from the way Colette and I have built trust in our dancing together over the years.

Trust is tested over and over in our work and I don't mean this metaphorically, although that is true as well. The choreography requires dancers to literally catch, hold, and carry each other. The stakes are real in that if mistakes are made people can be seriously hurt. Robin and Jonathan are the kind of dancers and people I can trust to engage in this kind of work, and I feel fortunate that they trust my choreography enough to engage in it so fully. The dancing in this piece developed because both Robin and Jonathan brought incredible physical skills, intuition, and feedback to the process.

Aside from the collective joy of collaborating with Robin and Jonathan, each of them brought a unique skillset to the work. Robin is a longtime friend for over a decade and we received similar training at our undergrad The University of Florida. She brings with her to the studio a wealth of professional experience, expertise as an

MFA dance graduate (in the same UMD program), a certified Laban movement analyst (CMA), and a newly initiated member into motherhood. One of Robin's greatest contributions to the process of making this work was her ability to clarify and carve out the language of our movement ideas as we created them. She is a patient listener and her lens as a CMA and choreographer herself allowed us to develop colliding choreographic ideas between Colette and myself. I would even dare say Robin was someone we could also lean on to mediate ideas between the two of us that we both felt passionately about.

Jonathan always brings energy to the process and embraces physical challenges set forth for him as a dancer. I love this about Jonathan and it echoes many of my own desires as a dancer to perform athletically challenging movement. His background in martial arts, hip-hop, and modern dance give him a unique dynamic range of possibilities as a mover. I'm reminded that so many things in this piece were ideas that we could not do right away; they were too physically tough. This has illuminated for me as a choreographer that I'm interested in the physical ideas that I can't do now but will be able to do eventually.

One exciting breakthrough during the process of creating WDWL was the company's commitment to the repetitions it would take to transform a physical idea. Time and weight were the biggest contributing factors in building the choreography. This is something Colette and I have always naturally used in our past works but now we were focused in intently on these two factors. This happened in a few layers. The first was with improvisational explorations. We had Robin and Jonathan warm up doing Contact Improvisation in many of our early rehearsals. Time and weight

naturally create transformation and Contact Improvisation is a method of moving that focuses on these elements. The weight of each dancers body is shared, lifted, rolled, or slid across the others. Timing of this weight sharing is crucial in order for a lift or lean to take place. Some moments need time to settle and develop while others require quick reflexes to handle a shifting weight pattern. Additionally the time spent sharing weight with another person takes energy and as bodies warm up and then become fatigued the dance naturally transforms; often becoming either more difficult or more efficient depending on how a dancer's body can adjust.

This time in rehearsal was given so the dancers could connect to each other and the idea of sharing weight with each other before they started working on other complicated partnering ideas. I quickly noticed the movement patterns that came out of their improvisations were not only beautiful but also felt connected to this idea I had of discovering the transformative dance in the 'dark.' The not-knowing of improvisation is connected to the subconscious realms of our being while the creation of the movement spontaneously connected to the image of The Self and the form of The Self splitting into two. This felt like the right way to bring in an unconscious layer of information I was looking for in the piece.

The second layer of this process is where the repetitions became more heavily involved. By using video tapes of these improvisations I would collaborate with Colette to find moments that caught our attention and then we would ask Robin and Jonathan to learn these moments and string them together into one continuous piece of choreography. This took a great deal of effort, as it is a very difficult task of relearning something you do lifting a partner spontaneously in the moment. Practice

of these moments took place over and over as we searched back into the darkness and tried to understand how the subconscious activities of our bodies had achieved these moments. We practiced over and over. And slowly over time, over hours, over weeks, over months, the material transformed and became like second nature to Robin and Jonathan.

For a brief period of time the material got cut, as we were not sure if it was necessary for the show. However we kept going back to it and it kept transforming the more we looked at it and the more it was rehearsed. Both Jonathan and Robin's bodies changed over time and they gradually became capable of dancing movements and lifts that once seemed impossible. This duet is now iconic to the work and it is impossible to imagine WDWL without it. This taught me that in the choreographic process there is value in going back to movement over and over because you never know what you will find there, and there is a magic to how repetition can transform human bodies. Just as a slow drip of water can eventually carve its way through a stone, repetition changes movement and the body.

Diving for Projections -Designing with Mark Costello



Colette Krogol pulls up Robin Neveu Brown on the ladder during 'Calling Of The Ladder 2' section of *WDWL*.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

I knew from the beginning that projection design would be perhaps the most crucial design element that I wanted to work with for this project. This involved a considerable amount of time spent working alongside designer Mark Costello both in and out of the studio. What I like about projection design is its ability to transform the way people see space, or an object. Since projection design is not an actual thing like a piece of scenery or a set, it pushes the minds of the audience, performers, and creators back into an inherently metaphorical realm as opposed to a literal realm. Projection design is effective at illuminating space and transforming space into windows of thought. So rather than build a set, I wanted to lean on projection design to build multiple images of the space. Ultimately this allowed us to continually transform the space over the course of the show.

The design collaboration with Mark started very broadly with general ideas of what the space should do. Colette and I wanted an interactive space between the performers and the projection imagery. We put out the idea to Mark that the space should feel like it is listening and responding to the content of the performance. However early on, what a space listening would look like, we did not know and we didn't want to dictate to Mark. It was important that we leave time to discover this idea and hopefully discover it in the space. It was incredibly fortunate that we were able to arrange a two-week intensive in the Kogod theatre over the summer to test out the possibilities of this idea. We were essentially able to use the form of the space to help us discover and dictate what the content might be; this is also our preference for creating choreography.

Lights in the Dark -Designing with Connor Dreibelbis



Matt Reeves reaches for a wireless can-light during 'Assembly 2' section of *Waking Darkness. Waiting Light.*
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

Lighting or the lack thereof was everything. The title of WDWL implies so much already for an audience. Lighting would function as if it was our scenic design. I was curious how we could build a world out of light. I identified early on that the lighting of the space and the projection of the space needed to dance well together especially since both of these design elements manipulate light to achieve their goals. We didn't want the audience to be thinking about lighting and projection as separate elements; the space needed to feel like a living and breathing organism that could naturally produce all these shapes, spaces, memories, and moments.

One of the key methods of blending the audiences' perspective with light and projection was the use of the wireless can-lights. The wireless can-lights that were used in the piece by the performers on stage could magically turn off and on at the stage manager's discretion. This method of bringing their light in and out during the show echoes the presence of the projectors and their ability to magically bring imagery in and out of the space. The second key method of blending these design elements was the use of projection as a light source. The projection mapping of the rungs of the ladder and the spotlights within the section of '*Calling of The Ladder 2*' (AKA *Bodies Crashing*) mimicked lighting effects seen in the space. These were moments where light and projection became indistinguishable.



Projection as light in '*Calling of the Ladder*' section.



Key moment of projection imitating light in '*Calling of The Ladder 2*' section. Still shot from Saturday matinee video by Paul Jackson

Projection light naturally contains whiter and bluer tones. This allowed us to explore using single source lighting ideas that would warm the space and the dancers bodies with lovely orange incandescent glows. This also gave WDWL another essence of how time could be felt. Video light often dealt with the past, memories, or the foreboding nature of what was to come. The warm light that Dreibelbis created for the work was used to feature the performers who were living in the here and now; it brought critical moments in the performance into the present.



Two moments from the Section '*He Venido*' featuring the warm single source design of Dreibelbis
Photo Credit: C. Stanley



A moment featuring the warm single source light contrasted against the cool blue hue of the projector light.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

Sounds of Light and Dark- Designing with Jeff Dorfman & Dylan Glatthorn



'Searchlight' section, with dancers Jonathan, Robin, and Matt seen here impacted by the bone jarring sound score.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

The collaboration of sound and music during the creation of WDWL was the result of the extraordinary work of two composers Jeffrey Dorfman and Dylan Glatthorn. This collaboration stretched all the way between Virginia where Jeff lives, and New York City where Dylan lives. Via Skype and the busing of Dylan down from New York for two intensive rehearsal weekends, the sound score for WDWL was made over considerable distance. I like to think this was a subconscious element that contributed to the beautiful sense of distance and time that WDWL held.

We had worked with both composers before and knew the strength of their work individually, but we weren't sure about how they would feel collaborating together. Fortunately they were quite dynamic together as a team and the access to two brilliant musical minds allowed for the collaboration to explore additional styles

and directions than the usual process of one composer. The success found in the making of the sound was highly influenced by both composers being in the rehearsal space and creating music while watching dancers work through material. This would in turn produce small segments of musical ideas that we would dance to see how the sound was then influencing the dance.

One of Dylan's greatest contributions was a piece of music he titled: *The Bright*. This was influenced by conversations about the heavy, dark and weighted nature of many of the themes being brought into rehearsal and that we needed to also find the hope and light of moments as well. Here Dylan developed a seemingly simple but beautiful chord progression that really dropped in 'light' to our rehearsal process. This music became the key catalyst for how the '*The Other Side/Ladder Duet*' section came together.

Jeff contributed so much to this work, but one of my favorite contributions, was his willingness to make silence something we could feature in the work as well. Silence and sound were equally precious to Jeff and I love the attention to detail he had when building silence and the moments right before the sound would pull out. This is identified best for me during the '*Waiting...*' section. Slow hard-edged ticks fill the space but the silence in between lasts longer than the click itself. The hard sharp nature of the clicks Jeff selected, emphasized the silence in between. Jeff also ever so slightly broke the ticks apart by milliseconds so that the audience can't consciously recognize the feeling that time is slowing down.

Costumes Washed In The Waves- Designing with Robert Croghan



The section 'Kicking up the Dust' featuring the costume design of Robert Croghan
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

Roberts Croghan's work in terms of developing costuming was brilliantly subtle and literally about layers. I have to admit costumes may have been the area I was least sure of at the onset of this project. I had no doubt in Robert's ability, nor the costume shop's ability to make extraordinary garments. But as much as I closed my eyes and listened for it, I had no sense of direction that came to mind. I prefer costumes that have a pedestrian sensibility and that emphasize the people as people. But other than these preferences I didn't naturally have a sense of how costume would work in this light and dark world of transformation and what role it would play. Robert really listened and adapted to our ideas as they continued to develop over the course of the rehearsal process and he also allowed for us to experiment with ideas leading up to the final design. One idea of color changing fabrics that were heat

activated never made it into the final costume design, but I was very grateful for the idea and the time given by Robert and the shops to test this idea out in studio during the early summer rehearsal process. It was just as important to rule out ideas that did not work, as it was to declare ideas that did.

We did ask Robert to help us create clothing that felt worn and beaten from an extremely long journey. The colors of Cuba were inspiration as well. Vintage wallpaper and plasters of old Cuban buildings eventually inspired the pallet. The final look was worn, sun beaten, and saltwater distressed. The costumes consisted of multiple layers and even the ones the audience couldn't see were quite important in terms of creating weight on the body and a sense of holding on to the only clothes you have. The coats were lined with pockets that were originally conceived to hold extra weight as well. This turned out to be unnecessary as the natural weight of the clothing proved to be enough and there was something poetic about the weight of our empty pockets being carried throughout the show.

Hidden Support Structures- Stage Management



The section '55 Years' seen from a view similar to that of the Stage Manger's booth.
Photo Credit: C. Stanley

The contributions of stage management to this process cannot be overstated. To manage this many design elements, schedules, and technically complicated props is a daunting task but our tasks during WDWL were made very smooth due to Tarythe Albrecht's incredible capabilities of anticipating what was needed. Tarythe is amazing at listening and has a keen eye for movement, which meant she was able to memorize complicated choreographic structures well before we ever started "teching" the show. Just like Robin and Jonathan, Tarythe performed the dance with us every night. The living breathing space of the Kogod that we created and performed in danced to the rhythm of Tarythe's calls, and she danced in response to our dancing onstage.

This relationship was challenged and measured through several technical difficulties that occurred during the run of the show. Each time Tarythe and dancers

were challenged to work together to solve the problem. This may best be exemplified by a technical glitch that occurred during the opening performance during which the sound went out for approximately twelve minutes of the show. As a performer this was scary and exhilarating and the four of us just kept moving in the spirit of “the show must go on.” At a certain point however it did become hard to imagine how long the show could go on without music. We were approaching the fastest section of WDWL titled ‘Searchlight.’ The music drives the tempo of the dance and cues several minutes of unison choreography within our quartet.

The moment arrives for this section to begin and there is still no music. We move on anyway. It was incredible how in tune we became as performers to each other when the music was taken away. We were all scared no doubt but we had each other, so that was enough to move on and give it a go. The section was going well enough considering the technical circumstances. Breathing had become our sound score and we were making it past the halfway point of the section. Here we started running and breaking into duets that spill across the space. Strobe lights emphasized a desire to for us to escape. A key moment is coming where I jump over Jonathan and fall to the floor syncing up with Robin for the final section of runs and falls. The music suddenly crashed back into the space!

It felt good to have the music again but we were not sure if it came in at the right time with the movement. The end of this section finishes with Jonathan diving and falling right on the music but we didn’t know if we would hit this moment. The music sounded right...but was it? Jonathan fell. The music ended. The music was perfect.

Tarythe had watched us rehearse this number hundreds of times and she knew the music. She knew exactly where to bring it back in and once she solved the technical problem from the booth she caught us in the final moment of searchlight. Something went wrong as often happens in performance but I believe that if you stay together and take care of each other nothing truly wrong can happen in performance. I'm grateful that Tarythe had prepared, just as I do, for an intimate duet with another dancer. She was prepared, so even though something went awry, she was still there to catch us.

Chapter 5: Synthesis of the Work



“Myths are public dreams; dreams are private myths. By finding your own dream and following it through, it will lead you to the myth-world in which you live. But just as in dream, the subject and object, though they seem to be separate, are really the same” (Campbell, “The Letter ‘U’: Dream Consciousness,” Track 12, 00:00:58-00:01:22).

Value in Making Dreams

WDWL is an experience built to parallel and bring forth the mythic images and experiences of one family’s exodus from their homeland. Instead of presenting this information literally through clear narrative and spoken language, WDWL used the intuitive kinesthetic knowledge of the body to present a dreamscape of content for

its audiences to digest and the performers to experience. There is exceptional value in this process for me and the more I discover how this can be done the more deeply connected I become to the fields of dance and mythology.

The value of this process of making dances that operate as dreamscapes, may be best understood by the sense of wonder that they form. Quotes from audience members about the show illustrate the nature of this wonder forming in their minds.

“During the show I was able to let go of trying to find a meaning or overthinking the story behind each and every thing and let myself just experience what was happening in front of me.” –Adriane

“I had moments through the piece where it felt as though I was dreaming. Throughout the piece, it felt as though several different dreams with different plots and then you have a reality check to remember it’s just a dream.” –Shaina

“It’s an image, an idea, an experience that is free to float instead of being tied down by words. It was raw and paradoxical.” –Arsh

These sentiments are not unique to this evening of dance. I believe dance creates this sense of wonder naturally, but I do believe that when dance is creating wonder like this in it’s audiences, it is because it is tapping into the same collective unconscious from which mythology is derived. Dance is lining up with our subconscious knowledge of mythic images. “Mythological symbols touch and

exhilarate centers of life beyond the reach of reason and coercion...” (Campbell, ‘Masks of God’ 4). Dance can “touch and exhilarate” the centers of our lives well beyond the reaches of reason and coercion. It is for this reason that I love to dance and make dances. It is for this reason that I strive for my choreographic work to align with the mythological symbols that reconcile a waking consciousness with our sense of wonder.

Listening To The Work

In many ways it feels fitting that I don’t have a well wrapped up or easily understood conclusion to this process of making WDWL. This seems fitting because when you are looking to explore the unknown you must give up the parts of you that want to make assumptions and you have to surrender to the practice of listening. Looking at the work, it was not perfect, and it was filled with challenges. Listening to the work reminds me that perfection was never an image I was trying to achieve. Myths and their metaphors are not measured by their perfection. They are images meant to direct our understanding and attention into the transcendent realms of our being. They are meant to feed us and transform us. Metaphors are meant to be heard...

When I listen I can hear the waves crashing on the beach like the sad song of a mother grieving...

I hear the bodies crashing into the ocean and I feel their weight gathering up on my shoulders...

Listening I hear... "Take care of each other out there..."

"Because that water that is there, separating one from the other is something that if you touch it will break your heart, your courage, everything you believe."

For my process, repetition counts. You have to listen to the movements of the dance over and over. You have to wait in the dark. Time is important. Weight and gravity always tell the truth. So does dance. This story was meant to test me and become my own.

"Because that water that is there, separating one from the other is something that if you touch it will break your heart, your courage, everything you believe."

When I listened and closed my eyes I found the images but time and repetition were key. It must be pondered that perhaps the repetitions are still not done. What will this journey look like in fifty-five years? The meaning of this dance has already grown over time and like a dream it provokes strong visceral imagery stored inside my body.

Yo me requiero. I remember.

I remember Jonathan cueing our movements in the silence.

Yo me requiero.

I remember carrying Robin over the wall in the dark.

Yo me requiero.

I remember touching Colette's outstretched hands and bringing them to my forehead like an ocean wave gently crashing on the beach.

Yo me requerdo.

I remember the moment that I made her story my story.

Her burden my burden.

Her waiting my waiting.

I remember holding Colette...Cuba...one last time.

"Because that water that is there, separating one from the other is something that if you touch it will break your heart, your courage, everything you believe."

This moment continues to impact me. These moments of deeply empathizing with Colette's family have been there in my personal life before, but the action of dancing this moment resonated deeper; the actions made it real. The discovery of its mythic images let me in. This dance was not Colette's family's journey just as this paper is not the dance. It does however point towards La Familia³ and their journey. It works hard to give a taste of an experience that can only be summoned up through the wonder of people moving in space to the rhythm of the collective unconscious. It can only be summoned up through dance.

I set out to see if I could make myths of my own through this thesis process. I wanted to make myth though dancing. *Yo me requerdo*. I remember not knowing

³ How Colette refers to her family in Spanish.

how. *Yo me requerdo*. I remember listening...waiting. There was nothing to make. Instead of making myths I learned how to listen for them. *I sat there silently watching the water pour in*. This is transformational. *Swimming and Swimming... Leaving the shore*. By listening to Colette's dream and following it through I found myself inside the myth world in which I live. *Swimming and Swimming.... Leaving her behind*.

Swimming and Swimming....

Yo me requerdo. I remember.



Matt and Colette embrace in the section 'He Venido'. Photo Credit: C. Stanley

Appendix

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
PRESHOW	Worklights. Just the Bike, Log, and Ladder are in the space. Water is dripping from the upstage right corner of the space. Overall the space is dull and relatively uninspiring.	Backstage	No Audio. Let the silence of the space and the sounds of the audience provide a sharp contrast for the start of the show.	Black/Dowsed.		
BLIND THE AUDIENCE/ FALLING INTO THE ABYSS	Blinding light and sound. Cacophony of light. Blind the audience into the darkness.	Backstage	Opening Hurricane with Tail.mp3	Space flashes and radically comes to life.		SHOWING VIDEOS FOLDER 2016.08.17 WDWL Showing
WAIT IN THE DARKNESS/ THE ABYSS	Letting the audience sit in the darkness and the silence. Making them feel isolated and alone.	Backstage. Waiting to enter.	Faintly hearing the ocean? The sound of the first waters in the abyss. Ice cavern	Black/Dowsed.		
ENTRANCE	Coming from exile. Standing in the light.	SOUND DOOR OPENS. Dancers enter carrying cans. ELEPHANT DOOR AND SOUND DOOR CLOSE TOGETHER.	Section 1-2 8-7-16.MP3	Black/Dowsed.	Bright light behind the elephant door spilling into the space.	SHOWING VIDEOS FOLDER 2016.08.17 WDWL Showing
ASSEMBLY		DANCING IN FRONT OF CANS Slow walking backwards.	Section 1-2 8-7-16.MP3 Added ticking sound.		Can-lights come up after door closes.	

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
KICKING UP DUST (ACTIVATION OF THE WORLD)	Stirring up and preparing the space. Haze/fog start to fill the air and performers activate the dream reality of the world. Dual sense of life and decay.	KICKING UP THE DUST DANCE. Dancers are in a small cluster slightly stage right of center.	Section 1-2 8-7-16.MP3 Need to extend		HAZE.	
HURRICANE/ FLOOD		Dancers begin to break apart and are spread through the space by crashing waves.	he venido reversed? JEFF			
ITO reunion/ Two generations of exiles (M&J Duet)		Matt & Jonathan Duet. Colette and Robin hold cans and then place cans on the wall and elephant door stage right. DUET ENDS WITH MATT CATCHING JONATHAN.	*chimes (slowed down 200%)* DYLAN			
CALLING OF THE LADDER 1	"The Ladder is our bridge to the stories that we have been told since we were young and the places we've still never touched."	Start in darkness. A single rung of the ladder is illuminated calling Colette to climb up and touch it. As she touches it a memory is released into the space. The ocean waves...a woman on the shore.	*each ladder rung triggers a different sound (6 total). 1.) reversed reversed hurricane (opening to beach) 2.) violin harmonics (in STEMS) 3.) cellos/bass (in STEMS) JEFF	Colette standing on the shore.		

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
BODIES ROLLING	"The beach waits to say goodbye to more of her children only to see some wash back ashore."	When Colette releases the ladder rung the memory/video of the space starts to slowly decay. Jonathan and Matt start rolling. Robin and Colette start reeling the bodies back home.	WDWL_Rolling&W allDuet_160910.wav	Decaying video of Colette standing on the shore.		
WALL DUETS		Matt and Jonathan push Colette and Robin upward and they walk across the wall and back down. Tableaus of longing, love, and loss take place as the wall continues to finally decay/ dissolve away.	WDWL_Rolling&W allDuet_160910.wav (continued)	Final decay of space.		
CALLING OF THE BIKE 2	The island of the bike calls the performers to it. A glimpse at the exit and climax later to come.	Performers walking slowly downstage towards the bike.	"Worlds Biggest Well Drips.wav"as the constant *mix the Cuban National Anthem (La Bayamesa) with the Communist Anthem* JEFF Starts in the Can, and eeks in. Comes in and out.	Cone around bike. Flickering?		

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
SEARCHLIGHT	<p>"Waiting patiently and impatiently. Waiting for the light to pass. Oscuridad. Darkness. Now. Swimming and Swimming... Leaving the shore. Swimming and Swimming.... Leaving her behind. Swimming and Swimming.... A fin rises up beside him, me. Swimming and Swimming side by side with the revolution. Nadando y Nadando. Swimming and Swimming... If it's a shark I'm dead. If it's a dolphin it means no sharks. Swimming and Swimming... The fin stays with me till the end. No sharks tonight except the searchlights that pulled me back home. (Wake me in the night) say instead? Manolo fue capturado y fue a la carcel. Manolo fue capturado y fue a la carcel. Manolo was captured and sent to prison."</p>	<p>Unison walking phrase into the pulsing can-lights. Breaks apart performers seeking to get under the light. Culminates in doubles duets. Repeat Matt and Jonathan. Add the Lighthouse duet of Colette and Robin.</p>	<p>WDWL_Searchligh t_160907.wav</p>		<p>Pulsing can- lights.</p>	

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
CALLING OF THE LADDER 2		All rungs of the ladder light up. Colette goes behind the ladder. 4 Rungs remain lit. As Colette grabs each rung a body falls into the water/back wall projection. Colette climbs the ladder again for a final rung. This time the ladder rung activates projection search lights emanating from the bodies on the ground. Colette climbs down the ladder and begins pulling Robins body by her jacket. Robin and Colette ascend back up the ladder.	*each ladder rung triggers a different sound (6 total). 1.) reversed reversed hurricane (opening to beach) 2.) violin harmonics (in STEMS) 3.) cellos/bass (in STEMS) JEFF	Searchlight and Ladder rungs		
CALLING OF THE BIKE 3			"Worlds Biggest Well Drips.wav"as the constant *mix the He Venido with the Communist Anthem* JEFF IN THE CAN!!! WOOOO!!!	Cone around bike. Flickering?		
WAITING DUET R & C		R&C Duet on ladder now. M&J on the Floor. Colette touches the first rung triggering the first memory momentarily but then it bursts into	Ticks slowly drifting apart?--> JEFF	Memory 1 turns into the White bar from the ceiling falls for 5 minutes.		

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
		the white line that travels down the wall for waiting.				
WAITING IN THE WAVES		R&C wait on the ladder above the waves. M&J stay on the floor in the waves.	-->ticks turns into ocean waves (ocean waves are the new clock) Ocean Waves into End Titles	As the white bar hits the seem of the Floor and the Wall it turns into waves rolling across the floor.		
ASSEMBLY 2		INSERT MATT AND JONATHAN UNISON DUET. Dancers slowly make thier way to in front of the cans. Small Reprise of assembly against SR wall in front of wall mounted cans.	*Variation on Section 1-2 8-7-16.MP3 Added ticking sound. JEFF			
COLETTE SOLO	Heavy Celebration. Waiting for 55 years. New years at Lela's is so happy but filled with heavy memories as well.	Colette reprise kicking up the dust into 55 gesture phrase. J, R, and M moving landscape with three cans. Maybe reprise Kicking up dust in front of cans.	*Assembly continues, adding more and more sounds. Becomes cacophony of sound into!--> JEFF			REHEARSAL VIDEO FILE 9.10 Assembly.mp 4
HE VENIDO (Heart of the piece)	Last love letter to Cuba. One story becomes two.	Matt and Colette Duet	WDWL_HeVenido_160911.wav Starts in Speaker Can. Blend into space based on sweeping gestures. Sound switches to high fidelity when Matt Holds Colette's Hand and brings them to his face.			

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
BLIND THE AUDIENCE/FALLING INTO THE ABYSS Calling of the bike 4		Colette unhooks ladder. Goes to back wall with J&R. Slow walk forward.	55 years of memories we ride through in 5 minutes. Speed of projection and sound affected by bike. WDWL_55years_MAXcaco_20160924	55 years of memories we ride through in 5 minutes. Speed of projection and sound affected by bike. THE ENDING BLINDS THE AUDIENCE INTO THE BLACKOUT AGAIN.		
55 YEARS/ THE BIKE RIDE		Matt rides the bike through 55 years in five minutes. This crumbles the world and breaks it. Colette, Robin, and Jonathan walk slowly from the back to the front of the space.	WDWL_55years_MAXcaco_20160924			
LADDER DUET THE OTHER SIDE		Jonathan moves ladder to set up duet. Matt moves bike upstage right. Robin crosses and stands underneath the ladder. Colette and matt move the drip corner for thier duet. Robin and Jonathan perform ladder duet. Matt and Colette wall duet. Deposit Robin. ADD MORE DEPOSITS. Matt and Colette Ladder duet.	WDWL_TheBright_160813.wav (*make longer*) DYLAN-->			
MATT DRAG	THIS SECTION WAS CUT		>WDWL_TheBright_160813.wav (continued)			

SECTIONS	CONTENT	DANCERS	AUDIO TRACK	PROJECTION CUE	LIGHTING	REHEARSAL VIDEO
DISTANCIA INFINITA		DIAGONAL QUARTET. EXODUS PHRASES. R&J duet. MATT AND COLETTE EXODUS PHRASE BACK UP THE DIAGONAL. MATT MOVES PROPS. COLETTE MOVES CANS. Cans to final position. C&M Doorframe duet. JONATHAN LEAVES ROBIN. ROBIN BRINGS FINAL CAN TO THE CORNER. FINAL SCANS OF PEOPLE START.	WDWL_StainedGlass_160831.wav (ends at the end of Jonathan/Robin duet) *Possibly make longer* DYLAN Well drips begin as she looks back at can (beginning of the end)			

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